The Indian Factor of the World Politics

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Abstract. This paper analyzes India's capacity to become a global superpower, as well as the major geopolitical foci of its foreign policy. The introduction notes that India's goal to become a global leader has been the subject of a national consensus since the former British colony became independent. The theoretical part shows that today's India is becoming close to China in some socio-economic aspects while still being poorer than China. The paper describes the following aspects of the Indian foreign policy: Indo-Pakistan relations, Indo-American relations, Indo-Russian relations, and Indo-Chinese relations. It is noted that relations with the United States is a priority for India. In this region, India mainly competes against Pakistan and China. Indo-Russian relations have become cooler since the collapse of the USSR. The paper concludes that in key aspects, India is indeed becoming a superpower.

1. Introduction

Research Problem. The strategic goal of India's foreign policy to become a global superpower was defined more than half a century ago right after the country gained independence in 1947. It was virtually since that very time that the country's international course has been agreed upon by a super-party and national consensus. This paper is to analyze how far India has gone in attaining its strategic goal to transform from a regional power to a global superpower.

Relevance. The modern world politics sees a gradual shift in the centers of influence. The global development vector is being shifted towards Asia, while the United States (and, to some extent, other Western countries) is losing ground in some terms. In this respect, it is interesting to observe one of the Asian giants, India, and its developmental dynamics.

Analysis of this question is linked to the *scientific relevance* of this paper. Russian researchers pay a lot of attention to India, albeit less than to China. Notable researchers studying this question include specialists of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO of the Russian Foreign Ministry), as well as specialists of the Russian Academy of Sciences. We can cite such names as A.D. Voskresensky, S.I. Lunev, A.G. Volodin, M.S. Zaytsev, etc.

2.Theory

India's Capacity to Become a Global Superpower. The global status of a country is defined by four parameters: socio-economic parameters, political power, military-political power, and cultural and ideological influence. Let us consider each of them specifically.

Recently, India has been particularly successful in the socio-economic sphere. In the 1990s, India's long-lasting period of economic growth barely exceeding the population growth finally came to an end. Their economic growth is now significant at 7% to 9%. India's GDP PPP amounted to 3.55 trillion dollars in 2009. According to the IMF, India accounted for 6.84% of the world GDP PPP, cf. Japan's 4.40% and Germany's 3.45%. [10. P.211] However, India's GDP is still less than a third of China's. Its infrastructure such as ports, roads, and railways is still inferior to its Chinese counterpart, a fact apparent to any foreign visitor.

Aside from some central areas, the country is still poor. Life has not changed much in most of the thousands of Indian villages. Today, India accounts for a third of the global population below the poverty line.

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The system of patron-client caste relations permeates India's politics and public life, effectively paralyzing any reforms on the way.

The sources of India's economic growth are rather specific. The country accounted only for 1.4% of the global exports and imports in 2009, while having a 5% GDP share. It ranks 16th worldwide in terms of imports and 25th in terms of exports. The role of foreign investments in the Indian economy is rather insignificant. In 2008, direct investments in India accounted for only slightly more than 1% of global investments despite India being one of the three most attractive countries for foreign investors. [10. P.211-212] One can therefore conclude that India's GPD growth is mainly driven internally, making this growth and any prediction quite reliable and stable.

Over the past decade, India's economy doubled, and the government expects it to double again in less than a decade. Gold and foreign exchange reserves exceeded 100 billion dollars despite being effectively zero in 1991. On an interesting side note: India ranks first worldwide in milk production, which is interesting given that cows are sacred for Indians. The country is an active foreign investor, especially when it comes to oil investments in Russia, Sudan, Libya, Viet Nam, etc.

The enormous domestic market, and a large population of European-grade consumers (100 to 150 million people, with the middle class amounting to about 300 million people of the country's total population of 1,300 million people) enables India to be successful without a broad integration into the world economy, albeit such integration is inevitable. Some forecasts hold India's population is soon to exceed that of China. [11. P. 42]

However, only 0.5% to 1% of the country's workforce is employed in the most advanced sector of economy. Being of such low capacity, this sector is not yet in position to transform the Indian economy. [3]

This means that India has to revise its education system to prepare more and more young people for employment in a new economy. India is now taking serious efforts to overcome illiteracy. The preceding decades' lack of effort in this area has now manifested itself in the low female literacy rates (65% vs 90% in China). Today, young educated people do not have skills necessary for the new emerging jobs. [11.P. 42]

A striking difference between India and other countries is its young population. 65% of the population is below 35[1]. Given the job creation pace, India needs a 14% economic growth to cope with unemployment, which is hardly possible. Otherwise, it may face political discontent and social upheaval. [7]

India's political authority keeps growing. The country is believed to be the most likely candidate for permanent membership in the UN Security Council or even in G7. [10. P. 212]

For the country's status to improve, it is of utmost importance that India sticks to its independent foreign policy. What causes special concern in India is the possibility of a unipolar world being established. India's quest to strengthen its credibility among emerging economies has become far less significant; the country has de-facto lost its status of the ambassador for such nations, a role it played during the Cold War as a part of the Non-Alignment Movement. Diplomacy has become a lot more "focal", a fact attested to by India's cooperation with ASEAN, BRICS, United States, Japan, and EU.

From a military standpoint, India is one of the world's largest military powers. With 1.2 million soldiers, it is the third largest army after China and the United States. India's defense investments are huge. However, its military budget is only 2.5% of GDP. Cf. 4.8% in the United States, 4.2% in Russia, and 2.1% in China (although many experts believe that China is understating its military expenditure). [10. P. 214] India's armed forces are still substandard for a global superpower. The Indian Ocean does not really belong to India, as it is ploughed by the fleets of many countries, including the United States and increasingly China.

[1] Cf. China, where the one-child policy has resulted in an aging nation.

India became a nuclear weapon state as far back as in 1974, but renounced this status back then. India restarted its nuclear weapon tests in 1998; today, experts estimate India to have 100 to 150 nuclear warheads. The country is actively developing its missile program. At the same time, India is one of the four countries not to join the NPT, as it de-facto does not comply with the NPT (the DPRK withdrew from the NPT).

Given the low socio-economic development, Western democracy would not be able to root in India was it not fundamental to India's civilization. Self-governing communities, or Panchayats, existed in the country as far back as three thousand years ago. No other country would boast such limited state intervention with such communities. The Indian politics being close to Western standards has earned the country a nickname of the "world's biggest democracy".

The cultural and civilizational particularities of the Indian society strengthen this enormous Asian nation's stance, as a number of philosophy schools have long deemed the human development, harmonious enhancement, and furtherance of moral ideals to be of utmost importance. The Indian society in general has never been characterized by excessive aggressiveness, intolerance, or hierarchy found in other Oriental civilizations.

The current global division of labor prevents a closer coalition of the BRICS, where India is a member. Perhaps the economic growth of the Southern leaders will gradually eliminate all the obstacles. At the same time, the main impediment to the BRICS cooperation is each individual participant's chance to enter the "big league" and gain a whole-new level opportunities to cooperate with the global system core.

India and Pakistan. After Pakistan emerged as an independent nation in 1947, being separated from India as a result of dividing the former British colony, its geopolitics has been focused on confronting India. Over the past years, Pakistan has warred against India three times—and lost all these wars.

One may wonder why Pakistan would confront India, which is much more powerful in terms of both economy and military? Well, there are at least three reasons to be mentioned.

First, Pakistan supports the Muslim separatists in the Indian State of Kashmir.

Second, almost two thirds of Pakistan's population lives below the poverty line. Semi-feudalism persists in the country, with the bulk of the nation's wealth being concentrated in the hands of a small cohort of landowners. Pakistan hopes that war might actually improve its situation.

Third, the geopolitical interests of the United States have always been apparent behind the actions of this Muslim nation's leaders. [9. P. 462-463]

Indian authorities seek better relations with Pakistan, a cease in the Kashmir bloodshed, and a recovery of the state-to-state communications. At the same time, the Indians are building something like a Great Wall in Kashmir, a nearly 3,000-km perimeter standing at 2.5 meters tall.

Domestic and foreign stakeholders continue keeping Islamabad and New Delhi in a state of conflict. In late 2008, Bombay was the site of India's largest terrorist attack of recent times. Pakistani terrorists killed more than 170 people. The terrorist cell was created by Pakistan's ISI intelligence unit to start a jihad in Kashmir. The terrorist attack was intended to stir up a war between India and Pakistan. However, New Delhi demonstrated its political wisdom and restraint.

Indo-American relations. The United States needs India as a counterbalance to the ever stronger China, a nation that has strongly opposed Washington on many geopolitical issues. At the same time, Indian international lawyers and politicians state that the United States is becoming India's crucial partner. The two countries have never yet been so close. Such improvement in relations is attributable to four factors:

1. Shared values
2. Large Indian diaspora in the United States and the role it has to play
3. Advanced American technologies being transferred to India
4. Indian political scientists believe that the United States will remain dominant for decades to come in the asymmetrically polycentric world, while good relations with the US will help India actualize itself as a global superpower.

With its rapid economic growth, India suffers from considerable shortage of electricity. The Indian Government believes the solution is to development nuclear power. However, the construction of new NPPs were effectively prevented by the prohibition to supply nuclear fuel, technology, and equipment to India, imposed by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (the NSG) consisting of 45 member states. Sanctions were imposed on India due to its 1998 nuclear weapon tests as well as its refusal to enter the NPT.

However, during the times of President George Bush Jr., the NSG followed the US proposal to lift the nuclear sanctions once imposed on India. The Americans exercised pressure on small NSG member states. Why did Washington do this?

One can trace a multi-move geopolitical combination here.

First, the United States needs India as a buffer against China growing strong.

Second, the Washington-New Delhi rapprochement is an attempt to jeopardize the long-standing Indo-Russian friendship.

Third, the Americans need a ground in this region to combat Islamic fundamentalism and transnational Wahhabism.

Fourth, the United States made it clear for Pakistan that America won't help this nation in its fight for Kashmir. [1]

For the United States, it is clear that India, with its enormous economic potential, advanced technologies, missiles and nuclear weapons, is a strong player in South and Southeast Asia. That is why Washington has been making successful attempts to reap the fruit of its Indian policy. In 2005, the Governments of India and the US signed a nuclear energy cooperation agreement. For the first time in history, the United States entered into such an agreement with a nuclear-weapon state that had not joined the NPT. Washington thus indirectly recognized India as a nuclear superpower. [6]

The American multi-nationals are interested in India as in a huger market, particularly for weapons. In the long term, Washington may oust Moscow from this weaponry and military tech market, as it is ready to offer its own weapons on more favorable terms. This will effectively make the buyer dependent on the seller, as only the latter can offer suitable spare parts, ammunition, etc. [9. P. 464-467]

India and the USSR/Russia. The Indo-Soviet/Russian relations have undergone certain perturbations. It must be recognized that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, India sought improvement in its relations with the United States, as it was clear for New Delhi that the new Soviet Government was destabilizing the country, seeking to destroy not only the global geopolitical balance, but also the Soviet Union itself.

India was on the rise and desperately needed advanced technologies and investments into its fast-growing economy. The Soviet military-industrial complex had just collapsed, effectively losing its newest advanced developments. Thus, Moscow did objectively weaken its ties with New Delhi and contributed to India's turn to the West and Japan.

At the same time, while the Indo-American relations are based on strictly pragmatic motivations, mentality-wise an average Indian is of better opinion of Russia than of the United States. They still gratefully remember the enormous economic aid the newly independent India gained from the USSR in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

According to O.G. Leonova, globalization has resulted in the two countries swapping their positions in the global hierarchy: India is now seen as a new global leader, while Russia is frequently referred to as just a regional power in the West. Now some people might think that India and Russia have swapped their places, and it is now Russia that seeks friendship with its long-time partner, which only recently was just an emerging third-world economy. [5]

Despite that, the relations of these two countries could still be described as friendly in the 1990s. In 1993, Russia and India signed two fundamentally important documents, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership Between the Russian Federation and the Republic of India.

Moscow and New Delhi's partnership and friendship is greatly facilitated by the historical absence of Russian-Indian conflicts, clashes, or controversies. Besides, these nations' geopolitical interests are coincident and mutually supportive. Moscow and New Delhi both want the trend towards multipolarity to be dominant in the new geopolitical system.

Moscow-New Delhi relations are being intensified with respect to military and technical cooperation. More than 30% of Russian arms exports is purchased by India. In the Rosoboronexport's portfolio, Indian contracts account for a third as well. Russia mostly sells ready-made weapons to India. However, Russia and India have now entered a phase of higher-level military and commercial partnership, which implies transfer of technologies, joint development, joint ventures, and transferring nuclear submarines to be owned or rented by India. Indian electronics has found efficient use onboard Russia's top-notch fighters.

At the same time, the economic cooperation is simply insufficient for countries with such economic capacities and needs. Russia's share in India's foreign trade turnover is only about 2%, while it was 10% as recently as in the early 1990s. [9. P.470]

What prevents a more successful economic cooperation is that New Delhi is often eager to initiate antidumping investigations against Russian businesses. This is due to the fact that India is one of the few countries that have so far failed to recognize the market status of the Russian economy. Anti-dumping investigation is mostly initiated in relation to the products of mechanical engineering and chemistry.

India and China. Since the late 1980s, India began normalizing its relations with China. Indian population includes more than 140 million Muslims, and China has the Muslim region of Xinjiang Uyghur; the two nations thus have to address similar challenges. New Delhi and Beijing both try to resist the aspects of economic globalization that hurt the emerging economies (in particular, the infringement of their interests by the IMF and the World Bank). However, they are also interested in furthering their economic and technological relations with the United States and other industrialized countries. It is therefore no coincidence that China and India often take the same stance on global issues, as can be revealed by analyzing how frequently their UN General Assembly votes match each other.

However, a few factors limit the Indo-Chinese relations. New Delhi still tends to see Beijing as an ally to Pakistan, being critical of the Sino-Pakistani military cooperation, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons. The strengthening of China's and India's military and political connections in adjacent countries seems controversial to say the least. There are fears that the neighbor's warheads will target China or India. Unresolved border issues persist. Last but not least, the Chinese government has every right to be afraid of a potential anti-Chinese bloc being established, which is something apparently sought by the United States; however, India has been maneuvering quite gracefully so far to avoid any pitfall in this situation.

For the upcoming decade, the Indo-Chinese relations will most likely stick to a status quo, being gradually improved and slowly progressing towards further normalization. China is India's largest trading partner by far. However, this trade is imbalanced in China's favor.

New Delhi's main tool it can use to exert pressure on China is its relations with the United States, to some extent those with Japan. For the today's New Delhi, Beijing is the primary security threat. China sees India as its main long-term strategic adversary in Asia or even worldwide; India's perception of China is perhaps even worse. Most of India's elite believes that in a longer term, the two Asian giants may directly confront each other. It was as early as in the bipolar times that India stated the imperativeness of being ready for "one and a half wars" at the same time, i.e., for conflicts with China and Pakistan.

The Tibet problem is one of the major spoilers for Indo-Chinese relations. On the one hand, India recognizes Tibet as a part of China; on the other hand, since Prime Minister J. Nehru (held office in 1947–1964), New Delhi has been perceiving Tibet as an India-China buffer zone.

Beijing sees India as one of the main actors to fulfill the American strategic design to block China.

The strife for energy resources is threating to ruin the Sino-Indian relations. Being in a desperate need for imported oil, China and India has already competed multiple times for access to the Central-Asian hydrocarbons in Kazakhstan, as well as to South-American and Angolan reserves.

Relations between the two demographic giants, China and India, are far from warm. The Indian government is concerned with China's growing military power, to which Russia is instrumental. India's diplomats strive to keep and bolster good relations with China, although some in New Delhi are afraid that the Chinese colossus will inevitably demonstrate its colossal intent to expand infinitely, an effort that India may be the first nation to succumb to.

3. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from our analysis:

first, India is becoming a global superpower in all the four aspects (the socio-economic aspect, domestic and foreign policy, military and civilization);

second, China is its worst competitor in the region and on the global scale. Besides, China tends to support Pakistan, India's another arch enemy in the region. Notably, all angles of this triangle of nations are nuclear-weapon states, making their confrontation even more dangerous;

third, India has one indisputable advantage over China in terms of adapting to the global community: India is the "world's biggest democracy", and unlike the totalitarian China, the Indian civilization is much closer to the West. We can therefore conclude that India might enter the "club" of developed nations in the foreseeable future provided that its economic progress does not fail. However, this will likely cause the country to leave the BRICS, but this matter is not on the today's agenda.

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