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# PSIR

## OPTIONAL COURSE 2023

**By Sumit Sir & Team OnlyIAS**

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[video.onlyias.in](https://video.onlyias.in)


[info@onlyias.com](mailto:info@onlyias.com)


[+ 91-7007-931-912](tel:+91-7007-931-912)

# The return of nuclear weapons on the global platform

## - C Raja Mohan

### Introduction

An international conference to review the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty concluded at the United Nations in New York last week without a consensus document. Given the growing great power conflict today, that was not unexpected.

Surprisingly, though, the NPT review elicited little interest in Delhi. India, one of the world's nuclear weapon powers, ought to be paying a lot more attention to the international nuclear discourse that is acquiring new dimensions and taking a fresh look at its own civilian and military nuclear programmes.

### India and NPT-

There was a time when Delhi used to be hypersensitive to what was said at NPT conferences. The parties to the NPT, which came into force in 1970, undertake a review of the treaty's implementation every five years. The Tenth Review Conference, scheduled for 2020, was delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, the US attempt to roll back India's nuclear and missile programmes generated serious concerns in Delhi. India responded with a diplomatic strategy that sought to deflect external pressures.
- At the same time, Delhi also debated whether India should test nuclear weapons and declare itself a nuclear weapon power.
- After the nuclear tests in May 1998, India's focus shifted to managing the consequences of that decision — including global economic sanctions.
- The historic India-US civil nuclear initiative of July 2005 finally produced a framework that brought to an end Delhi's extended conflict with the NPT system.
- At the heart of the deal was the separation of India's civil and military nuclear programmes. The consummation of the India-US nuclear deal a few years later gave Delhi the freedom to develop its nuclear arsenal and resume civilian nuclear cooperation with the rest of the world which was blocked since India's first nuclear test in May 1974.
- There was a fierce political debate — often slipping into the "headless chicken" mode — in Delhi on the terms of the nuclear engagement with the US. Many in Delhi argued that India was sacrificing the autonomy of its nuclear programme and its foreign policy.

### What's the debate about NPT today-

- A decade-and-a-half later, it is easy to ask what the political fuss was all about. India has not bought a single reactor from the US. Nor has it become a much feared "junior partner" to the US. India's independent foreign policy appears to be thriving.
- Ironically, as India's atomic isolation eased after 2008, India's nuclear debate lost much of its urgency.

## New emerging challenges of global nuclear order-

The **failure** of the Tenth Review Conference, however, does reveal many of the **new challenges** facing the global nuclear order today and their implications for India.

1. First, is the **deepening divide between the main sponsors of the NPT** back in 1970 – **America and Russia**. Even at the height of the Cold War, there was always one major area of cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union — **strong support for the NPT**.
  - Most review conferences were **jointly managed** by close diplomatic coordination between Washington and Moscow.
  - More often than not, the **nuclear problems of the Middle East involving Israel and Iran prevented successful outcomes** at the quinquennial NPT review conferences.
  - The **Ninth Review conference in 2015, for example, ended without an agreement** because of major differences over establishing a **Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction**.
  - Russia objected to critical references in the statement to Moscow’s military control over the **Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in the southeast of Ukraine**. The war in Ukraine has begun to envelop Zaporizhzhia, where the two armies are locked in combat and are raising the prospect of a horrible nuclear emergency.
2. Second, the non-nuclear state parties usually complained about the **lack of progress in implementing the disarmament provisions of the NPT**. The situation today is worsened by the **absence of any dialogue** between the nuclear powers on arms control.
  - Rather than reduce the salience of nuclear weapons, the major powers **now put greater emphasis on their strategic utility**.
3. Third, the **invasion of a non-nuclear weapon state, Ukraine, by a nuclear weapon power, Russia**, has generated a whole series of new questions. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decision to **put his nuclear forces on alert** and threaten the use of nuclear weapons has sent a shiver down the spine of those who are on the periphery of nuclear weapon states.
  - To be sure, Russia has since **walked back on the nuclear threat**. Putin has reaffirmed that “**a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought**,” senior Russian officials reiterated this message on the opening day of the NPT conference in early August.
  - Russia may have put its nuclear sword away, but the impact of Moscow flashing it early in the Ukraine war has been significant. For those in Asia, **who worry about China’s growing assertiveness**, “Ukraine could well be the future of Asia”.
  - There are real fears that **China might decide to flex its nuclear muscle while seizing the territory of its neighbours**. America’s Asian allies worry about the US’s ability to reinforce the “**nuclear umbrella**”.
  - **East Asian** policymakers are debating various options. These include **building one’s own atomic weapons**, sharing the use of US nuclear assets, developing nuclear-powered

submarines, building powerful long-range conventional counterstrike capabilities, and strengthening missile defences.

4. Fourth, **China's political campaign against the AUKUS arrangement** has found some resonance in South East Asia. When the **US and UK announced their plans to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered attack submarines** in September 2021, China argued that the agreement violates the provisions of the NPT.
  - Although the **NPT permits non-nuclear states to develop nuclear naval propulsion**, Beijing persisted with the campaign.
  - In New York, this month **Indonesia and Malaysia** raised concerns about the implications of the AUKUS deal for the NPT.
5. Fifth, nuclear power is coming back into reckoning around the world amidst the growing **challenge of climate change**. The draft final statement noted that “nuclear technologies can **contribute to addressing climate change**, mitigating and adapting to its consequences, and monitoring its impact”.
  - Separately, a **group of 12 countries led by the US, UK, Japan, and South Korea** emphasized the **importance of nuclear power** in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

### What is its impact on India-

1. One, **India must find ways to end the current stasis in its civilian nuclear power generation**, especially at a time when Delhi has outlined an ambitious programme to reduce the share of fossil fuels in its energy consumption. India, which commissioned **Asia's first nuclear power station more than 50 years ago, is stuck today** with a total generating capacity of barely 7,000 MW.
2. India's historic **civil nuclear initiative** was meant to **open up international collaboration** to boost the production of atomic electric power. But the enormous political and diplomatic energy that went into ending India's nuclear isolation was squandered by the disastrous 2010 **Civil Nuclear Liability Act** which has made it impossible for private players — internal and external — to contribute to the programme. **Revisiting that law is now an urgent imperative** for any Indian strategy to rapidly raise the contribution of nuclear power to India's energy mix.
3. India must also **recognize and adapt to the return of nuclear weapons as major instruments of great power military strategy**. Delhi must ask itself if its nuclear weapons can deter **China's expanding atomic arsenal**.
4. After 1998, India premised its strategy on building “**credible minimum deterrence**”. The time has come to **reflect on the “credible” side of that strategy and redefine what the ‘minimum’ might be**.

## New Delhi's balancing act

### - C Raja Mohan

#### Introduction

"India wishes to sit on top of the mountain to watch the tigers fight." This was the assessment of a Chinese scholar reviewing India's approach to the unfolding conflict in Taiwan. In a column for the Global Times, Liu Zongyi argues that India will be a major beneficiary if the US can contain China in East Asia and the Western Pacific.

#### Russia-Ukraine conflict angle-

Some Chinese might extend the argument to Europe as well — that the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began six months ago this week, suits Delhi. The conflict between the Kremlin and the West, they might believe, weakens both sides and would eventually benefit a rising India. There is no doubt that both Russia and the West are wooing India to support them in this conflict.

- That kind of hyper-realist Chinese thinking, however, has not been part of India's strategic culture. In fact, independent India has been far too idealistic. Nothing illustrates it more than Delhi's enduring illusion of building an "Asian Century" in partnership with Beijing.

#### China's angle in the balancing role-

- At a time when China was isolated in Asia and the world in the 1950s and 1960s, India campaigned with the rest of the world to engage with China. It sought to serenade China before a skeptical Asian audience at Bandung in 1955.
- Delhi also insisted that Beijing is the rightful owner of a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. India pursued for long a "China-first strategy" despite persistent evidence that Delhi's contradictions with Beijing are structural and not amenable to easy resolution.
- Delhi's reluctance to come to terms with that reality has cost India dearly. The Galwan clash two years ago, which followed China tearing apart three decades of peace and tranquility on the disputed frontier, appears to have made Delhi wiser. It certainly has cured at least parts of the Indian establishment of chronic Sinophilia.

#### Consequences on India because of Ukraine war-

- Returning to Liu's geopolitics, there is no mountain for India to retreat to and watch the US, Russia, and China tear each other apart. In today's deeply integrated world, great power conflict has systemic effects and consequences for everyone.
- The Russian war in Ukraine and the Western sanctions in response have roiled global oil markets, disrupted the food supply chains and pushed the global economy into a fresh crisis.

- For India, which was just about **recovering from the devastating economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic**, there has been no joy in watching the war in Ukraine. It has no reason to wish for another great power war in the East.
- If the current tensions around Taiwan boil over into a shooting war, the **global economy will sink even faster and take India down with it**.
- **Taiwan's geopolitical location**, its special place in US-China relations, and its centrality to global manufacturing supply chains will make **a war in Asia far more consequential than the European one**.

### **Opportunity for India-**

- Liu argues that **"China's preoccupation with the East China Sea, the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea"**, will reduce Beijing's "attention toward the Indian Ocean". "India would take this opportunity **to strengthen its maritime power** and consolidate its advantages in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region."
- That **China's problems on its eastern frontier would open up strategic opportunities for India**, however, is a **myth**.
- **China's conflict with the US over Taiwan during the late 1950s** was also the period when **Sino-Indian tensions** over Tibet turned into the 1962 war.
- China's **growing problems in the Western Pacific** over the last decade have not seen any diminution of Beijing's ambitions in the Indian Ocean. China now has the **political will, economic muscle, and growing naval capability** to pursue a two-ocean strategy.
- There is also an Indian flip side to Liu's argument — a **China locked in a conflict with the US might be more accommodative of India's concerns**. This too has been a persistent but unrealized hope in Delhi. India's problems with China have less to do with the US policies in Asia, but everything to do with their **intractable bilateral disputes**.
- Sino-US relations have **oscillated** wildly in the last 75 years, but that has had **little impact on the resolution of the clash of Chinese and Indian territorial nationalisms**. That problem has been worsened by the **growing power gap** between Beijing and its neighbours, including India.
- Beijing does not believe it must make nice to a Delhi that keeps political distance from Washington. China is convinced it now has **the power to redeem its historic territorial claims vis a vis India and other Asian neighbours**. Beijing also believes that the West is in terminal decline and the changing Asian balance of power allows China to set the terms of engagement with the US in its own Favour.

### **Changing real geo-politics-**

- **Russia seems to share this assumption with China** and the two have now proclaimed an **alliance without limits**. Like Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin has bet that a **weakened West** will be unable to stop the Russian attempt to restructure the European security order.
- Both Putin and Xi have been hailed for their **great "political genius"**. But both of them may have **over-estimated their own power and under-estimated the resilience of the West**.
- At the root of this miscalculation may be the kind of **geopolitical thinking articulated by Liu Zongyi**. Six months after the invasion of Ukraine, it is difficult to see how Putin's Russia can come

out victorious, whichever way Moscow defines “victory”. Xi’s China too will find it hard to emerge unscathed from an escalating confrontation with the US.

- In Europe, the Russian aggression has compelled Finland and Sweden to join the US-led NATO. Putin has also put an end to Germany’s neutralist temptations.
- In Asia, Japan has embarked on its own rearmament and is strengthening its alliance with the United States and is eager to build regional coalitions against China.
- Unrealistic external calculus and an authoritarian political bubble at home have seen Putin and Xi squander their national gains over the last three decades. The costs of overweening geopolitical ambitions in Moscow and Beijing are just coming into sharp relief.

## Conclusion

Liu Zongyi’s suggestion that Delhi can sit back and watch the great powers bleed each other imputes the Chinese way of thinking to India. Delhi, however, must find its own way to manage the current turbulence in the triangular relationship between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing.

A better appreciation of past errors in misjudging the frequent shifts in great power relations should help Delhi more adroitly navigate the current dynamic. The discourse on India’s current diplomacy focuses on Delhi’s “positional play” among the great powers. But there is no mistaking the essential “strategic play” that must guide India in the coming years — reducing the power gap with China, building the capacity to deter Beijing’s aggressive actions on its land and maritime frontiers, and rebalancing the Indo-Pacific.



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[+ 91-7007-931-912](tel:+91-7007-931-912)

# India, Bangladesh, Pakistan: What east can teach west

## - C Raja Mohan

### Introduction

The news from India's western frontier with Pakistan is rarely positive. There is little expectation of change as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Independence and mark the partition of the Subcontinent. The **persistence of cross-border terrorism, the conflict over Kashmir, the militarization of the frontier, little connectivity, poor trade relations and no formal inter-governmental negotiations** paint a bleak picture of the India-Pak border.

### What's the scenario after 75 years of partition-

- The **inability** of successive generations of Indian and Pakistani leaders **to bring a closure to Partition** in the west makes the talk of a "100-year war" credible.
- The only trend that can counter this pessimism is the **good news from India's eastern frontier with Bangladesh** — that it is indeed possible to transcend the bitter legacies of Partition and build a **mutually-beneficial relationship**.
- If we can do it in the east, where the **sources and consequences of Partition were far more complex**, it **should not be impossible to normalize the western frontier** — hopefully well before 2047.
- In contrast to the talk of a 100-year war between India and Pakistan, Prime Ministers Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi have proclaimed a **"Sonali Adhyay" or "golden chapter"** in bilateral relations.
- Cynics would discount that rhetoric; pessimists continue to see the cup as half empty. But there is no question that the **bilateral relationship dominated by endless contentions at the turn of the millennium has transformed into a very productive partnership**. For both Delhi and Dhaka, the reinvention of the bilateral relationship has been one of the most significant successes of their recent foreign policies.

### Rebuilding of ties between India and Bangladesh-

- The work on rebuilding ties began in **earnest in 2010**, when **Sheikh Hasina came to India** after taking charge of Bangladesh as prime minister for the second time in 2009.
- Hasina and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh embarked on an **extraordinary effort to address most bilateral problems**—including border settlement, river water sharing, cross-border terrorism, market access to Bangladeshi goods, and connectivity.
- With impressive progress in many of these areas, **Singh travelled to Dhaka in September 2011**; but **West Bengal chief Mamata Banerjee rained on the parade by refusing to join** the delegation at the last minute and **pulling the plug on the agreement to share the Teesta waters**.
- The visit was **salvaged by other agreements**, including the settlement of the land boundary that had been pending for decades.
- But the Manmohan Singh government **struggled to get Parliament to approve the boundary settlement**. Part of the problem was the rejection of the settlement by the main opposition party — the BJP.



- Recognizing the **strategic significance of a settled boundary with Bangladesh**, Modi reversed the position of the BJP after he became the PM in 2014. He won support for the shift from the BJP units in Bengal and Assam, and **got parliamentary approval in 2015**.
- Modi also accepted the **award of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague** on settling the **maritime boundary dispute** between Delhi and Dhaka. Bangladesh had taken the issue to international arbitration.
- In normal circumstances, the bureaucrats in the two capitals would have argued for another couple of decades without settling the dispute. But **Delhi moved decisively to accept the verdict** and removed another long-standing territorial dispute in bilateral relations.
- While the **unresolved land and maritime territorial disputes constitute one of the main problems in India's relations with Pakistan**, their resolution with Bangladesh transformed the context of bilateral relations.

### **Building of political trust-**

- Cooperation on **cross-border terrorism** that began a couple of years earlier helped build much-needed **political trust between the two national security establishments**.
- The incremental **opening of the Indian market for Bangladeshi goods** and Dhaka's willingness to let Indian goods transit to India's northeast boosted bilateral relations. The last few years have seen **bilateral ties grow rapidly**.
- On the **connectivity front**, we have seen a substantive movement towards **reopening the border** that was largely shut down after the 1965 war between India and Pakistan. **Trans-boundary bus services, reopening of railway lines, and the revitalization of waterways** are restoring connectivity in the eastern subcontinent that was severed.
- **Bilateral trade volumes have grown** by leaps and bounds in recent years touching nearly **\$16 billion last year**. Bangladesh is **one of India's top export markets**.
- Meanwhile, Bangladesh has become one of the fastest-growing economies in the world and has **overtaken Pakistan by a good margin in South Asia**.
- India and Bangladesh have also developed **inter-connected power grids facilitating Dhaka's purchase of power from India**. It currently buys about **1200 MW of power** from India and an additional **1500 MW is in the pipeline**.

### **Role of N. East states in building of India-Ban relations-**

- The progress on the India-Bangla front could have been more expansive if the governments of West Bengal were **enthusiastic about regionalism** in the eastern Subcontinent. Neither the Left parties nor the Trinamool Congress that have ruled West Bengal for so long have had a transformative agenda for regional cooperation in the eastern subcontinent.
- Today the northeastern states have realized the **immense benefits of deeper economic engagement with Bangladesh** — none of them more important than **ending the geographic isolation of the region**.
- **Assam** today is at the forefront of imagining a bolder agenda for deepening economic ties with Bangladesh.

### **No reciprocity with Pakistan-**

- For India, the expansive partnership with Bangladesh has significantly **eased its security challenges and laid the basis for peace and prosperity in the eastern subcontinent.** For Bangladesh, discarding the temptation to balance India and embark on a cooperative strategy has allowed Dhaka to **focus on its economic growth** and lift itself in the regional and global hierarchy.
- There were efforts by India to **replicate these kinds of moves with Pakistan**; but Islamabad and Rawalpindi have **not been ready to accept** even the simplest of initiatives on trade, connectivity, or trans-border energy cooperation. India has had no choice but to live with the sovereign choices of the Pakistani leadership.
- Rather than regret the **unfortunate dynamic on the western frontier** and bemoan Pakistan's **reluctance to let the SAARC become a vehicle for regional cooperation,** Delhi should focus on **consolidating the "golden moment" in the east.**
- There is **no shortage of issues in the east** that need to be addressed by Delhi and Dhaka. They include **protecting the rights of minorities, sharing the waters of more than 50 rivers, promoting cross-border investments, managing one of the longest borders in the world, facilitating trade and preventing illegal migration, countering forces of religious extremism, promoting maritime security in the Bay of Bengal, expanding defence cooperation, and mitigating climate change in the shared regional environment** to name a few.

## **Conclusion**

Many of these issues are alive and continuously **threaten to destabilize the growing strategic partnership.** Solving problems and tending to the relationship **must necessarily be a continuous effort rather than episodic.** Nor can Delhi and Dhaka take each other for granted and let domestic politics overwhelm the logic of bilateral cooperation. The 75th anniversary of independence offers Delhi and Dhaka a special opportunity to elevate the ambition for their bilateral partnership.

## **International Relations Theory Suggests Great-Power War Is Coming** - Matthew Kroenig

### **Introduction**

For decades, international relations theory **provided reasons for optimism**—that the major powers could **enjoy mostly cooperative relations** and resolve their differences short of armed conflict.

Realist IR theories **focus on power,** and for decades, they maintained that the **bipolar world of the Cold War and the unipolar post-Cold War world dominated by the United States were relatively simple systems not prone to wars of miscalculation.** They also held that nuclear weapons raised the cost of conflict and made war among the major powers unthinkable.

### **What did Liberals say-**

- Meanwhile, liberal theorists argued that a **triumvirate of causal variables (institutions, interdependence, and democracy) facilitated cooperation and mitigated conflict.**
- The dense set of **international institutions and agreements** (the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, etc.) established after World War II—and **expanded and depended on since the end of the Cold War**—provided forums for major powers to work out their differences peacefully.

- Moreover, **economic globalization made armed conflict too costly**. Why quarrel when business is good and everyone is getting rich? Finally, according to this theory, **democracies are less likely to fight and more likely to cooperate**, and the major waves of democratization around the world over the past 70 years have made the globe a more peaceful place.

### **Views of constructivist scholars-**

- At the same time, constructivist scholars explained **how new ideas, norms, and identities have transformed international politics in a more positive direction**.
- In the past, **piracy, slavery, torture, and wars of aggression** were common practices. Over the years, however, **strengthening human rights norms and taboos against the use of weapons of mass destruction** placed guardrails on international conflict.

Unfortunately, nearly all of these pacifying forces appear to be unraveling before our eyes. The major driving forces of international politics, according to IR theory, suggest that the **new Cold War among the United States, China, and Russia is unlikely to be peaceful**.

### **Changing global scenarios-**

- Let us begin with **power politics**. We are entering a **more multipolar world**. To be sure, the **United States is still the world's leading power**, according to nearly all objective measures, but **China has risen to occupy a strong second-place position** in military and economic might.
- **Europe is an economic and regulatory superpower** in its own right. A **more aggressive Russia maintains the largest nuclear weapons stockpile on Earth**. And major powers in the developing world—such as India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Brazil—are choosing a nonaligned path.
- Realists argue that multipolar systems are **unstable** and prone to major wars of miscalculation. **World War I** is a classic example.
- Multipolar systems are unstable in part because **each country must worry about multiple potential adversaries**. Indeed, at present, the U.S. Defense Department frets about possible simultaneous conflicts with **Russia in Europe and China in the Indo-Pacific**.
- Moreover, U.S. President Joe Biden has stated that the **use of military force remains on the table as a last resort to deal with Iran's nuclear program**. A three-front war is not out of the question.
- **Wars of miscalculation** often result when states underestimate their adversary. **States doubt their opponent's power or resolve to fight, so they test them**. Sometimes, the enemy is bluffing, and the challenge pays off. If the enemy is determined to defend its interests, however, major war can result.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin **likely miscalculated in launching an invasion of Ukraine**, incorrectly assuming that war would be easy. Some realist scholars warned for some time that a Russian invasion of Ukraine was coming, and there is **still the possibility that the war in Ukraine could spill across NATO's borders**, turning this conflict into a direct U.S.-Russia conflagration.
- In addition, there is the danger that **Chinese President Xi Jinping might miscalculate over Taiwan**. Washington's confusing **"strategic ambiguity" policy** as to whether it would defend the island only adds to the instability.
- Biden has said **he would defend Taiwan, but his own White House contradicted him**. Many leaders are confused, including possibly Xi. He might mistakenly believe he could get away with an attack on Taiwan—only to have the United States intervene violently to stop him.

## Shifts in the balance of power-

- Realists also focus on **shifts in the balance of power** and worry about the **rise of China and the relative decline of the United States**. Power transition theory says that the **fall of a dominant great power and the rise of an ascendant challenger often results in war**. Some experts worry that Washington and Beijing may be falling into this **“Thucydides Trap.”**
- Their **dysfunctional autocratic systems** make it unlikely that Beijing or Moscow will usurp global leadership from the United States anytime soon, but a closer look at the historical record shows that **challengers sometimes start wars of aggression when their expansive ambitions are thwarted**. Like **Germany in World War I and Japan in World War II**, Russia may be lashing out to reverse its decline, and China may also be weak and dangerous.
- Some people might argue that **nuclear deterrence will still work**, but **military technology is changing**. The world is experiencing a **“Fourth Industrial Revolution”** as new technologies—such as **artificial intelligence, quantum computing and communications, additive manufacturing, robotics, hypersonic missiles, directed energy**, and others—promise to transform the global economy, societies, and the battlefield.

## Possibility of revolution in military affairs-

- Many defense experts believe we are on the **eve of a new revolution in military affairs**. It is possible that these new technologies could, like **tanks and aircraft on the eve of World War II, give an advantage to militaries that go on the offense**, making war more likely.
- At a minimum, these **new weapons systems could confuse assessments of the balance of power**, contributing to the above risks of miscalculation.
- **China**, for example, is **leading** in several of these technologies, including **hypersonic missiles**, certain applications for artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. These advantages—or even the false perception in Beijing that **these advantages might exist—could tempt China to invade Taiwan**.

## Conclusion

Fortunately, there is some good news. The **best understanding of international politics may be found in a combination of theories**. Much of humanity prefers a **liberal international order**, and this order is only made possible by the realist military power of the United States and its democratic allies. Moreover, 2,500 years of theory and history suggest that **democracies tend to win these hard-power competitions and autocracies flame out disastrously in the end**.

## Delhi dives in to the South China Sea dispute

### - Harsh V Pant

#### Introduction

The **Cold War between the United States and China over the South China Sea is heating up**. Washington has raised the stakes on China's "militarization" of the South China Sea, warning that "**specific actions will have specific consequences**," if it continues down the path of militarizing the region.

#### What is USA planning-

- The US is planning **joint exercises around the South China Sea** and intends to **spend US\$8 billion on submarines and undersea drones**.
- **India's role in the dispute is also assuming a new dimension** – particularly at a time when China is deploying **advanced radar systems in the Spratly Islands archipelago** and **missiles on Woody Island**, and the US is encouraging its allies to carry out their own freedom of navigation operations to challenge Beijing's controversial assertions of maritime sovereignty.
- Last month it was reported that the **United States and India held talks about conducting joint naval patrols** that could possibly include the disputed South China Sea. The US and Indian government officials were quick to dismiss the story.
- Washington suggested that **while the US and India have a shared vision of peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, the two countries were not planning joint maritime patrols** in the Indian Ocean or South China Sea. China, not surprisingly, reacted swiftly and angrily.
- Even though it seems clear that the US and India are not yet ready for joint patrols, the **trial balloon sent out to the media to gauge the audience's reaction is** indicative of the rapidly evolving Indian position on one of the key strategic disputes in Asia.

#### What is changing in the South China sea-

- A number of factors are forcing India's hand. The **US has been forced to adopt a more robust posture** in the Indo-Pacific, the dramatic acceleration in American military commitment largely down to the astonishing rise of China, which is on the cusp of becoming a serious regional military power.
- This transition appears all the more menacing because of **China's aggressive posturing** in the East and South China Seas, challenging the freedom of navigation in these waters and open access to the global commons.
- Since **most of China's territorial conflicts are spread across the East and South China Seas**, naval force projection has gained uncharacteristic momentum for a country that has not had a continental mind-set.
- **China's maritime strategy and its increasing capabilities** may simply overwhelm the smaller powers in the region. With respect to extra-regional powers such as the United States, China's singular objective is to **deny them any operational space** in its oceanic sphere of influence.

#### Steps taken by USA and China-

- Against this background, **Obama's 'pivot' towards Asia** represents a simultaneous attempt to **warn China away from using heavy-handed tactics** against its neighbours and provide confidence to other Asia-Pacific countries that want to resist pressure from Beijing now and in the future.
- In response, **China has accused Washington of seeking maritime hegemony** in the name of freedom of navigation after the US Navy's attempts to demonstrate its power in China's vicinity.
- American officials have found a **strategic partnership with India attractive**, especially in guarding the Indian Ocean from the negative fallouts of China's rapid rise. Washington continues to **express its appreciation of India as a net security provider** in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Maritime security cooperation between India and the United States** has become a strategic necessity, especially for sustaining a favorable strategic equilibrium as Chinese power rise.
- American strategy, according to some in Washington, should **focus on supporting Indian pre-eminence in the Indian Ocean** and closer US-India strategic cooperation.

### **India's role in the dispute-**

- India has had to **respond to these growing expectations** and it has its own reasons for challenging China. China's antipiracy operations in the **Gulf of Aden have raised hackles**, with some in the Indian Navy **questioning the need for the People's Liberation Army Navy's continuous deployment of two frontline warships and a tanker**.
- But the **rivalry also extends to waters beyond Malacca**. If, for China, the Indian Ocean is not an Indian lake, New Delhi's imperative is to contest impressions in Beijing that the **waters east of Malacca automatically fall under the latter's sphere of influence**.
- **India's naval engagement in the east, therefore, has also been a reaction to China's expansion** in the Indian Ocean region. The turf war between the two navies, as both nations further prosper and seek greater roles in regional dynamics, is set to grow.

### **Role of Indian navy-**

- **Least ideologically driven and also the most strategic-minded** of all the services in India's defence establishment, the navy has long articulated the **need to expand India's maritime vision**.
- This ambitious thinking is evident in its policy documents, as well as in its **increasing maritime engagement with states across the Indo-Pacific**. Indian naval officials and maritime strategists seem to favour a **'naval forward strategy'** that, logically speaking, **could extend eastward into the South China Sea and the Pacific Rim**.

### **Recent happenings-**

- In their recent joint statements both the US and India have **repeatedly declared their support for freedom of navigation in the South China Sea**, signaling that the Modi government is not reluctant to highlight New Delhi's convergence with Washington on regional issues.
- **India's engagements with states like Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines** have become more serious. India has **publicly supported Vietnam and the Philippines in their disputes with China**, **Indian naval ships have visited Vietnam in the South China Sea region**, and the two nations have continued to cooperate on hydrocarbon exploration in the South China Sea despite Beijing's warnings.

## Conclusion

Joint patrols with the US or not, **India is conceiving a new and more ambitious role for itself in East Asia** and Indo-US interests in the region are converging at an unprecedented rate. It is now up to Delhi and Washington to take full advantage of these developments.

## **The Nuclear Taboo is Key to Preventing Collapse of the Nuclear Order** **- Rakesh Sood**

### Introduction

The nuclear scenario today appears **confusing**. On one hand, the nuclear taboo has held, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (**NPT is a near universal treaty**), and nuclear weapon stockpiles are a fourth of what they were at the height of the Cold War, and yet, on the other hand, there is a **perception that nuclear risks are higher than before**.

### Principles behind NPT-

At such moments, it may be useful to **return to the basic principles**, the realizations that helped lay the foundations of the nuclear order more than seven decades ago.

- The first realisation from the **successful Trinity test conducted by the US on 16 July 1945**, was the **immense destructive capacity** of the new weapon. Witnessing the mushroom cloud, Robert Oppenheimer – one of the bomb’s inventors – pondered a line from the Bhagvad-Gita, **“Now I am become Death, the destroyer of the worlds”**. One month later, the **Hiroshima and Nagasaki** bombings reinforced the gravity of those words.
- The second realisation was the worry that **other countries too could now go down this path**. In 1946, this led to the **Baruch Plan** (authored by Bernard Baruch) that envisaged transferring control to an international body so that there would not be any national arsenals. However, there were **internal differences within the United States and Soviet Union** did not trust it.
- Once the **USSR exploded its nuclear bomb in 1949**, the Baruch Plan died a natural death. Even as the United States and the Soviet Union embarked on their **nuclear arms race**, they found convergence in the notion that **nuclear materials and knowhow must be restricted**. Non-proliferation became a shared objective leading to the NPT in 1968.
- The third realisation was the imperative to **manage nuclear risks**. It was driven home in 1962 when both US and Soviet leaders realized how close they had come to a **nuclear exchange during the Cuban Missile Crisis**. It led to establishing **fail safe communications, hotlines and nuclear risk reduction** measures together with arms control.
- Reconciling these three realizations helped lay the **foundations of the nuclear order**, shaped by the political dynamics of the Cold War. In a bipolar world, there was one **nuclear dyad, the US-Soviet dyad, and deterrence was a two-player game**.

- **Strategic stability was reduced to nuclear stability and nuclear arms control was the answer.** It kept the allies in check and reassured the third-world countries that the two nuclear superpowers were 'responsible'.

### Arms control and the nuclear taboo

- Nuclear arms control **revolved around the notions of 'parity' and 'mutual vulnerability'** because US and Soviet arsenals were based on similar triads.
- **The ABM Treaty (1972) limited missile defences** thereby guaranteeing mutual vulnerability. Meanwhile, strategic planners and negotiators worked on numerical limits for **strategic launchers and warheads** leading to **Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) I and II, Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) I and II and New START in 2010.**
- Together with **unilateral initiatives** undertaken after the break-up of the Soviet Union, these arms control measures helped draw down the **US and Russian arsenals by over eighty percent**, from **nearly 65,000 in early 1980s to less than 12,000 today.**
- The other seven nuclear-armed countries between them possess another **1,300 warheads.**

### Evolution of "non-proliferation" principle-

- Non-proliferation grew **as a norm as the NPT got extended indefinitely** and unconditionally in 1995. It has come to enjoy **near universal adherence** with only **four countries outside it – India, Israel and Pakistan (that never signed) and North Korea** (that withdrew). It has therefore reached the limits of its success since all four are nuclear-armed states.
- Most important, the **nuclear taboo has not been breached**, despite some close shaves.
- Today, this nuclear order, consisting of the **'taboo', arms control and non-proliferation is under strain.** The 'taboo' is only normative, arms control is fraying and the NPT, a victim of its success.

### Changing deterrence order-

- Fundamentally, the political order has changed. **Deterrence is no longer a two-player game;** there are **multiple nuclear dyads** (United States-Russia, United States-China, India-China, India-Pakistan, United States-North Korea) and these are linked together in loose chains. Instead of parity, it is an **age of asymmetry**, both in terms of doctrines and arsenals.
- Without **'parity' and 'mutual vulnerability'**, arms control needs to be redefined. Meanwhile, there is **growing mistrust** that prevents meaningful dialogue among major powers to define new areas of convergence.
- The **NPT delegitimized proliferation but not nuclear weapons.** Nuclear weapons **research and development has continued** and most nuclear powers are modernizing and expanding their arsenals.
- Today, nuclear science and technology is a mature **eighty-year-old technology.** Terms like **'threshold states', 'lead times' and 'break out'** did not exist when the NPT was negotiated. The political challenges inherent in the NPT surface every five years at the Review Conferences, especially since 1995.
- Finally, **technology doesn't stand still.** Developments in **missile defence, cyber and space, dual use systems like hypersonic and conventional precision global strike capabilities** have blurred the firebreak between conventional and nuclear weapons. This has created **nuclear**



**entanglement** and in the absence of transparency and guard rails, raises the risks of use: advertent, inadvertent, accidental or on account of misjudgment.

- With the **emergence of global terrorism**, new threats have emerged highlighting the importance of nuclear security.

### **The collapsing nuclear order**

- The **conflict in Ukraine has sharpened the growing nuclear risks**. Russian President Vladimir Putin has engaged in repeated nuclear rhetoric, placing the Russian arsenal on 'special alert', and later warning of 'unpredictable consequences'.
- Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky bemoaned the fact that had Ukraine not signed the Budapest Memorandum in 1994**, voluntarily relinquishing the nuclear weapons on its territory, Russia would not have invaded. Such statements have raised the **salience of nuclear weapons**. For countries that feel threatened by militarily more powerful adversaries, it is the ultimate security guarantor.
- At the same time, it also means that **a state possessing a nuclear deterrent can commit aggression against a smaller non-nuclear country**. While NATO members have provided billions of dollars' worth of military supplies, NATO has been deterred from either putting boots on the ground or imposing a 'no-fly-zone' that might bring it into direct conflict with a nuclear Russia.
- The nuclear order was based on **arms control, non-proliferation and a taboo**. Today, the old nuclear arms control model is **almost dead and a fresh convergence appears remote**.
- Non-proliferation is under strain given the **new found attractiveness of nuclear weapons and non-nuclear weapon states are actively considering nuclear powered submarines** that will further strain the NPT debates. The 'taboo', only normative to begin with, is being eroded by growing nuclear rhetoric, presently by **Russia** and in recent years, by **US, North Korean, Indian and Pakistani leaders**.
- Yet, the **old realizations still hold**. Nuclear weapons remain an **existential threat for humanity**. In an ideal world, **arms control should be revived, non-proliferation buttressed and the 'taboo' reinforced**, preferably with a legal instrument. But we don't live in an ideal world and have to make choices. Reviving arms control has to await a modus vivendi among the major powers.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the only way forward for **reconciling the NPT and the Ban Treaty**, for reducing nuclear risks is to reinforce the nuclear taboo. It has lasted since 1945. We need to ensure that it **lasts through the 21st century** so that we are able to collectively negotiate a more lasting solution to the challenges of the new nuclear age.

## Reinvigorating the Chabahar port - Suhasini Haider

### Context-

After months of what appeared to be a “go-slow”, the Union government has revved up its **interest in using Iran’s Chabahar port to connect to Afghanistan and Central Asia for trade**, with the visit of the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal to the port on August 20.

Ahead of the visit to Iran, where **Mr. Sonowal met with senior Ministers as well as officials connected to the Shahid Beheshti terminal project development**, an official statement said that the visit would be a chance to “strengthen ties and the maritime relationship” between the two countries. “

- Due to [the] **pandemic**, there were a **smaller number of visits from India to Iran** and vice-versa... This visit will also highlight the **importance of Chabahar as a gateway for Indian trade** with Europe, Russia and CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries,” the statement said.

### Background-

When the **first agreement for Chabahar** was signed by then Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003**, the plan had a four-fold objective:

1. To build **India’s first offshore port** and to **project Indian infrastructure prowess in the Gulf**
2. To **circumvent trade through Pakistan**, given the tense ties with India’s Neighbour
3. Build a **long term, sustainable sea trade route**
4. To find an **alternative land route to Afghanistan**, which India had rebuilt ties with after the defeat of the Taliban in 2001.

Subsequently, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s government constructed the **Zaranj -Delaram Highway in Afghanistan’s South**, which would help connect the trade route from the border of Iran to the main trade routes to Herat and Kabul, handing it over to the Karzai government in 2009.

- In 2016, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi travelled to Tehran and signed the agreement to develop Chabahar port**, as well as the trilateral agreement for trade through Chabahar with Afghanistan’s President Ashraf Ghani.
- Since the **India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ) authority** took over the operations of the port in 2018, it has **handled 215 vessels, 16,000 TEUs** (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units) and four million tons of bulk and general cargo, the government said in Parliament last month.

### New objective of Chabahar-

In the last few years, a **fifth strategic objective for the Chabahar route has appeared**, with **China’s Belt and Road Initiative making inroads in the region**.

- The government hopes to **provide Central Asia with an alternate route to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** through Iran for future trade.

- Speaking a few days earlier on the occasion of a “Chabahar Day” function in Mumbai, Mr. Sonowal said that it is India’s vision **to make the Shahid Beheshti port a “a transit hub”** and **link it to the International North South Trade Corridor (INSTC)**, that also connects to Russia and Europe.
- Since the beginning, the **development of the Shahid Beheshti terminal in Chabahar** as well as surrounding infrastructure has hit geopolitical **road-block** after road-block; the biggest issue has been over **Iran’s relationship with western countries**, especially the United States.
- In years when **western sanctions against Iran increased**, the Chabahar project has been put on the back-burner, while in the years when **nuclear talks that resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 came into being**, the Chabahar port has been **easier to work on**.
- In **2018**, the U.S. Trump administration **put paid to India’s plans by walking out of the JCPOA** and slapping new sanctions on dealing with Iran. This led to the Modi government **“zeroing out” all its oil imports from Iran**, earlier a major supplier to India, causing a strain in ties.
- Despite the fact that the **U.S. made a special “carve-out” on sanctions for Chabahar**, on the ground, it has been **difficult to source equipment for the port construction** from infrastructure companies that continue to fear secondary sanctions, as well as to engage shipping and insurance companies for trade through Chabahar.

## Conclusion

The Modi government also **snapped ties with Afghanistan** after the **Taliban takeover in August 2021**, which put an end to the **humanitarian aid of wheat and pulses** that was being sent to Kabul via Chabahar. When India restarted wheat aid to Afghanistan this year, it **negotiated with Pakistan to use the land route instead**.

With the government **now reopening the Indian Embassy in Kabul**, and establishing ties with the Taliban government, it is **possible that the Chabahar route will once again be employed**, another reason for the recent flurry of activity at the Iranian port terminal that India has pinned so many hopes on.



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## Taiwan tensions: How serious could the US-China standoff get?

- Suhasini Haider

### Introduction

The past week saw a **dramatic scale up in tensions in the Taiwan Strait**- after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi went ahead with the visit of the congressional delegation to Taipei- to meet the leadership and many civil society representatives in the island.

The **visit went ahead despite several warnings from China** that this would destabilize the region, and even a disavowal of the trip from the US government, that said Ms. Pelosi's plans were not helpful, and even this appeal from UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who said humanity is one miscalculation away from annihilation

### Why was the visit so controversial for Beijing?

1. The Speaker is a high-ranking US official- comes **third in precedence after the US President and Vice President** - and a visit to the self-governed island that the **US doesn't formally recognize, but supports**, is significant
2. The Pelosi visit **came 25 years after the last visit by a US speaker**, Newt Gingrich to Taiwan in 1997
3. Unlike Gingrich who was a Republican Speaker in a Democrat Administration, Pelosi **belongs to the ruling Democratic party**, making it difficult for the Biden administration to distance itself from her decisions
4. **Another red rag**: Pelosi is an avid supporter of Tibetan rights, has **visited the Dalai Lama often**. She has **publicly called out China on every human rights issue** from Tiananmen square to Tibet and Xinjiang. In the Washington Post this week, Pelosi spelt out her rationale.
5. Pelosi's visit comes on the **back of Biden administration's renewed energy in the Indo-Pacific** in the past few months, the launch of **IPEF, Blue Pacific Partnership, AUKUS**, and invitation to Indo-Pacific allies at NATO conference like Australia, Japan, New Zealand.

### No surprise that China's response was ballistic, quite literally:

1. After issuing a series of threats, it announced **military exercises** that came closer to the Taiwan straits than they have in 25 years.
2. Nearly **30 Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ)** on Tuesday, the day Pelosi landed
3. From August 2-6, China is **conducting military drills at 6 locations that encircle Taiwan**, in what military analysts call "blockade exercises", testing its ability to surround Taiwan in case of more hostilities
4. China launched the **biggest such Missile Drill since 1997**- Japan's defense minister said five missiles fired by China landed in Tokyo's Exclusive Economic Zone off Hateruma island

5. China announced **economic sanctions against Taiwan**, banning import of Taiwanese goods from about 100 exporters, although this wouldn't make a dent in the bilateral trade of \$32 Billion.
6. Beijing went into **diplomatic overdrive** as well- summoning the US ambassador, issuing strong statements from every embassy, including Delhi, and garnering a number of statements in support, including from India's neighborhood: where Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and even the Taliban **affirmed the One China policy**, called for peace and criticized the provocations
7. Above all, **China stressed the One China principle**, that the world must stand by its recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC)- ruled by the CCP in Beijing, not the Taiwanese Republic of China (ROC)- which only a handful of countries recognize.

### **How does the current situation compare to past Taiwan Strait Crises?**

- What makes this Taiwan crisis different from previous crisis that we have seen in the eyes of people here in Beijing is that **they feel this is going to have a lasting, permanent impact on the status quo** around the Taiwan Strait.
- We have seen that in terms of the military exercises that China has been carrying out since Thursday which have been **unprecedented in scale**.
- For the first time, you have had **conventional missiles** that have **flown over the island of Taiwan**, flown out from the Eastern coast of China into the waters, into the east of Taiwan for the first time.
- As well as the **deployment of a range of aircrafts across the median of the Taiwan Strait** also for the first time. The message from Beijing is that some of these exercises including what has taken place within 12 nautical miles of Taiwan coast, what Taiwan would consider to be its **territorial waters**, that these maybe here to stay.
- That these essential blockades that we are seeing for the last four days as a result of these exercises are a **message from Beijing being that should it feel inclined to do so in the future it could similarly blockade Taiwan's airspace and waters**.
- So, one big difference from this crisis at least from the messaging we are seeing from Beijing is that **it will have a permanent, lasting impact on the security situation in the Taiwan Strait** to a degree we have not seen previously.

### **Indian reaction- and possible reaction to more such provocations and reactions in the Taiwan Strait- which is informed by a number of factors:**

1. India's relations with the **Taiwanese polity and business have been growing since 1996**, and then in 2011 when it signed the **Double Tax Avoidance Treaty**. India-Taiwan trade has grown from **\$2bn in 2005 to about \$6 bn in 2020**, and is now exploring semiconductor collaborations.
2. India's trade relations with China are gigantic in comparison: From less than \$20 billion in 2005 to \$130 bn last year, but **strategically, relations have been strained for a number of reasons**- which has had an impact on India's articulation of the One-China policy
3. After 2008, when **Chinese claims on Arunachal Pradesh and comments on Jammu Kashmir grew- including renaming of Arunachal villages**, issuing stapled visas to Indian citizens from JK and Arunachal, the government decided not to change policy, but to stop referencing it in Joint resolutions and statements.

4. However, **India still follows the One China principle**, given its own sensitivities on territorial integrity, at several multilateral fora- One example is the World Health Assembly, where despite statements from G-7, other Quad partners and requests from Taipei, **New Delhi did not back an observer ship for Taiwan**
5. In recent times, India has also made **no statements on Russia's invasion of Ukraine**, has been reticent about **Myanmar junta's coup, and after a year out of Afghanistan**, has now re-opened its mission in Kabul. This suggests that **India's reaction to military action by China may be muted**.
6. Even in the case of Chinese PLA transgressions at the Line of Actual Control- India's official line has been **restrained**- The PM and government have insisted Chinese troops **haven't crossed into Indian territory**- in an effort to resolve the situation diplomatically.

## Conclusion

Given the political posturing, it is clear that US-China tensions will be on a **slow boil with some eruptions for the foreseeable future**. The question is, can a world already weighed down by economic distress, the continuing Covid pandemic, energy and food shortages resulting from the Russia Ukraine invasion and western sanctions, really afford another conflict at this time?

## Time for India to reclaim its moral leadership - Happymon Jacob

### Introduction

At 75, **India — a younger state and an older nation** — stands at a **critical juncture in its relationship with the world**. The world in which India won independence in 1947 has **changed beyond recognition**, from a bipolar U.S.-U.S.S.R. world to a brief unipolar moment of American hegemony to one that is moving toward another bipolar **competition between China and the United States, distracted by the illusions of a multipolar world**.

For India, the **challenge today is to define its unique foreign policy identity**, and shape the contours of its engagement with an increasingly chaotic world. India can address this by **reclaiming its moral leadership in the region and beyond**.

### India's moral claims-

- India at 75 appears to have become a **'normal country'** (or just another country if you will) with its **claims of a moral or political exceptionalism** increasingly ringing hollow (or being abandoned), and its national interests articulated in a more unembarrassed manner.
- There is an abiding feeling within much of the Indian strategic and political elite that **its moral claims have not served the country's interests well**.
- This post-normative turn in India's foreign policy, with its attendant aggression, a **new language of self-interest and growing balance of power temptations**, is likely to define India's attitude towards the world going forward.

- India has **long given up on non-alignment**, and its legatee concept 'strategic autonomy' is devoid of any normative connotations, unlike its predecessor.

### **Is moral argument a powerful foreign policy tool?**

- While this post-normative turn has **helped better clarify the country's national interests** to itself and others, the **moral argument is no longer viewed as a powerful foreign policy tool**.
- There is an enduring grievance in contemporary India that **the moral arguments it consistently made since (and even prior to) its independence have not taken India very far**. While it is not wrong to argue that in an increasingly chaotic world, **self-help is unavoidable**, and moral arguments or policies alone will not take nations very far especially those located in hard geopolitical situations, it is also **not inaccurate to argue that nations and leaders who can provide moral leadership have a special place** in the comity of nations.
- So, the question that countries such as India (because the world still, albeit occasionally, looks up to us for moral leadership or as a peace-builder) should ask is **whether it is possible to uphold the norms and values in foreign policy pursuits without necessarily sacrificing its own national interests**.
- As the historian **E.H. Carr** powerfully argued in his masterpiece, **The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939**, "any sound political thought must be based on **elements of both utopia and reality**". India may have become a 'normal country' today, but there is **no reason for us to stop being a normal power with a moral persuasion**.

### **India's role as an institution builder-**

- Another important factor in India's relationship with the world is **its role as an institution builder** (or the lack thereof). India has followed **seemingly contradictory policies**.
- It has been **keen on participating in global institutions, including the UN Security Council** (which it has been kept out of), it has made significant **contributions to various types of international organizations**, international or inter-governmental, and it has been a keen participant in various global efforts at addressing common global challenges.
- And yet, despite our keen desire to be a part of global institutions and governance structures, **have we made, sustained or supported such institutions in our own region?** I agree it would not have been easy and would have involved compromises.

### **Analysis of India's moral persuasion policy-**

- Let us dig a little deeper. Even as we fought for **sovereign equality and non-intervention** in the affairs of other countries globally, and **dismissed hegemony or the dominance of any one power**, we have done pretty much the opposite in our own region (once again, I get it — 'it's complicated').
- Notwithstanding the double standards, the point I want to stress is that **we lost an opportunity in our own region to lead by example**.
- Once a **site of India's primacy, South Asia is no longer 'India's region'**, and so India has lost the opportunity to build cooperative institutions and norms in the region, and to sustain its political influence in it.

- The impact of such a lost opportunity is becoming evident today. **India's reluctance over building institutions in its 'periphery' which can sustain democratic values and economic integration** has come back to haunt the country given how Beijing's predatory economic practices have managed to sway the region so effortlessly. So, we **must reimagine our approach to global and regional institutions** and norm-building.

### India's potential vs its achievements-

- India is also a power caught between the **deep desires of being a great power and the material incapacities of being unable to become one**. That was perhaps a reason why the country's 'early leaders' sought to **project India as a moral great power**, cognizant of its debilitating material incapacities to be a 'normal' great power.
- Seventy-five years since Independence, India is perhaps neither — **a moral great power or one in the standard material sense**.
- Our **loss (or willful renunciation) of moral agency in foreign policy** has a number of consequences.
  1. For one, our **ability to build peace or mediate for global peace has vastly diminished** (not that there is much appetite for doing so in New Delhi even if material ability were available).
  2. Second, **contemporary India's pursuit of its interests is hardly backed by normative arguments** but by material power (which it does not have a great deal of) or exploitation of great power contradictions or playing the balance-of-power games.

As the incumbent Foreign Minister writes in his book, The India Way, India seeks to advance its "national interests by **identifying and exploiting opportunities created by global contradictions**", using "competition to extract as much gains from as many ties as possible" and soliciting or manipulating stronger forces to its advantage. Surely these are **standard practices of statecraft and India cannot be faulted for adopting them in an uncertain world**. And, yet, this line of thinking belongs to a passive state unwilling to proactively shape the outcomes of international politics. Can we not do better than that?

### Global peace and stability-

- Another major aspect of India's engagement with the world is **its search for peace and stability**. New Delhi's **insistent references to 'terrorism'** in its statements in various forums is a partial indication of this deep desire for a stable neighborhood.
- Despite **enjoying regional primacy for a long time**, India **failed to pacify the region**, and its own actions have often contributed to regional instability. But there is a larger issue here pertaining to India's moral agency: our **attitudes and policies toward the outside world** will also be a function of who we are internally.
- Our **Weltanschauung cannot be seen to be divorced from who we are internally as a nation**. Put differently, can India truly build peace externally without building peace internally? Good foreign policy starts with good domestic politics.

### Conclusion



We **must reclaim our moral leadership in the comity of nations**, but it has to begin from **within** the country and neighborhood. The argument is not that India must relinquish its hard national interests, but that moral arguments have the **power to highlight the appeal of our national interests even more**.

## Realism versus liberalism in international relations

### - Stanly Johny

#### Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has **rekindled the realism versus liberalism debate** in international relations. While **liberals in general call the war an attack by "authoritarian Russia" on "democratic Ukraine"**, **realists argue the war was the culmination of the post-Cold War power games in Europe**. While this debate can go on with no consensus, it's important to understand the basic tenets of the two theories that are fueling it.

#### Understanding the behaviors of the state-

- Basically, both theories try to **understand the behavior of states, especially great powers**, from different perspectives.
- **Liberalism** broadly has **three core beliefs**:
  1. **States are the main actors** in the international system
  2. The **internal characteristics of each state vary from the other** and these differences shape the state's behavior
  3. **Some governance models are good and some are bad** (for example, democracies versus dictatorships).

After the end of the Cold War, in which the **liberal West defeated the communist Soviet Union**, **Francis Fukuyama, in The End of History and the Last Man**, called the **western liberal democracy the final form of human government**.

#### Streams of liberal theory-

- So, **liberals emphasize on the internal characteristics of states** which, they argue, impact states' external policies. According to them, **good states are supposed to make peace while bad states could seek to expand their power at the expense of others**.
- Within the liberal framework, there are **three different but interconnected theoretical approaches** — **economic interdependence, democratic peace and international institutions**.
  1. The proponents of **economic interdependence** argue that a **liberal economic order is essential for a stable international order**. **Economic globalization** is intrinsically linked to this argument.
  2. **Democratic peace theorists** claim that **democracies do not go to war with each other**. So, to create a world without war, according to this theory, a world of democracies should be built.
  3. And the **role of institutions**, according to them, is **critical** to maintain peace and order in the global system.

The League of Nations was formed after the First World War. The League collapsed and the Second World War broke out. But the post-War world order was rebuilt with new international institutions starting with the United Nations. Therefore, the ideal world order that liberals want is the one where democratic states are connected through economic globalization and function in a system that is regulated by international organizations.

- While liberalism offers an optimistic view of the global order, it's more about what the world ought to be. Realism is more about what the world is.

### Realist view of global order-

- For realists, a peaceful global order is desirable, but that's far from reality. Hence, they are pessimists.
- Realists, like liberals, also consider nation states as the primary actors in the international system. For them, the world is basically an anarchic place with no supreme authority to maintain order.
- Therefore, this makes the world a dangerous place. As historian E.H. Carr notes, realism "tends to emphasize the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to these forces and these tendencies".

### Streams of realist theory-

- There are three main streams of realist theory in international relations — human nature realism, defensive realism and offensive realism. And all streams seek to explain why states seek more power.
- 1. Human nature realism (also called classical realism), laid out by Hans Morgenthau in Politics Among Nations, is based on the argument that humans' lust for power can have a profound impact on the nature of states as states are led by human beings.
- According to human nature realists, states, by default, have this 'will to power' wired into them like human beings, and in an anarchic order, they continue to seek expansion of power. This could create conflicts.
- 2. Defensive realists, on the other hand, don't believe that states are inherently aggressive. Kenneth Waltz argues in Theory of International Politics that the fundamental aim of states is survival. But Waltz also agrees that the global order is anarchic and this structural factor forces states to compete with each other.
- 3. Offensive realism is also a structural theory like defensive realism that bases its arguments on the structural factors rather than human behavior. John Mearsheimer, the Chicago University professor who conceptualized offensive realism, argues that great powers always seek to maximize their power at the expense of rivals.
- While defensive realists argue that great powers seek to maintain the existing balance of power, offensive realists argue that status quo powers are rarely seen in international politics.
- "A state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system," writes Mearsheimer in The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.