INTRODUCTORY NOTE

INDIAN NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The emerging threats to India's national security this century are propelling India to a national security strategy of alliance, and away from its traditional stance of neutrality.

At the start of the Cold War of the last century (1946-1989), the newly independent India chose to remain aloof from the bipolar struggle between the nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Instead, India became a co-leader with communist China of the Non-Aligned Movement of the Third World. On the ground, this amounted to a balancing act between the overtures of United States and Soviet Russia in order to evade an alliance with both. Domestically, its political system was one of Western parliamentary democracy, while it relied on the socialist five-year plans of Soviet Russia for the architecture of its economy. In its economic development, India accepted Soviet economic assistance for its heavy industry and relied on American aid for its agriculture. India inherited a British-style military complex, but took Russian tanks and military aircraft, even as it purchased cast-off naval vessels from Great Britain.

In 1962, this balancing act suffered a blow with the sudden Chinese attack on the North East Frontier Agency ("**NEFA**") and the Ladakh region of Kashmir just as the United States and the Soviet Union were preoccupied with the Cuban Missiles Crisis. Still, the hurried dispatch of an American Aircraft Carrier Battle Group to the Bay of Bengal deterred China from extending its offensive. Despite the conspicuous lack of any Russian assistance in this attack, India subsequently signed a Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971 that led to its military dependence on that country.

The wars with Pakistan in 1947, 1965, and 1971 made matters even more complicated. Pakistan turned to the United States and China for support as a counter to Russia's influence in India. At the turn of this century, these complications turned into a potentially serious global crisis as Pakistan became a nuclear weapons state in 1998, following India's earlier detonation of a nuclear device in 1974. Indeed, in 1998 both countries launched a series of nuclear tests and began stockpiling these weapons of mass destruction. It is noteworthy that the Indian subcontinent is the only region in the world where two antagonistic nuclear weapons states glare at each other as neighbors across the thin Line of Control in Kashmir.

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, India's national security faces two challenges. The first is the fragility of the co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in South Asia. This, of course, flows into the larger global issue of a *modus vivendi* between the Islamic Middle East and the Christian West, an issue inflamed by the War on Terror triggered by the assaults of the radical Islamic *al-Qaeda* on 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC.

In South Asia, a majoritarian Hindu India is surrounded by an arc of Islamic states. This includes its subcontinent neighbors of Pakistan and Bangladesh, but then extends to the surrounding neighborhood of Afghanistan, the five "stans" of Central Asia, and Malaysia and Indonesia in Southeast Asia. Surely, accommodations of moderation can be worked out for regional political stability and economic interdependence between India and its neighbors. Creating legal barriers to citizenship for India's Muslims, however, does not help.

On the larger global stage, the biggest challenge to India's national security is the meteoric rise of China. Its leader, Xi Jinping, has made it clear that China is intent on attaining regional supremacy in Asia and in overthrowing the Western-created global order internationally. In 2010 China surpassed Japan as Asia's leading economy and appears to be on a path to overtake the United States as the world's economic leader.

More than economic growth, China is openly challenging parliamentary democracy as the world's dominant, and preferred, form of government. With glee, it points to the increasing dysfunctions exhibited by Western-style democracies as a case for adopting the "efficient" Chinese model of one-party authoritarianism.

For India and the United States, the response to China's challenge will come from both economic interests and democratic values. Indeed, national security strategies emerge from a mix of interests and values. Interests, however, are often transitory, of the moment, while values are long-lasting and come from histories of shared beliefs and institutions.

The informal, but solidifying, alliance of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India—called the Quad—has the combined economic and military power to prevent China's domination of Asia. What gives this new consortium staying power is its shared democratic values. Japan's post-World War II democracy was shaped by an American-inspired constitution. India, Australia, and the United States—whatever their separate histories—are former colonies of Great Britain and inherited their democratic political systems as their English birthright when they became independent.

There is one final, or extra challenge to India's national security. Xi Jinping recently announced that in addition to becoming a global superpower by 2050, he is determined to wipe out absolute poverty in China by that date. India should announce a similar goal. Its Quad allies will surely want to help India secure this.

Timothy J. Lomperis

Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Saint Louis University