

## Themes from India's Big Power Diplomacy

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### *Abstract*

*India's intensive engagement with the major powers of the international system, in the second half of 2010, has underlined Delhi's improved international standing. Thanks to the growing worldwide perception of its rise, India is now in a position to leverage its economic growth for the pursuit of ambitious political objectives and national security goals. At the same time, India is also under pressure to adapt to the dynamic evolution of relations among the great powers and take new responsibilities in the multilateral domain.*

### **Introduction**

Indian diplomacy ended the year 2010 with an extraordinary run of high level bilateral engagements. With top global leaders making their passage to Delhi in the second half of the year, India has every reason to be pleased with its rising profile in the international system, its attractiveness as an economic partner, and its new ability to mobilise the great powers in favour of its own national interests. Indian diplomacy, however, has much work to do before it can realise the ambitious political objectives that it unveiled in the engagement with the major powers in 2010. While India has discovered new leverages, it will also need to address the new challenges that are beginning to emerge in its great power relations. Until now India had the luxury of not taking sides in the dynamic between other powers. That freedom might

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begin to shrink as tensions and realignments occur between other great powers. Equally important, India is also coming under greater compulsion to demonstrate responsibility on the international stage in its search for a seat at the high table.

Starting with the visit in July 2010 of the British Premier David Cameron, who chose Delhi as one of his first foreign destinations, all leaders from the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) were in India in the second half of 2010. The United States (US) President Barack Obama was in Delhi in early November. French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev arrived in December. The Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh travelled to Japan in October. In December, he headed to Brussels for the annual summit with the European Union (EU) and also had a bilateral meeting with the German Chancellor Ms Angela Merkel. This comprehensive engagement with all the major powers of the international system underlines India's new strengths and reveals the broad set of concerns that animate Indian foreign policy at the present juncture. India's interaction with the world leaders also underlines some potentially difficult issues that are beginning to dominate Delhi's diplomatic agenda. This essay identifies the main themes that have dominated India's high level interaction with great powers in 2010 and assesses the implications for Indian diplomacy.

### **India as an Economic Partner**

The talk of a 'shining India' and the image of India emerging as a 'new superpower' have been around for a while. These ideas have been contested most vigorously in Delhi itself, where a large section of the political class and the intelligentsia has been deeply sceptical of the concept of India's rise.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, during his visit to India, President Obama, gave a new twist by declaring that India is 'not an emerging power' and that it had already 'emerged'. In his remarks at a town hall meeting with students in Mumbai, Obama said 'the United States does not just believe, as some people say, that India is a rising power; we believe that India has already risen. India is taking its rightful place in Asia and on the global stage. And we see India's emergence as good for the United States and good for the world'.<sup>3</sup> Coming from the US President, the notion of India as a 'risen power' acquired a new international currency and set off a renewed debate in Delhi on the meaning and consequences of a change in India's relative position in international hierarchy. With a real GDP (gross domestic product) of more than US\$1 trillion in 2010, India has become one of

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<sup>2</sup> Amrita Narlikar, 'All that Glitters is not Gold: India's rise to Power', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.28, no.5 (July 2007), pp.983-996; see also, Ramachandra Guha, 'Will India Become a Superpower?', *Outlook* (30 June 2008), [www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?237762](http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?237762). Accessed on 5 January 2011.

<sup>3</sup> White House, 'Remarks by the President and the First Lady in Town Hall with Students' (Mumbai: 7 November 2010), [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/07/remarks-president-and-first-lady-town-hall-with-students-mumbai-india](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/07/remarks-president-and-first-lady-town-hall-with-students-mumbai-india). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

the top tier economies in the world. According to a Goldman Sachs study, India could become the third largest in the world in real US dollar terms by 2030; behind only China and the United States.<sup>4</sup> India's economic growth rates had exceeded the earlier predictions made by Goldman Sachs in 2003; thus its relative rise in the world could be faster if the current recession enveloping the West persists.<sup>5</sup>

India's successful weathering of the global recession and its quick return to a growth rate of eight per cent during 2009-10 has made Delhi an attractive economic partner for all major powers in the international system. Experiencing the worst recession in decades and recording high domestic unemployment, Western leaders have intensely focused on striking business deals with India.<sup>6</sup> President Obama made the creation of more jobs at home, the principal theme of his visit to India. Preceding his visit to Delhi, the White House also made market access to a number of US products a central element of the mutual deliverables. British Premier Cameron who preceded Obama, French President Sarkozy and Russian President Medvedev focused on securing major business contracts with India. Obama's decision to highlight the creation of nearly 50,000 jobs in America from the US\$10 billion worth of deals<sup>7</sup> certainly surprised the Indian public, which is not used to the spectacle of international leaders pushing for commercial contracts. The Indian foreign policy establishment, however, was fully aware of the new political imperatives driving the Western leaders and the opportunities that it provided India both on the economic front as well as on the political arena.

Business was also at the top of the agenda during the visits of Chinese Premier Wen and the Russian President Medvedev. In the case of Russia, there was a renewed effort towards connecting the business leaders of the two countries and expand the non-defence trade between the two countries. Addressing the principal weakness in bilateral relations, India and Russia set the target of US\$15 billion for bilateral trade in 2015.<sup>8</sup> Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao signed off on nearly US\$16 billion worth of deals and set a new target of US\$100

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<sup>4</sup> Goldman Sachs, 'India Revisited', *White Paper* (June 2010), [www.goldmansachs.com/gsam/docs/funds\\_international/education/articles\\_and\\_whitepapers/wp\\_india\\_revisited\\_jun10.pdf](http://www.goldmansachs.com/gsam/docs/funds_international/education/articles_and_whitepapers/wp_india_revisited_jun10.pdf). Accessed on 26 December 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Sanjaya Baru, 'India: Rising Through the Slowdown'; Ashley Tellis, Andrew Marble, Travis Tanner (eds.), *Strategic Asia 2009-10: Economic Meltdown and Geopolitical Stability* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> James Lamont, 'Russia is last in series of major powers to seal valuable deals with India', *Washington Post* (21 December 2010), [www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/12/21/AR2010122104819.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/12/21/AR2010122104819.html). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Ben Feller, 'Obama India Trip: President Announces \$10 Billion in Trade Deals Supporting 50,000 U.S. Jobs', *Associated Press* (6 November 2010), available at [www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/06/obama-india-trip-presiden\\_n\\_779872.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/06/obama-india-trip-presiden_n_779872.html). Accessed on 4 January 2011; see also, White House, 'Fact Sheet: The National Export Initiative: U.S.-India Transactions' (6 November 2010), [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/06/fact-sheet-national-export-initiative-us-india-transactions](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/06/fact-sheet-national-export-initiative-us-india-transactions). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>8</sup> 'Celebrating a Decade of the India-Russian Federation Strategic Partnership and Looking Ahead' (20 December 2000), [www.mea.gov.in](http://www.mea.gov.in). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

billion for bilateral trade with India by 2015.<sup>9</sup> In the past, the targets for Sino-Indian trade tended to be conservative. If the trade between the two countries continues to rise at the current rate of 40 per cent, the target could be achieved by 2012. Expanding trade with China has become a major factor in stabilising bilateral relations that have long been hobbled by enduring political differences. Alternatively, the growing commerce with China has also brought its share of new problems. India has an expanding trade deficit with China, currently at nearly US\$19 billion in 2010 out of a total bilateral trade of US\$60 billion. Besides the huge imbalance, raw material comprise substantive parts of India's exports to China. India's political pressure on the trade front included a refusal to move forward on the Chinese proposal for a free trade agreement between the two countries.<sup>10</sup> Delhi instead insisted that a demonstration of Chinese good faith on market access must precede further trade liberalisation on India's part. Wen apparently did promise to take measures to address India's concerns and the joint communiqué issued at the end of his visit, explicitly referring to the Chinese intent to act on market access to India's information technology (IT) services and pharmaceuticals. The two sides also agreed to set up a 'strategic economic dialogue' to build a more sustainable economic partnership.

While trade liberalisation with China has stalled for the moment, India is pushing ahead with deeper economic integration with the rest of the world. During Dr Singh's visit to Tokyo, India announced an agreement in principle for a free trade agreement with Japan.<sup>11</sup> The agreement is expected to be signed formally in the first quarter of 2011. In his visit to Brussels, Dr Singh and his European interlocutors welcomed the progress of the negotiations with the EU on a Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) and the hopes to sign an 'ambitious' pact by the spring of 2011.<sup>12</sup> India's rapid economic growth has made Delhi's voice an important one in the G-20 grouping that has been set up to address the challenges of the global economic crisis and rebalancing the international financial order.

The most important political consequence of India's newfound economic clout has been an unprecedented opportunity for New Delhi to mobilise other powers in promoting India's vital national interests. Four major objectives stood out in India's big power diplomacy – integration with the global non-proliferation order, reforming the Security Council, putting pressure on Pakistan to end its support for cross border terrorism and expanding cooperation with other major powers in constructing a new Asian security order. We explore below the progress achieved on these four objectives.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Joint Communiqué of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China' (16 December 2010), [www.mea.gov.in](http://www.mea.gov.in). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>10</sup> See the press briefing by the Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao after the talks between Dr Singh and Mr. Wen, (16 December 2010), [www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530316895](http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530316895). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>11</sup> 'Vision for India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership in the Next Decade' (25 October 2010), [www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316597](http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316597). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>12</sup> 'EU-India Joint Statement' (10 December 2010), [www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316833](http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316833). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

## **Integration with the Non-Proliferation Order**

Since 2005, India's main diplomatic preoccupation has been with the implementation of the historic civil nuclear initiative that Dr Singh had signed with George W. Bush. The promise of ending the nation's decades long atomic isolation drove Dr Singh to stake everything on the implementation of the initiative during 2005-08. The approval of the initiative by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in September 2008 was one of the most important victories in independent India's diplomatic history. During 2010, India surprised most international observers by embarking on a bold initiative to complete its integration into the global non-proliferation order. In the run up to the Obama visit, India sought to push through five important objectives.<sup>13</sup> One was to complete the residual issues in the implementation of the civil nuclear initiative. Obama, who was somewhat of a sceptic of the Bush years, took a political decision early on in his tenure that he would implement the civil nuclear initiative, despite widespread lack of enthusiasm in his administration. By the time he arrived in Delhi, Obama had taken all the necessary actions to complete this implementation of the civil nuclear initiative.

A second Indian objective was to eliminate the so-called 'entities list' in Washington that targeted many leading institutions in the security sector, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the denial of technologies. A third goal was to get the US Administration to alter India's negative position in the US export control laws. The fourth objective was to win membership in the four major export control groupings – the NSG that regulates international atomic commerce; the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR); the Australia Group that controls the transfers of materials and technologies that could be used in the manufacture of chemical and biological weapons; and lastly the Wassenaar Arrangement that oversees the trade in conventional weapons and dual use technologies. A final objective of India was to remove some of the persistent ambiguity about its status as a nuclear weapons state in the international system even after the implementation of the civil nuclear initiative.

During his visit, US President Obama announced the removal of some Indian organisations from the entities list and promised to alter India's position in the export control laws to reflect Delhi's status as a strategic partner of Washington. He also extended support for India's membership of the non-proliferation groupings.<sup>14</sup> With Obama's acceptance of the principle that India should be fully integrated into the global non-proliferation order as an equal

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<sup>13</sup> For an analysis of the Indian position on the eve of Obama visit, see; C. Raja Mohan, 'India and the Nonproliferation Institutions: Addressing the Expectations Gap', *A Report of the CSIS South Asia Program and the Nuclear Threat Initiative* (Washington DC: CSIS, December 2010).

<sup>14</sup> See; 'Joint Statement of Dr Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama' (8 November 2010), [www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316632](http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=550316632). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

member involves further negotiations between Delhi and Washington and mobilising support from the other powers. As the joint statement makes it clear, ‘The United States intends to support India’s full membership in the four multilateral export control regimes (NSG, MTCR, Australia Group, and Wassenaar Arrangement) in a phased manner, and to consult with regime members to encourage the evolution of regime membership criteria, consistent with maintaining the core principles of these regimes, as the Government of India takes steps towards the full adoption of the regimes’ export control requirements to reflect its prospective membership, with both processes moving forward together. In the view of the US, India should qualify for membership in the Australia Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement, according to existing requirements once it imposes export controls over all items on these regimes’ control lists.’<sup>15</sup>

Having won over Obama, India made lifting high technology sanctions and integration with the non-proliferation order major priorities in its talks with other leaders. France, Russia and Germany also endorsed India’s membership of the NSG. Medvedev went one step further to describe India as a ‘supplier state’ and the two sides agreed to promote the use of civilian nuclear energy in third countries.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, China’s Premier Wen turned out to be the exception. According to news reports, Chinese negotiators resisted India’s efforts to win great power acknowledgement of its new status as a *de facto* nuclear weapon power outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) system. While the Russian and Western leaders were ready to accept the formulation that India is a ‘state in possession of nuclear weapons’ and support its membership of the NSG, China’s Premier Wen was reluctant.<sup>17</sup> China, it might be recalled, had problems with the India-US civil nuclear initiative and has been trying to promote a similar deal for Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> India is acutely conscious of the potential for significant resistance from Beijing to its nuclear aspirations.

## Security Council Reform

Although the campaign for a reform of the UNSC has dominated Indian diplomacy in recent years, it has acquired a new urgency amidst the renewed negotiations in New York during 2010. The high level exchanges with the major powers during 2010 provided an opportunity for India to take up the theme again. India’s election by a large margin at the end of 2010 to a non-permanent seat has further boosted Delhi’s campaign for the UNSC reform and a permanent seat. Indian diplomacy hopes to make a big push for reforms at the UN during

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> ‘Celebrating a Decade of the India-Russian Federation Strategic Partnership and Looking Ahead’ (20 December 2000), [www.mea.gov.in](http://www.mea.gov.in). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>17</sup> For a comparison of the nuclear parts in the various joint statements, see; Siddharth Varadarajan, ‘In statements, gradual recognition of India’s nuclear status’, *The Hindu* (23 December 2010), p.12.

<sup>18</sup> Ashley Tellis, ‘The China-Pakistan Nuclear Deal: Separating Fact from Fiction’, *Policy Outlook* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, July 2010).

2011-12. The last time India was on the Security Council was during 1990-91 and it failed miserably to secure another term in 1996. Having won the support from France, Russia and Britain for India's case for permanent membership, the focus was on whether India could get the US and China to do the same. Before the Obama visit, there was indeed a sense that the White House will make its support a major deliverable.<sup>19</sup>

In his address to the Indian Parliament, Obama ended the suspense and offered the support that Delhi was long looking for. Obama declared, 'The just and sustainable international order that America seeks includes a United Nations that is efficient, effective, credible and legitimate. That is why I can say today, in the years ahead, I look forward to a reformed United Nations Security Council that includes India as a permanent member.'<sup>20</sup> In July, Cameron had strongly affirmed a similar sentiment. Sarkozy who followed Obama to Delhi insisted that India should become a permanent member of the UNSC 'without further delay.'<sup>21</sup> There was speculation that Russia was not as enthusiastic as it was before in supporting India's candidature and might water down its public formulation on the issue. But Medvedev came through strongly to endorse India's case for a permanent seat. The only exception to the renewed support for India's quest in the UNSC was China. During his visit, Wen was unwilling to go beyond the traditional Chinese formulation that Beijing 'understands India's aspirations to play a larger role' in the UN. China, it might be recalled, was at the forefront of defeating the joint campaign for UNSC expansion by India, Japan, Germany and Brazil during 2005. China's reluctance to modify its position in favour of India was put in context by the strident Pakistani reaction to the international support for Delhi at the end of 2010.<sup>22</sup>

While India is aware that the UNSC reform and winning a permanent seat are not going to be easy, there is a new determination in Delhi to push for its objective and a measure of satisfaction that the level of international support has begun to grow. Meanwhile, as a newly elected non-permanent member of the UNSC, India has agreed to step up consultations with all the big powers on the global security agenda. Whether India becomes a permanent member of the UNSC or not, the next two years are likely to see an intensification of Delhi's role in issues relating to international security and strengthening of its multilateral diplomacy.

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<sup>19</sup> Karl Inderfurth, 'Obama's opportunity', *The Indian Express* (18 October 2010), p.12; Ashley Tellis, 'Obama in India: Building a Global Partnership: Challenges, Risks, Opportunities', *Policy Outlook* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, October 2010), p.29.

<sup>20</sup> See Obama's address to the joint sitting of the Indian Parliament on 8 November 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Text-of-President-Barack-Obamas-address-to-Indias-parliament-/articleshow/6889675.cms>. Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>21</sup> See, 'India-France: Partnership for the Future', Joint Statement issued by Dr Singh and Sarkozy, New Delhi (6 December 2010), [www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530516770](http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530516770). Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>22</sup> 'Pak, China have "unanimous stand" on India's UNSC bid: Qureshi', *Economic Times* (13 November 2010), p.2.

## War on Terror

Since the outrageous terror attack on Mumbai on 26 November 2008, India has sought to mobilise international support to press Pakistan to bring the plotters of the attack to justice. In the wake of the attack, there was great empathy for India and there was considerable technical support in investigating the incident that had links to actors in many countries, including Pakistan. But the international community, especially the US, was reluctant to condemn Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism against India. Two years later, India has gained stronger support from the international leaders. Obama began his tour in Mumbai and stayed at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel that was the principal site of the terror attack. Sarkozy and Medvedev also paid their respects to the victims of the 26/11. While Cameron did not visit Mumbai, he offered a critique of Pakistan's policy that stunned Islamabad and surprised Delhi. During his first stop at Bangalore, Cameron became the first Western leader to speak candidly about Pakistan's role in promoting terror in the subcontinent. 'We cannot tolerate in any sense the idea that this country is allowed to look both ways and is able, in any way, to promote the export of terror, whether to India or whether to Afghanistan or anywhere else in the world,' Cameron declared.<sup>23</sup>

India had few expectations that the high bar set by Cameron would be met by the others. Delhi's focus was on acquiring explicit support for early action from Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice, shut down the safe havens of terrorism on its soil, and act against the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Pakistan army's principal instrument of terror against India. Obama offered a cautious formulation that went beyond the old Washington ambiguities, but nevertheless balancing US interests in India and Pakistan, 'We'll continue to insist to Pakistan's leaders that terrorist safe havens within their borders are unacceptable, and that terrorists behind the Mumbai attacks must be brought to justice. We must also recognise that all of us have an interest in both an Afghanistan and a Pakistan that are stable, prosperous and democratic and India has an interest in that, as well.'<sup>24</sup> Sarkozy and Medvedev were a little stronger in their formulations than Obama, but Wen was unwilling to offer anything specific and India had to be satisfied with a general formulation on terrorism that made no reference to Pakistan. India was aware that words alone are not going to improve its security condition *vis-à-vis* the challenge of terrorism. It is also aware that the international community's dependence on Pakistan to stabilise Afghanistan means there are limits to Western leverage over Islamabad. What matters more is the increased prospect of institutionalised cooperation with major powers in dealing with terrorism and extremism on the ground. The joint

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<sup>23</sup> Rosa Prince, 'David Cameron: Pakistan is promoting the "export of terror"', *Daily Telegraph*, London (28 July 2010), [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/7913905/David-Cameron-Pakistan-is-promoting-the-export-of-terror.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/7913905/David-Cameron-Pakistan-is-promoting-the-export-of-terror.html). Accessed on 27 December 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Obama's address to the joint sitting of the Indian Parliament on 8 November 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Text-of-President-Barack-Obamas-address-to-Indias-parliament/articleshow/6889675.cms>. Accessed on 4 January 2011.



statements from the Obama, Sarkozy, Cameron and Medvedev administrations underlined the commitment to strengthen India's counter terror cooperation. Delhi also focused on getting broad support for India's positive role in Afghanistan from the West, underlined stronger engagement with Russia on regional security and got China to agree to begin consultations on Afghanistan.

## **Asian Security Order**

Amidst the growing international awareness of the shift in the world's centre of gravity from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Asian security issues figured prominently in India's engagement with Obama, Wen and Medvedev. At the heart of the declarations was India finding a way to enhance its position in constructing a new Asian security order and emerging as an indispensable element of regional balance of power. Through the last decade, India had stepped up its involvement in the Western Pacific by expanding security cooperation with the US, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Australia. Obama surprised his hosts by strongly endorsing India's 'Look East' Policy (LEP) and urged Delhi that India should do more in Asia. 'Like your neighbours in Southeast Asia, we want India not only to "look East", we want India to "engage East" – because it will increase the security and prosperity of all our nations,' Obama declared.<sup>25</sup> Amidst a new emphasis on 'returning to Asia' and reclaiming its position in the region amidst the rise of China, the Obama administration has set some value with engaging India on Asian security issues, during a dialogue on East Asia with India during 2010.<sup>26</sup> The ASEAN decision in October to invite the US and Russia to join the East Asia Summit (EAS) underlined the new urgency in the region to develop a credible regional framework to deal with the rapid changes in the distribution of power. On its part, India welcomed the entry of the US and Russia into the EAS and in the joint declarations with Obama and Medvedev, India emphasised the importance of an 'open and inclusive' architecture for the region. The formulation with China was similar but the reality of differences with China on the future of Asian security were not far below the surface. While both sides talked about the importance of strengthening cooperation in all Asian multilateral organisations and called for greater consultations on regional issues, Beijing was apparently reluctant to include any specific references to security issues in East Asia. An example would be Beijing's reluctance to comment on the tensions on the Korean peninsula that had acquired a new salience towards the end of 2010.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Obama's address to the joint sitting of the Indian Parliament on 8 November 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Text-of-President-Barack-Obamas-address-to-Indias-parliament-/articleshow/6889675.cms>. Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Josh Rogin, 'U.S. and India take their relationship beyond South Asia' (15 November 2010), [www.thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/11/15/the\\_us\\_and\\_india\\_take\\_their\\_relationship\\_beyond\\_south\\_asia](http://www.thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/11/15/the_us_and_india_take_their_relationship_beyond_south_asia). Accessed on 6 January 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Author's conversations with senior MEA officials (18 December 2010).

## Future Challenges

India's impressive economic growth rate amidst a global recession provided a strong basis for intensified cooperation with all the major powers. Yet three important challenges have begun to emerge in India's engagement with the great powers. Until now, thanks to the absence of great power tensions, India could pursue cooperation with each of them without a reference to another. That unconstrained bilateralism, however, may come to an end as tensions between the US and China acquire a new edge and the 'reset' of relations between Washington and Moscow remains unfinished. Indian diplomacy, however, must now adapt to new circumstances where its relations with one great power might affect those with others. Balancing China had been an important subtext of the improvement of Indo-US relations during the Bush years. It might have acquired a more explicit dimension under Obama as both the US and India cope with the rise of China. The Chinese media has certainly taken note of the implications of the deepening partnership between the US and India.<sup>28</sup> The deterioration of Sino-Indian relations during 2008-09 might have been paused during Wen's visit, but the two nations remain far apart on the questions of global governance and regional security order. Meanwhile their disputes over territorial sovereignty of Kashmir and Tibet have acquired a new edge. On the eve of Medvedev's visit, there was speculation that Moscow was unhappy with the warming of Indo-US relations. Moscow was also apparently concerned with the potential loss of its primacy in arms supply to India.<sup>29</sup> Although the unalloyed success of Medvedev's visit might have masked these concerns, they might remain relevant as long as US-Russia relations remain uncertain.

Second, the AfPak situation, in general, and the question of Pakistan, in particular, are likely to cast a shadow over India's future relations with the great powers. It is not easy for the US, the West and Russia to translate their demands on Islamabad on ending cross border terrorism into concrete pressures against the Pakistan Army. That might involve a fundamental change in their current strategies towards the stabilisation of Afghanistan. If India cannot bet on the great powers to change Pakistan's strategic calculus *vis-à-vis* India, Delhi will have to find ways to revive a measure of engagement with Pakistan that was stalled after the Mumbai attacks. Expanded activism in Afghanistan could be one way of India influencing Pakistan as well as those of the great powers. While the international leaders welcomed India's economic role in Afghanistan, the level of support for a more strategic Indian role in Afghanistan is not clear. Meanwhile as India's relations with the West and the US continue to improve, China's stakes in its all weather friendship with Pakistan are growing rapidly. That in turn brings

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<sup>28</sup> Li Hongmei, 'Obama greets India with more than a lip service?', *People's Daily Online* (9 November 2010), <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90002/96417/7193497.html>. Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Vladimir Radyuhin, 'Is the glass half full or half empty', *The Hindu* (16 December 2010), p.12.

India to one of the perennial security problems that has confronted it – the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan.

Finally, while India takes credit for winning the support of all major powers barring China for a seat at the high table, Delhi will be under a big test to demonstrate its readiness to take larger responsibilities on the global stage, especially as a non-permanent member in the UNSC during the next two years. In endorsing India's rise, Obama reminded the political classes in Delhi of the new international expectations:

‘With increased power comes increased responsibility. The United Nations exists to fulfill its founding ideals of preserving peace and security, promoting global cooperation, and advancing human rights. These are the responsibilities of all nations, but especially those that seek to lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And so we look forward to working with India – and other nations that aspire to Security Council membership – to ensure that the Security Council is effective; that resolutions are implemented, that sanctions are enforced; that we strengthen the international norms which recognise the rights and responsibilities of all nations and all individuals.’<sup>30</sup>

India, however, is not unaware of the challenge and is likely to interpret it in its own ways. As Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said, ‘There is no scope for fence-sitting. There is no room for prevarication. Our positions will need to be the outcome of comprehensive analysis and will require careful, well-modulated articulation. Our aim should be not merely to avoid negative fallout on our relations with various countries but to see how we could leverage our Council membership in order to shape its debate and promote outcomes that are aligned to our interests.’<sup>31</sup> The year 2011 is likely to demonstrate how effectively India will measure up to the new opportunities and challenges that await it on the global stage.

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<sup>30</sup> Obama's address to the joint sitting of the Indian Parliament on 8 November 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Text-of-President-Barack-Obamas-address-to-Indias-parliament-/articleshow/6889675.cms>. Accessed on 4 January 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Shyam Saran, ‘India in the UN Security Council’, *Business Standard* (New Delhi), [www.editorialjunction.com/opinions/shyam-saran-india-in-the-un-security-council/](http://www.editorialjunction.com/opinions/shyam-saran-india-in-the-un-security-council/). Accessed on 27 December 2010.