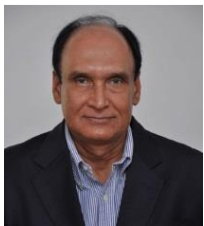


“The US and India: Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century”: Assessing the Modi-Obama Summit, June 7-8, 2016

by Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh



The Modi Factor

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a transformative and dynamic leader, driving national policies across several domains. However, nowhere is this impact more evident and remarkable than in the area of foreign policy. And if there is a relationship which he has impacted with resounding success, it is the multi-dimensional strategic partnership with the United States, which stands elevated to the apex of India's foreign policy priorities.

Soon after taking office, PM Modi began to lift India's external posture from one of hesitation and strategic ambiguity towards credibility and strategic relevance. In this process, he has established pragmatic but differentiated partnerships with major powers. With increasing self-confidence, India has moved forward to assume greater commitments towards regional and global stability.

Over a process of four US visits and seven summits with President Obama, PM Modi has also progressively erased ideological constraints and “non-aligned” India's traditional reticence towards the United States. In his own words, “Today, unlike before, India is not standing in a corner.”

Congressional Address

This changed mindset is best reflected in the tribute paid by PM Modi, at the very start of his address to the US Congress on June 8, to the fallen of the US military for their great sacrifices in the service of mankind, and his reminder that Indian soldiers have similarly fallen in distant battlefields for the same ideals of freedom and liberty which constitute a strong bond between the Indian and US democracies. With this symbolic gesture, India has finally moved beyond its conventional stance harking back to the Cold War.

And to reinforce this break from shadows of the past, PM Modi went on to declare to US Congressional leaders that “our relationship has overcome the hesitations of history” and is today defined by “comfort, candour and convergence”.

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In keeping with the growing dynamism of India's foreign and security policy, the DPG is expanding its focus areas to include India's broader regional and global role and the strategic partnerships that advance India's rise as a leading power. To support that goal, the DPG undertakes research and organizes policy interactions across a wide canvas, including strategic and geo-political issues, geo-economic issues and defence and security issues.

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Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh
Director General



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Arlington Cemetery on June 06, 2016 | Source: MEA website

In presenting his compelling vision before the US Congress, PM Modi defined the context, nature and purpose of the transformed India-US relationship. He recalled that the India-US partnership extends to the entirety of human endeavour; “in every sector of India’s forward march, I see the US as an indispensable partner”. He underlined that both nations stand to gain in great measure from advancing their relationship and remaining invested in each other’s strength, security and prosperity. In a world full of multiple transitions and growing uncertainties, India-US engagement can make a difference by promoting “cooperation not dominance”, connectivity not isolation, respect for global commons and adherence to international rules and norms. Thus, “A strong India-US partnership can anchor peace, prosperity and stability from Asia to Africa and from Indian Ocean to the Pacific,” and help ensure the security of the sea lanes of commerce and freedom of navigation of the seas.

As an equally strategic component underpinning bilateral relations, PM Modi highlighted the promise and vast potential of economic partnership covering trade, technology, investment and industry, based on complementarities that make India an “ideal partner” for US businesses.

In recalling the enormous contributions of India and America in Afghanistan, PM Modi reminded US lawmakers that globally, terrorism remains the biggest threat and “although its shadow is spreading across the world, it is incubated in India’s neighbourhood.” The need of the hour is for the US and India to deepen security cooperation and delegitimize terrorism. He commended the US Congress “for sending a clear message to those who preach and practise terrorism for political gains.”

Finally, PM Modi recognized that in the process of deepening the India-US partnership, “there would be times when we would have differing perspectives”, “but, since our interests and concerns converge, the autonomy in decision-making and diversity in our perspectives can only add value to our partnership.” This drove home a clear message to US lawmakers that to realize the full promise of an “extraordinary relationship”, there would be a need to view our journey together “with new eyes and new sensitivities”. India and the US do not have to be formal treaty allies to be on the same side of history in the 21st century.

Summit Outcomes

Coming as it did in the final months of the Obama Presidency, the main purpose of the Obama-Modi summit on June 7, 2016 was to “consolidate” the progress made in bilateral relations over the past two years. But in terms of actual outcomes, the results of the summit went beyond and marked significant advances, particularly in the areas of civil nuclear commerce and defence ties.

Eight years after the conclusion of the India-US Civil Nuclear accord, work is finally set to begin on six AP1000 reactors to be built in India by Westinghouse, with contractual arrangements to be completed with NPCIL by June 2017. That India and the US are now on the same wavelength on climate change and share the goal of the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement is a welcome development.

The scope of India-US defence cooperation is set to expand exponentially, from weapons technology transfers to wider military-to-military collaboration. In recognition of the potential of India-US defence ties as an anchor of regional and global security, the US recognized India as a “Major Defence Partner” and committed to share technologies with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners. The US will also support the Modi Government’s “Make in India” initiatives by helping develop robust defence industries and their integration into the global supply chain. New Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) working groups have been established, covering naval systems, air systems and other weapon systems.

Operationally, the finalization of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) will greatly facilitate the expansion of defence cooperation across the Indo-Pacific. With advances on maritime domain awareness through the sharing of “White Shipping” information, maritime security cooperation can progress further.

However, the completion of the long-awaited “Roadmap” for implementation of the 2015 US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region, designed to serve as a guide for maritime security cooperation in years to come will, for the present, remain an enigma as it has not been publicly disseminated. While the roadmap is clearly meant to codify specific actions under the Joint Strategic Vision, it is not quite clear what signal India and the US are sending out by keeping details shrouded in mystery. Whether it is a good idea to keep regional powers guessing remains to be seen; transparency would serve the interests of both countries better.

The summit marked further advances on counter terrorism, with a commitment to deepen collaboration against the full spectrum of terrorist threats and the finalization of an arrangement to facilitate the sharing of terrorist screening information.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama in the Oval Office on June 07, 2016 Source: MEA

The common interest of both nations in securing the global commons across the board, from the oceans to air, space to cyberspace, was further affirmed.

Challenges Ahead

Prime Minister Modi has consistently prioritized India-US economic ties and vigorously pursued US FDI, technology and knowhow, but ironically it is here that, despite affirmations to bolster relations, a hiatus remains and could widen. There is an increasing mismatch between India’s growing geo-political ambition and its continued diffidence towards trade and investment openness, including emerging mega regional arrangements like TPP which bench mark the rules and standards governing open environments for enhanced economic activity and business. With intensifying regional competition for investment, India will certainly not gain from its present stance of “we have liberalized enough”. Continuing strains over trade policy issues and the absence of progress on a BIT are only adding to long entrenched reservations of the USTR to India’s APEC membership. If India is to become an influencer of regional security, it must actively seek to become an important trade and economic partner of East and South East Asia. It has to strive for both economic and security influence across the region.

Aligning policies on economic initiatives with advances in security convergences requires the urgent attention of, and much greater direction from, PM Modi.

On India's new status as "Major Defence Partner", the implications will become clearer only when Congress legislates changes into relevant US laws controlling defence transfers and technology release, providing for specific carve outs for India. Equally on the Indian side, it is high time that long-pending "foundational agreements" are expeditiously concluded to gain access to the highest US military technologies. These agreements were negotiated and adjusted to India's comfort level a decade ago, but have remained in abeyance. India's MOD would do well to follow PM Modi's lead and overcome the "hesitations of history."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the Joint Session of the US Congress on June 08, 2016 | Source: MEA website

On geopolitical issues and security concerns related to India's western "arc of anxiety", strategic communication has progressed but there remains considerable room for improvement towards enhanced understanding and accommodation of respective viewpoints.

Quite clearly, removing residual obstacles to India-US ties in areas where challenges remain will require constant tending and diligent work by both sides, not least as the US enters the final phase of the Presidential election cycle.

Conclusion

PM Modi's decisive leadership on India-US ties has prompted President Obama to substantially scale up his Administration's strategic investment in India's rise as a leading power.

It is an open question if China, which found no mention in summit documents, will continue to pursue its recent path of unilateral assertions and coercive pressures to establish regional dominance, or move towards greater accommodation of multipolarity and respect for the security interests of other emerging powers. By dropping any references aimed specifically at China, the latest Modi-Obama joint statement provides China with some incentive to moderate its behaviour, including over the South China Sea.

In any eventuality, both India and the US can better manage Asia's ongoing power transitions through a strategic partnership that supports a balanced regional order grounded in the established principles and norms of international law.

President Obama and PM Modi have come together to establish a radically transformed India-US strategic partnership which will be consequential for the future of both countries. It remains to be seen what changes the next US President might bring to this equation, but the foundational pillars of a defining relationship which is unquestionably in the interest of both countries have been firmly established.

Technological and Strategic Implications of MTCR for India

by Brig. Arun Sahgal, PhD, Senior Visiting Fellow



India on June 6, 2016 qualified to become member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), when the deadline for objection to the Indian application expired without any member raising objections, in what is

termed as a “silent procedure”. Under this procedure, lack of objection automatically qualifies an applicant to be a member. India has been seeking to join major non-proliferation regimes for two reasons: legitimize its position as a responsible stakeholder outside the NPT and, more importantly, gain access to cutting edge technologies to enhance its strategic programmes.

MTCR is one of the four non-proliferation regimes, enacted by small groups of nations controlling sensitive technologies, as part of the global non-proliferation effort. The other three are: the **Wassenaar Arrangement**, the **Australia Group** and the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**. The Wassenaar Arrangement deals with export controls on conventional arms and related dual use technologies. Australia Group focuses on controls on technologies related to chemical and biological weapons. Lastly and most importantly, the Nuclear Suppliers Group is a grouping of 41 countries that seeks to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials, including fuels, by imposing strict controls on civil nuclear commerce.

What is MTCR?

MTCR is essentially an export control regime comprising 34 nations along with four permanent adherents, Israel, Moldavia, Slovakia and Macedonia, aimed at preventing proliferation of a range of equipment pertaining to missile development, production and operations. Prohibited materials are divided into two Categories. Category I systems include missiles, drones and cruise missiles, with payload capacities exceeding 500 Kg and ranges beyond 300 Kms. Category II includes systems not covered in Category I, such as rocket systems (including ballistic missiles systems, space launch vehicles and sounding rockets) and unmanned air vehicles (including cruise missile systems, target drones, and reconnaissance drones etc.). These are subject to the same limitations of payload weight and distance as Category I. This category in addition includes a wide range of

equipment, material, and technologies, most of which have uses other than for missiles capable of delivering WMD.

India’s relatively smooth entry to a large extent was facilitated by Italy forsaking its veto post the resolution of the Italian Marines controversy and more importantly China, which is currently at the forefront of preventing Indian entry into the NSG, not being a member.

Interestingly, China although a self appointed adherent, applied for MTCR membership in 2004, which was denied owing to its dubious export control record and commitments. China was found to be in violation of MTCR provisions in exporting missile technologies to both Pakistan and North Korea. Both countries’ missile programs have developed largely on account of Chinese support and munificence. Pakistani cruise and IRBM programmes which include ‘Babur’ and ‘Raad’, cruise missiles and ‘Ghauri’ and ‘Shaheen’ IRBMs, owe their success largely to design and technologies provided by China.

Implications of MTCR Membership for India

Post its 1998 nuclear tests, sanctions were slapped on India and critical technologies denied. To illustrate the point, three specific cases are discussed here.

First is the case of the proposed sale of “Arrow II” theatre missile defence interceptor from Israel as part of our attempt to develop an indigenous “Ballistic Missile Defence”. The transfer of both the missiles and technology was subject to US approval owing to its contributions in the development of the interceptor technology of the “Arrow II” system. The then US Administration, in keeping with its commitment to MTCR guidelines and the possible consequences of such transfers on missile defence cooperation with other states, forced Israel to decline the sale to India even though Israel was willing.

Second is the sale of cryogenic engines and technology by Russia. By the late 1980s, the US space and strategic community began to conclude that India could be pursuing a strategic ICBM program that could pose a long term threat to the United States. This programme, based on Agni IV/V series or what the Americans called the “Surya” missiles, was

thought to be using two stages of the PSLV with a strapped on third stage derived either from the French 'Victor' rocket or cryogenic engines from Russia. Russia agreed to supply India both engines and 'upper stage' technology (Geo Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle or GSLV). The US, concerned that this will provide India with a powerful ICBM capability with ranges far exceeding 5000 Km and with the ability to strike the continental US, slapped sanctions on both India and Russia in 1990. These were lifted only in 1993 after Russia agreed not to supply cryogenic technology to India and restrict the sale to only a few cryogenic engines. It is another matter that this allowed India to master cryogenic technology on its own and today it is in a position to launch heavy satellites into space that in future could include launching manned space missions.

Technology Perspective

Before specifying technological gains for India, it is important to highlight obligations under the regime. First is the issue concerning export controls. India will have to not only abide by export control norms specified in the regime but more importantly bring changes to its own export control laws to meet MTCR obligations. It could be a double edged issue which on the one hand could restrict Indian exports to non MTCR countries and on the other it will make technological access easy owing to complementary obligations and export control commitments.

Once India is admitted into the Group, all such cases of transfers of technology will not face sanctions and technically India will be in a position to import and export missile and drone technologies. This does not, however, mean blanket availability: countries controlling technologies will make both political and strategic judgments in terms of the impact of the technologies and the end user concerns and in the final analysis this will be a predominantly political decision informed by larger geo-strategic calculations.

It is in the above context, namely the mutuality of strategic interests and growing India – US defence relations as a major defence partner, that could assist India in getting cutting edge technologies which would not have been possible earlier. To highlight the issue, two specific cases are cited below.

India has been developing long endurance drones, namely "Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE)" and "High Altitude Long Endurance Drones (HALE)" called Rustom I and II, with on station endurance capabilities from weeks to a month. India has been facing some critical technological issues in their development. With India now becoming a member of the MTCR group and even more importantly a major defence partner of the US, it will be possible to get these technologies from the US or to collaborate with other MTCR partners in seeking those technologies.

Next is cruise missile technology. No doubt India is justifiably proud of its supersonic India – Russia jointly developed "BRAHMOS" cruise missile. However, its range had to be perforce curtailed to under 300 Km to meet the norms of the MTCR as India was not a member. Today, it is the only operational cruise missile apart from the limited import of Klub missiles for the navy which too adhere to MTCR norms. Pakistan on the other hand, shorn of any such restrictions, developed 400 Km range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LACM) Babur and 700 Km range Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) Raad with active Chinese support and technology, both being non members. Similarly, China has developed multiple air, sea and land attack cruise missiles with ranges of over 1500 Km that today form an integral part of its AA/AD strategy.

In India's case, the indigenous development of the "Nirbhay" cruise missile of proposed 1000 Km plus range, has been delayed owing to several technological limitations. Theoretically, it will now be possible to bridge these technological gaps with technology transfers from the US and others.

Another issue is the proposed sale of "BRAHMOS" to Vietnam and other countries. With both India and Russia being member states, it will draw little attention. To that extent, this will help in meeting Indian arms export targets, an important aspect of the current governments' defence policy. No doubt, however, that such a sale will be subject of larger geo-strategic calculations, in particular regional implications. This is something on which India alone will take a call, based on its regional interests. The China factor as it is sought to be played up in the above specific sale, has little relevance as China itself has not hesitated in providing similar and more lethal weapons to Pakistan and other Indian neighbours.

There has also been much hype in the media about the MTCR membership clearing the way for sale of Predator unmanned aerial vehicles to India. Here, two issues are important. One, as mentioned above, if the indigenous drone Rustom's

technological problems can be resolved under DTI or other bilateral initiatives, then there may be perhaps a requirement at best to buy a limited number of Unmanned Aerial Combat Vehicles, either of the Predator variety or the Heron TP from Israel as an interim arrangement. Indian interest should not be so much in a particular system but in technology. There is, however, no doubt that India needs multiple varieties and ranges of drones whose development can best be expedited through easier technology imports.

Finally, it is important to note that admission into MTCR is a major development that will give a fillip to India's indigenous missile and space programs. More importantly, it recognizes India as a credible stakeholder. Actual transfer of technologies, nevertheless, will remain subject to a number of political constraints and balance of power equations. To that extent, MTCR only opens doors and needs to be seen as a technology access facilitator.

South Asia update

by Rana Banerji, Senior Fellow



Pakistan

On May 21, Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Mansour was killed in a US drone strike near Nushki, in Baluchistan, while returning from Iran. A Pakistani passport in the name of Mohd Wali was found near

the charred remains of his body. The Pakistani authorities appeared shell-shocked and failed to respond officially and acknowledge his death for more than 24 hours. Though the Taliban quickly appointed Haibatullah Akhundzada as their new leader, papering over factional splits by bringing in Mullah Omar's son Yaqub and Serajuddin Haqqani as his two deputies, the drone attack signified crossing of some mutually accepted 'red lines', so far adhered to in the 'war against terror'.

Not only was this the first US drone foray inside Baluchistan (though actually perhaps conducted from across the Afghan border), it signified acceptance of a new policy giving the U.S. military greater ability to accompany and enable Afghan forces battling a resilient Taliban insurgency more proactively on the battlefield.

Under this new policy, the Commander, Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, U.S. General John Nicholson, will be

able to decide when it is appropriate for American troops to accompany conventional Afghan forces into the field - something they have so far only been doing with Afghan special operations forces. Now they could be employed "in those select instances in which their engagement can enable strategic effects on the battlefield", though not in every "day to day mission".

Pak Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali belatedly held a press conference on May 24, mainly to rant against the US drone attack and launch a fault finding drive against Immigration and NADRA (National Data Regulatory Authority) officials for the false documents issued to Mullah Mansour.

On the pretext of orchestrating protests against the US drone attack in Baluchistan, the Jamaat ud Dawaa of Hafiz Mohd Saeed was allowed to revive the Difa-e- Pakistan Council (DPC), a gathering of Islamic radical groups in Islamabad on May 31, casting doubts afresh on the military establishment's professed intention of curbing activities of 'different' types of militants.

With Nawaz Sharif proceeding to the UK almost surreptitiously for his open heart surgery (May 31), there appeared to be a vacuum in governance. A media leak on June 09 (Samaa TV) revealed however, that Nawaz Sharif

had kept Gen. Raheel Sharif informed about his medical condition and impending travel/long absence. On June 07, the Army Chief called in Defence Minister, Khwaja Asif, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz and Special Assistant Tareq Fatemi to a Formation Commanders' Conference at Army Headquarters to discuss the security situation. Intriguingly, Interior Minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali was not invited.

The annual budget was presented on June 03 by Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar. It contained the expected 11% percent increase in allocations to the Defence sector and avoided taxing the rural rich or elites benefitting from the Services sector.

Afghanistan

On May 24, the Angoor Adda border check post, 35 km west of Wana, district headquarters of South Waziristan agency, was handed over by Pakistan to the Afghanistan government, ostensibly with 'strategic intent to improve border management' (Inter Services Public Relations-ISPR). The Afghan authorities closed the border there soon afterwards.

Border trouble continued at the main land border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan at the Torkham border crossing in Khyber Agency as Afghan border guards objected to Pakistani attempts to fence some areas in mid-May, 2016. Subsequently, Pakistan announced that all Afghans crossing into Pakistan would require passports and visas to come in. This measure has created unprecedented difficulties for poor tribal villagers (especially Shinwaris), petty traders and Afghan refugees travelling to meet their relatives on either side. If persisted with, these restrictions will only boost dislike of Pakistan among Afghans and add impetus to the growing stream of Afghan medical tourists into India.

Tensions escalated further at Torkham on June 12-13, with firing exchanges between Afghan and Pakistani troops leading to deaths of an Afghan border guard and Major Ali Jawad Khan Changezi, a Hazara officer from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the Pakistani side. Pakistan claimed the firing was 'unprovoked' from the Afghan side, even as the Pakistanis were constructing a gate on their side of the 'border'. An angry Interior Minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali, alleged that 'Afghanistan was playing into the hands of some other country', which 'was intolerable and unjustified', even as Pakistan 'was making sincere efforts' for border management.

On June 10, in what appeared to be an assuaging mission, Richard Olson, US Special Representative for Af-Pak, General Nicholson and Peter Lavoy, Security Adviser to President Obama called on General Raheel Sharif, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, Rawalpindi. They also met Pak Foreign Policy Adviser Sartaj Aziz. Complaining that the US drone strike in Baluchistan was 'counter-productive', negating the gains of the Zarb-e Azb operation, Raheel lamented that the drone attack had 'impacted mutual trust and respect' between the two countries (ISPR). He reiterated the need for "all stakeholders to understand Pakistan's challenges" with regard to the porous border, inter-tribal linkages and the decades-old presence of over 3 million refugees. According to him, "blaming Pakistan for instability in Afghanistan was unfortunate". The Pakistan side reportedly urged the US to eliminate Tehrik e Taliban sanctuaries inside Afghanistan and try to take out Mullah Fazlullah through drone attacks there.

Bangladesh

Under pressure to curb a wave of extremist violence that has resulted in the deaths of more than 40 people over the past 12 months, mainly religious minorities and secular bloggers, the Bangladesh government resumed (June 11) a countrywide security operation, detaining more than 5,000 suspected Islamic fundamentalist supporters belonging to Ansar ul Islam (Aul) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). Thousands of policemen and members of paramilitary units are taking part in the crackdown.

The political opposition, however, complained that the law-enforcement agencies were rounding up opposition activists on this pretext. Though the government has denied this, several suspected Islamist militants in police custody have reportedly died in shootouts. Human rights groups have warned that such arrests and the weakening of the opposition could risk bringing greater instability to the country.

Backgrounders: Modi-Obama Summit outcomes; India at Shangari-La Dialogue 2016; Malabar Exercise 2016

by Tanzoom Ahmad, Antara Ghosal Singh and Shreyas Deshmukh, Research Associates

Modi-Obama Summit outcomes

by *Tanzoom Ahmad*



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States has added renewed impetus and highlighted a new sense of purpose in India-US relations. PM Modi, using his intuitive deal-making capability, has successfully forged a strong strategic partnership with the United States. The India-US Joint Statement on June 7 defined the following eight major areas of collaboration between the two countries: advancing global leadership on climate and clean energy; clean energy finance; strengthening global non-proliferation; securing land, maritime, air, space and cyber domains; standing together against violent extremism; bolstering economic and trade ties; expanding cooperation in science and technology; and continued global leadership in achieving sustainable development goals. While each of these eight areas has significant potential for collaboration, the latest India-US Summit has paved the way for three immediate advancements.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's US Visit, June 06-08, 2016

Source: MEA Website

The first and most significant advancement was concretisation of civil nuclear energy cooperation between the two countries and the integration of India into the global nuclear order pursuant to the India-US civil nuclear accord of 2008. Both leaders announced the start of collaboration

between India's nuclear operator NPCIL and the Toshiba owned US based company Westinghouse in constructing six AP1000 nuclear reactors in Andhra Pradesh. This will be India's first nuclear reactor contract with the US, almost 50 years after construction of the nuclear power plant at Tarapur as a joint venture. At a strategic level, this collaboration is historical, as it puts an end to the prolonged disagreements between Delhi and Washington that surfaced after India's unwillingness to sign the 1970 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

The second development is cooperation in the area of defence: the formal announcement of India as a "major defence partner" for the US strengthened the fundamental framework for the India-US strategic partnership. This designation means that US will give India the same level of access to defence technologies that it gives to some of its closest allies. The US is also committed to modernise India's arms industry by providing technological support to defence sector manufacturing. In the past, India has missed two opportunities of building such a relationship: the first when Nehru and Kennedy failed to establish a defence partnership post India's border conflict with China in 1962, and the second in 2005 when the two sides announced a 10 year defence cooperation framework but lack of political will in the UPA government prevented India from taking concrete advantage.

The third important outcome of the visit is the direction given by both leaders to the security establishments of India and the US to identify new specific areas of collaboration in the maritime security domain under the Roadmap for the Joint Strategic Vision of January 2015.

India at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2016

-by Antara Ghosal Singh



Since its inception in 2002, the Shangri-La Dialogue, organized by the London-based think-tank International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in Singapore, has emerged as a premier, high-level, defence and security forum in the Asia-Pacific region. The dialogue attracts regular participation from defence ministers and policy makers from important nations like Japan, China, India, Australia, United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), and is thus often referred to as the ‘Davos of International Security’.



DEFENCE MINISTER MANOHAR PARRIKAR AT THE SHANGRILA DIALOGUE, 04 JUNE, 2016 (COURTESY: IISS)

Indian participation in this high profile security forum so far has been rather inconsistent; the last cabinet level representation from India was in the year 2007. This was followed by several ‘no-shows’ or lower level representation from the Indian Ministry of Defence, which invited much criticism from the strategic community, both in India and abroad. However, Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar’s participation at the latest edition of the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 3-5, has been well-received as a welcome development, testifying to the activist foreign policy agenda of the Modi government and the seriousness of India’s “Act East” policy.

One of the key highlights of Parrikar’s Shangri-La speech was India’s strong endorsement of the idea of the ‘Indo-Pacific’. As is known, the geo-strategic framework of ‘Indo-Pacific’ has found many takers in the official policy-making circuit of the US, Japan and Australia. However, India’s engagement with ‘Indo-Pacific’ discourses, has so far remained low-key and unofficial.

It was the Joint Statement issued by India and Japan titled “Vision 2025” in December 2015 where the idea of the Indo-Pacific found its first official mention. However, at Shangri-La 2016, ‘Indo-Pacific’ seemed to be the central theme of Defence Minister Parrikar’s speech where he highlighted the rising strategic significance of the region, shared PM Modi’s Indo-Pacific vision of “S.A.G.A.R or Security and Growth for all in the Region” and elaborated India’s growing contributions to the region as a net security provider. Parrikar further emphasised India’s traditional links with countries in the South China Sea (SCS) and the commercial importance of its waters for India, while expressing concern over the territorial disputes in the region which have the potential to escalate into military conflict.

Yet another highlight of Parrikar’s Shangri-La speech was its carefully nuanced nature. Parrikar, much like the US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter and Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani, “firmly” upheld the principles of freedom of navigation

and overflight in the South China Sea and urged all parties to opt for the peaceful resolution of disputes through legal means and in accordance with international law, without the threat or use of force. He also welcomed non-Asian countries' interest and presence in the Indo-Pacific region while stressing the need for a robust regional security mechanism "to promote and maintain seamless connectivity stretching across the Indian and Pacific Oceans". However, India's defence minister refrained from commenting directly on the recent Freedom of Navigation Operations carried out by the US in the South China Sea. Neither was there any mention of the international arbitration process initiated by the Philippines and calls for the binding nature of its ruling on China. At the same time, Defence Minister Parrikar emphasised India's total commitment to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to maintain legal order in the waters of the South China Sea.

Thirdly, in another development of strategic significance, Parrikar's Shangri-La participation was closely followed up by a one-on-one interaction with US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter on the side-lines of the forum and a two-day visit to Vietnam – both aimed at strengthening India's defence ties with the concerned countries.

To sum up, India's high-level participation in Shangri-La 2016 can be largely interpreted in terms of its desire to strengthen its Indo-Pacific credentials and its willingness to partner with like-minded countries with which it shares an overarching convergence in interests and concerns.

Malabar Exercise- 2016

by Shreyas D. Deshmukh



The Malabar Exercise is today a trilateral naval exercise conducted by the navies of India, Japan and the US. The primary aim of this exercise is to increase interoperability amongst the three navies and develop common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations.



Nimitz class super Carrier USS John C. Stennis with Destroyer Squadron in coy CVN 74 on the way for Malabar 2016, on June 09.

Source: Indian Navy Twitter (@indiannavy)

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The Malabar Exercise was initiated in 1992 between the Indian and the US Navies. Complexity of operations and the level of participation have increased steadily in successive editions of this exercise since then. From 1992 to 1998, three exercises were conducted by the US and Indian navies. The US suspended exercises after 1998 because of India's nuclear tests. However, after the 9/11 terror attack, the US renewed its military contacts and reinitiated Malabar exercises from 2002, and this has remained as annual exercise since then. Until 2006, all Malabar exercises were conducted in the Indian Ocean. The first India-US exercise conducted outside the Indian Ocean was in April 2007 in the Western Pacific near the Japanese island of Okinawa. Since then, Malabar has been held alternately off India and the Western Pacific. In September 2007, after China objected to a multilateral Malabar Exercise held in the Bay of Bengal including the navies of India, US, Japan, Australia and Singapore, India restricted the annual event to a bilateral exercise with the US when held off the Indian coast.

In the 19th edition of the exercise, conducted in the Bay of Bengal in October 2015, Japan participated as a permanent partner. This year's 20th edition of the Malabar exercise is significant because of its location in the Western Pacific and the changed regional security environment in the region. In 2013, China had unilaterally established an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea. Since then, maritime territorial disputes have also raised tensions in the South China Sea.

Malabar 2016 is being conducted from June 10th to 17th in the Pacific Ocean near Japan's Okinawa Islands. The scope of this year's exercise includes 'professional interaction in harbour and a diverse range of activity at sea, including complex surface, sub-surface and air operations'. INS Sahyadri and INS Satpura, which are guided missile stealth frigates, INS Shakti, a modern fleet tanker and INS Kirch, a guided missile corvette are representing the Indian Navy. The US Navy is represented by ships from Combined Task Force- 70 (CTF-70) of the USN 7th fleet, which is based at Yokosuka, Japan. The CTF includes the aircraft carrier USS John C Stennis (CVN 74), Ticonderoga class Cruiser USS Mobile Bay and Arleigh Burke class destroyers USS Stockdale and USS Chung Hoon, all with embarked helicopters. In addition, one Los Angeles class nuclear powered fast attack submarine (SSN) and carrier wing aircraft are also participating in the exercise. From the Japanese side JS Hyuga, a helicopter carrier with SH 60 K integral helicopters, and P-3C Long Range Maritime Patrol aircraft, besides other advanced warships for specific parts of the exercise, are participating.



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