

US PIVOT TO ASIA-IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

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Introduction

In January 2012, US formally outlined a major policy decision that seeks to shift the weight of US diplomatic, military and economic engagement to the Asia-Pacific region by 2020. The ‘US Pivot to Asia’¹, as it was first called and ‘Rebalancing’² as it came to be termed subsequently, is a significant development that is likely to shape the geopolitical contours of the entire world in the coming years. Essentially, the policy aims to ensure the primacy of US leadership in a region that is emerging as the new hub of world trade and economy.

However this quest for leadership invariably puts the US onto a competitive course with China which sees itself as the natural and pre-eminent power in Asia. While the US has insisted that its policy is not directed at any particular country, many in China view it as an effort at ‘containment’. On the other hand, economic interdependence between the US and China is so great today that an open conflict would be mutually disastrous and both countries do realise this. But the US formal security alliances with many of China’s neighbours can draw it into bilateral disputes.

India is the other major rising power in Asia and is acknowledged as a regional power in its own right. India has its own interests in the region and its engagement has been growing over the years through its Look East Policy. While India has followed an independent foreign policy it is finding it difficult to balance an increasingly assertive China on its own. Against this backdrop the US pivot can be seen as both timely and necessary.

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1. In US lexicon, Asia implies East Asia i.e. the countries bordering the Pacific Ocean. It does not imply the Asian continent as a whole.
 2. The term “rebalancing” has firmed up in the official US discourse while “pivot” is more used by the media and policy analysts.

Overview of the Pivot Strategy

Strategic Backdrop

The US Pivot is driven by a mix of strategic, economic, political and domestic factors that have been at play for close to a decade now. The 21st century being an ‘Asian century’ was being talked about by analysts for quite sometime. However, what has been of surprise is that the rise has been so fast and so spectacular, especially that of China. But before the US could shift its focus from Europe a more immediate threat developed in the form of international terrorism compelling US strategic focus to shift to the global war on terror. This period also coincided with a prolonged economic slow down forcing President Obama came to order a strategic review of the assets and liabilities that his government had inherited for laying down of global priorities in the coming decades. The Pivot to Asia was the outcome of this exercise.

Meanwhile China’s rapid military modernisation and increasing intransigence in its maritime disputes in the South China Sea, raised concerns amongst US allies about a lack of US will or ability to assert its influence in East Asia. Thus it became imperative for the US to reassure its treaty partners and in this context, the pivot policy can be seen as strategic signalling to both friends and potential adversaries.

Key Features of the US Strategy

The key features that are discernible combine all the instruments of national power and fall under five dimensions.³

- **Military Redeployment.** Substantially enhancing the force levels in the US Pacific Command (PACOM) for quick projection of power at potential flash points in the form of smaller, agile, self-sustaining expeditionary forces. In 2012, the former US Secretary of Defence, Leon Panetta stated that, “By 2020 the US will re-posture its forces from today’s roughly 50/50 percent split between the Pacific and the Atlantic to about a 60/40 ratio.”⁴ In contrast to the earlier practice of large permanent bases, the reliance will now be on ‘rotational deployment’ of units operating out of bases of partner countries.

3. SD Muni, in SD Muni and Vivek Chadha (eds.), op. cit. pp. 10-11.

4. “The US Rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific”, Leon Panetta, US Secretary of Defence, 11th Shangri-La Dialogue, June 2, 2012, IISS. <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/speeches> (Accessed February 27, 2015).

- **Security Cooperation.** The US strength in the Asia Pacific is dependent to a considerable extent on its traditional allies and partners, further augmented by strategic partnerships with like-minded nations. Proposals like the US-Japan-India strategic triangle etc need to be seen in this context. It is mainly aimed at achieving greater access to naval facilities, increase in joint exercises and institutionalised engagement with foreign militaries.
- **Strengthening Regional Architecture.** The US wants to ensure that it remains a key player in regional groupings like the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and prevent them from falling under Chinese dominance. Thus it gained entry into the East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2011, has proactively been participating in the Shangri-La dialogue and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). One of the most dramatic turnarounds in US policy has been the outreach to Myanmar, in addition to reaching out to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.
- **Economic Engagement.** The US is trying hard to establish the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) which aims to bind the region into a stable economic zone and become the world's largest free trade area. The US has concluded bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) with South Korea, Australia and Singapore. Negotiations are underway with Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan for similar agreements.
- **Ideological Assertion.** The strategy aims to propagate the values US holds dear; namely freedom, democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights. In this context, S. D. Muni points out, "The ideological component in the strategy is aimed at generating internal pressures within China to open up the society, polity and economy."⁵ US success in pulling away Myanmar from the Chinese orbit is a manifestation of this.

US Pivot: Responses and Prospects

Response of China

Two divergent trends are evident in the Chinese response wherein there is a difference between reactions at the official level and what is being commented about in the media. While remarks made by government officials are by and large reserved, the articles appearing in print and the internet have been highly critical

5. S D Muni, "Rebalancing Obama 2.0: India's Democratic Differential", ISAS Insight, 191, November 26, 2012, National University of Singapore <http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg> (Accessed February 13, 2015).

of the US. Considering that the media in China is under tight state control, the dichotomy appears to be a conscious decision to appear unperturbed on surface yet convey displeasure and a warning to the US.

As a counter, China on the economic front is deepening its institutional engagement in the region as seen by the establishment of an Asian Infrastructure Development Bank and enabling select ASEAN nations to buy Renminbi denominated securities to permit direct trading between the two countries' currencies.⁶ However it is the response on the military front that best conveys Chinese intentions. It has lately included its maritime disputes in the South China Sea as non-negotiable 'core issues', implying preparedness to use force in case of a showdown and is accordingly fast developing its military capability to a level that allows it to deter US intervention.

Response of Asia-Pacific Countries

In general, two trends are discernible in the response of the Asia-Pacific countries. Countries which are involved in protracted maritime territorial disputes with China have officially come out in favour of the US Pivot policy i.e. Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. Australia and Singapore too believe that the pivot is a strategic necessity for restoring the security balance in the Pacific. However a vast majority of the countries have been circumspect in offering their unqualified support. These include India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.⁷ Each country is attempting to deal with the challenge in its own way depending on its strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the US-China equation.

Sustainability of the US Pivot

While elements of the strategy are still unfolding, doubts are being cast whether the US has the ability and the resources to pursue the policy to its logical end. Reservations are being cast along three lines namely, changing strategic scenario, budgetary constraints and diminishing political will.

- **Strategic Factors.** Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine have caused a sharp deterioration in relations and brought US focus back to Europe. On the other

6. "New Initiatives to Strengthen China-Singapore Financial Cooperation", Press release by the Monetary Authority of Singapore, October 22, 2013, at <http://www.mas.gov.sg> (Accessed March 13, 2015)

7. Simon Denyer and Rama Lakshmi, "India Appears Ambivalent About Role as US Strategy Pivots Towards Asia", The Washington Post, October 13, 2012, at <http://articles.washingtonpost.com> (Accessed March 13, 2015).

hand pressing events in the Middle East since 2012 namely, Syria, Yemen, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Iran have strategically distracted the US. All these problems are complex and will demand investment of time and resources over the long term. This brings into question the ability of the US to focus on three strategic theatres simultaneously i.e. Europe, Middle East and Asia Pacific.⁸

- **Budgetary Constraints.** Recession along with costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has forced drastic spending cuts on the US government. The 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA) aims to reduce defence spending by \$ 500 Billion over the next nine years, over and above the \$ 487 Billion budget cut already underway. Accordingly, the Pentagon's budget for 2014-15, proposes a reduction in the number of active-duty Army from 520,000 to 440,000, phasing out its fleet of A-10 and U-2 aircraft and reduce the number of Littoral Combat ships from 52 to 32.
- **Political Will.** The biggest problem about the pivot is the apparent US lack of will to confront China as showcased during the Senkaku Islands and Scarborough Shoal standoff involving Japan and Philippines respectively.⁹ The US response to China's unilateral notification of the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the South China Sea too has been muted.

Indian Interests and Challenges in the Asia Pacific

For its first two decades the Look East Policy, enunciated in 1991, mainly remained focused on the ASEAN nations and almost became synonymous with it. It is only lately that India has begun to seriously engage with countries further away like Japan, South Korea, Australia and China. While other regions in the world are important there is no doubt that the importance of the Asia-Pacific is higher and growing. The stakes for India are substantial on their own merit and have nothing to do with the US Pivot to Asia, but the issues involved get affected by the larger power play unfolding in the region. Therefore there is no option for India but to dovetail the US Pivot and the responses of regional players into its own calculus.

8. Minxin Pei, "America's Pivot Paradox: Ukraine, Syria and Beyond", *The National Interest*, April 24, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org> (Accessed February 27, 2015).

9. Carlyle A. Thayer, "Standoff at Scarborough Shoal: Implications for US China Relations", May 09, 2012, *China US Focus*, www.chinausfocus.com (Accessed March 13, 2015).

India's Interests

- **Economic Interests.** An analysis of India's trade over the past decade reveals that the total volume of India's trade grew 5.38 times, but the trade with traditional partners like the US and European Union (EU) is declining while that with Asian countries is rising. Today 53% of India's trade is within Asia compared to 38% just a decade ago. This is explained by the fact that, as Asian countries develop they are able to provide both material and markets closer home at more competitive prices; therefore there is no doubt that India's future lie in the Asia- Pacific.
- **Balancing China.** India is finding it difficult to counter increasing Chinese assertiveness on its borders and China appears to be using this as a pressure point for political signalling. Therefore it is imperative for India to develop leverages or pressure points against China by building a common understanding with countries which have territorial disputes with China, such as Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and Philippines.
- **Regional Architecture.** The 21st century is seeing the growing importance of regional groupings as a framework for advancing geostrategic interests.. The efforts towards creation of a US led TPP, an ASEAN led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a Japan led Comprehensive Economic Partnership in East Asia (CEPEA) and a Chinese led East Asia Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) need to be seen in this context.¹⁰
- **Regional Stability and Security.** A natural corollary of India's expanding trade and commerce in East Asia is that, it has become a stakeholder in the stability and security of the region. The region has the world's six largest armed forces and five nuclear powers and many countries herein have a bitter history of rivalry and conflict, evident in the South China Sea dispute. 50% of India's own trade by volume passes through the area Thus it is in India's interest to help reduce tensions and promote stability.
- **Energy Security.** Faced with growing energy requirements but trying to reduce dependency on the Middle East, India has been trying to diversify its sources of oil and gas. East Asian countries like Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar can meet a part of India's requirements. India is also looking at oil from Siberia which will have to pass through this region. Thus the region holds promise for India's energy security.

10. Murray Hiebert and Liam Hanlon, "ASEAN and Partners Launch RCEP", Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 7, 2012 <http://csis.org/publications> (Accessed March 14, 2015).

India's Challenges

India's engagement with the Asia-Pacific has primarily been through the aegis of its Look East Policy, which despite being endorsed by successive governments, suffers from numerous constraints and inconsistencies.

- **Comparative Trade.** Even though India's trade with ASEAN appears to be impressive, it pales in comparison with that of others, particularly China. A Forbes study notes "India runs trade deficits with 16 of its top 25 trade partners due to its weak manufacturing sector which stems from restrictive labor, land and tax laws, rickety infrastructure and inadequate power supply. Roughly 70% of India's trade deficit is due to net imports of oil and coal. This has nothing to do with China, but rather with ill-designed policiesIndia could benefit far more from putting its own house in order."¹¹
- **Prioritisation of Trade and Ties.** Investments in some countries yield greater political benefit than others. A Heritage Foundation study notes, "Singapore, a country where investment gives the least political influence, gets the greatest Indian investment within ASEAN. Vietnam with whom India shares a strategic partnership trades 10 times as much with China as with India. Myanmar, India's only ASEAN neighbour and a country at the heart of China-India competition, receives 33% of its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China and less than 1% from India. Indonesia the largest and most influential member of the ASEAN despite signing a strategic partnership in 2005 has bilateral trade worth just \$ 20 Billion".¹² The bottom line is that, while India's trade with ASEAN is growing, it is not paying the political dividend due to incorrect prioritisation of the countries that matter.
- **Overland Connectivity.** A large number of projects have been drawn to improve road and rail connectivity to the North Eastern States and link up with Myanmar but all of them are languishing far behind schedule.¹³ The 3200 km trilateral highway connecting Moreh in India, to Mandalay in Myanmar and further to Mae Sot Thailand is likely to again miss its 2016

11. "Five Reasons India Shouldn't Worry about its Trade Deficit with China", September 23, 2014, Forbes. www.forbes.com (Accessed April 02, 2015).

12. Udai Bhanu Singh, "India-Indonesia: Is there a Case for a Special Relationship?", January 13, 2011, Focus on India-Indonesia Relations, IDSA, www.idsa.org (Accessed April 02, 2015).

13. Infrastructure, Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region, DONER www.mdoner.gov.in and "ASEAN-India Connectivity Report: India Country Study", 2012, Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS), www.ris.org.in (Accessed April 02, 2015)

deadline by another two years.¹⁴ Plans to link the railways with Myanmar and eventually to Hanoi in Vietnam remain on paper.

- **Diplomatic Capacity.** India's Look East Policy requires massive diplomatic capital, but the strength of the Indian Foreign Service presently stands at approximately 600 officers manning around 162 Indian missions and posts abroad as well as the various departments of the ministry in India.¹⁵ The Economist notes that, "The size of India's foreign service is ridiculously feeble. Its 1.2 Billion people are represented by about the same number of diplomats as Singapore's 5 Million."¹⁶ As a result Indian failure to outreach and follow up on policy initiatives is also explained by an overstretched foreign service.

Sino-India and Indo-US Relations

India's relations with the two biggest players in the region are essential to understand, as a precursor to generating policy options for India. The major aspects of these, as they impact India's Look East Policy, are enumerated.

Sino-India Relations

In general, China has tried to keep India out of any community building process in the Asia-Pacific as it sees India as a serious challenger in the long term. Chinese scholars have consistently tried to downplay Indian historical and cultural links with the region, with a view to dismiss it is an 'outsider'. Eminent Chinese scholar Li Li writes, "As India gets more involved in East Asia, it may bring its disputes with China into the regional mechanisms, which may require rest of the nations of the region to take sides."¹⁷ The Chinese media on its part sees a military dimension in India's Look East Policy. Port calls by Indian naval vessels and naval exercises involving the US, Japan, Australia have come under strong criticism.

14. "UP-Thailand Highway may Miss 2016 Deadline", September 26, 2014, Financial Express, www.archive.financialexpress.com (Accessed April 02, 2015).

15. 'Indian Missions Abroad' and 'Indian Foreign Service', MEA, GOI, www.mea.gov.in (Accessed April 02, 2015).

16. "Can India Become a Great Power?" The Economist, March 30, 2013, www.economist.com (Accessed April 02, 2015).

17. Li Li, "India's Engagement with East Asia: A Chinese Perspective", 2010, Paper Presented at the 24th Asia-Pacific Roundtable at Kuala Lumpur, ISIS, www.isis.org.my (Accessed March 14, 2015).

The Chinese stance along the disputed border with India is hardening as evidenced by the growing transgressions of the Line of Actual Control by the Peoples Liberation Army – both in depth and troop levels. China’s opposition to Indian dignitaries visiting Arunachal Pradesh, the issue of stapled visas for citizens from the state, support of the Pakistani stance on Jammu & Kashmir, its efforts to divert the waters of the Brahmaputra, its opposition to India’s entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group and a permanent seat in the UN Security Council are major sore points for India.

Despite a serious trust deficit, trade between India and China has touched nearly \$ 70 Billion, with China emerging as India’s largest trading partner. Beyond economic engagement, both have actively been cooperating during talks on climate change, at the G20 Summit, BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), BASIC (Brazil-South Africa-India-China) and the WTO (World Trade Organisation). Terrorism emanating from the Af-Pak region is also emerging as a major shared concern.

Indo-US Relations

Despite being the world’s two largest democracies, traditionally Indo-US relations have remained lukewarm due to a mismatch of worldviews and divergent national priorities. Relations hit rock bottom with India’s nuclear tests in 1998 when the US took the lead in imposing sanctions against India. However, 9/11 and the rise of global terrorism brought the two countries together. President George Bush recognised the necessity of making a new beginning with India and PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee also displayed immense sagacity in rebuilding the relationship. A Heritage Foundation study notes “President Bush pushed the ‘Indo-US civil nuclear deal’ to end India’s prolonged nuclear and technological isolation and raised bilateral ties to the level of a strategic partnership. This final lyde-hyphenated Indo-US ties from the prism of Pakistan and Kashmir. President Obama, despite his reservations on the civil nuclear deal, extended its logic by supporting India’s membership in various international trade groupings and backing India’s quest for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council.”¹⁸

18. Sunjoy Joshi, C. Raja Mohan, Vikram Sood, Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, James Jay Carafano, Walter Lohman, Lisa Curtis and Derek Scissors, “Beyond the Plateau in Indo-US Relations”, The Heritage Foundation, 26 April 2013, www.heritage.org (Accessed March 14, 2015).

The shared interests between the two countries range from access to global commons, combating terrorism, stability in Afghanistan, curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, nuclear nonproliferation, promoting human rights, free trade and building cooperative defence arrangements. Above all, both countries have a vital stake in the peaceful rise of China and regional stability in Asia. Despite broad convergence on most issues, both often disagree on their specifics. There are sharp differences over the approach to climate change, global trade, tariffs & subsidies and US soft-pedaling Pakistan over terrorism.

Policy Options for India

Unlike the Cold War where the West and the Communist Blocks were divided into isolated spheres, today's world is far more interdependent and complex. Thus the old constructs of 'containment', 'balancing' or 'hedging' are possibly unsuited for today's dynamics and a new strategic framework is needed.

Chart a New Course with Beijing

While a lot of actions taken by China affect India's strategic interests, not everything that China does is aimed at India, but the view from India invariably gets coloured by the historical baggage of the 1962 war. Chinese actions like tweaking of the 'no first use' clause in its nuclear doctrine, the enunciation of the Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2 / AD) concept, notification of the ADIZ and outlining of its non-negotiable core interests do affect India, but are not directed at India alone. Similarly, China's forays into the Indian Ocean possibly stem more from its need to secure its energy supplies from Africa and West Asia rather than any power projection. Therefore it stands to logic that India should build its relationship with China independent of the dynamics in the Asia-Pacific.

Chinese leaders have time and again affirmed that, "there is enough space in the world for the development of both India and China and indeed relations among them now go beyond their bilateral scope and have acquired global and strategic significance."¹⁹ If trade and interdependence between China and India rises, it can relegate the contentious issues to a lower priority and eventually facilitate their resolution. In any case, China is making deep inroads into South Asia by strengthening economic engagement with each of India's neighbours thus the only option it has is to constructively engage with China or get left out.

19. Joint Communiqué issued by India and China after talks between PM Manmohan Singh and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at New Delhi on December 16, 2010, The Times of India, December 17, 2010.

But this scenario of a ‘win win’ relationship with China suffers from a number of dangers. Firstly, China sees itself as the pre-eminent power in entire Asia. In this worldview there is no place for India or any other Asian power. Secondly, the question “what kind of power will China become?” is getting answered by China’s inflexibility in its disputes in the South China Sea. This implies that despite economic cooperation, India can never be sure when China will start arm-twisting India over their differences. Thirdly, India’s economic base is still weak. If the economic engagement is not carefully calibrated, it runs the risk of widening the trade imbalance and overwhelming and killing many sectors of the Indian economy.

Cooperate More Closely with the US

The underlying logic is that India does not really have any dispute with the US. The differences between them are normal for any two nations and India has benefitted from a stabilising US influence in its extended neighbourhood. As the Heritage study notes, “If the Indo-US relationship was imagined in the past decade in abstract terms and lofty possibilities, the reality today is that both need each other even more than before. As the US continues its role as the chief defender of the global commons, India must do its share, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-US partnership is indispensable to regional peace, security and prosperity.”²⁰

Endorsing this view, Premvir Das, a senior retired Indian Naval officer states, “India does not really mind a uni-polar world in which the US is the principal actor but, in Asia, it definitely needs to be a player. Yet, to get there, it needs a helping hand and the country best placed to provide it, in every way, military, political and economic, is the US. Indian strategy should be to see how it can exploit this environment to its advantage without compromising on its goal of becoming one of the major powers in Asia.”²¹

There is no doubt that Chinese attitude towards India has changed over the last few years from disdain to grudging respect primarily due to the growing relationship between India and the US and other Asia-Pacific countries. To that extent, the Indo-US relationship has already balanced China considerably. Closer cooperation with the US will also have other benefits like military modernisation, transfer of technology and greater leverage against Pakistan.

20. Sunjoy Joshi, et al, op. cit.

21. Premvir Das, “US-India Defence Links: The Next Level”, Business Standard, June 17, 2012, www.business-standard.com (Accessed March 14, 2015).

While closer ties with the US seem the natural course for India, this too has its pitfalls. Firstly, close ties with the US can precipitate a conflict with China. Close ties with the US by itself may not be enough reason for war, but it can add greatly to other factors. For India, the bottom line is that the US can do little if war breaks out in the high Himalayas, therefore it must keep up its guard and mend its fences with Beijing. Secondly, India's appeal lies in its non-alignment hence other states are looking for greater Indian engagement in the region only because it is perceived as a strong neutral power. If India aligns openly with the US, it will discomfort the smaller nations and diminish this very appeal. Thirdly, it is a fallacy to assume that India can or should help in arresting the decline of US influence around the world. US decline is the result of economic reasons for which India can do little. India had been enduring instability in its neighbourhood and proxy war before the thaw in relations with the US and can do so even now.

Pursue an Independent Course

This option advocates a policy of independence and self-reliance. A variant of this view calls upon India to act as a 'swing state'.²² In geopolitical parlance, a 'swing state' is one which can tilt the balance of power either way between two strong competing powers. In this case, for India to be a swinger, would involve deft diplomacy and posturing to play off US against China. The advantages and disadvantages of pursuing an independent policy have to an extent got answered in the foregoing discussion. To summarise, the pros of following an independent course are that: it reinforces India's international standing as a responsible neutral power; it adds to India's appeal where it can play a constructive role internationally; and it reduces the chances of a conflict with China. The cons are that: the rising asymmetry between India and China necessitates external balancing to prevent coercion, Indian soft power alone cannot match Chinese influence and needs to be backed up by comprehensive national power and India's economic base is still weak and needs massive technological and capital investment that can come only from the US or China.

Conclusion

While the US seeks a role for India to balance China, for India, China is first and foremost a neighbour and an economic opportunity. That said, it is inconceivable

22. Sonia Luthra, "India as a Global Swing State: A New Framework for US Engagement with India", July 22, 2013, the National Bureau of Asian Research, www.nbr.org (Accessed March 14, 2015).

that India and US will ever go to war, but the same cannot be said about China. Kanwal Sibal, a former Foreign Secretary, puts it succinctly, “We should, of course, continue our engagement with China bilaterally and in international forums. We should, however, not forget that our real adversary is China and not the US. China claims our territory, the US our partnership. We can tactically send reassuring signals to China, even as we become close partners with the US, but we need not equate our relations with the two to preserve our strategic autonomy.”²³

Sino-Indian ties can only improve if Beijing becomes more accommodative of India’s interests and concerns. To do that it must settle the boundary dispute on reasonable terms, stop propping up Pakistan and accept a greater role for India in Asian affairs. But if that does not happen, then India will need to balance China both internally and externally. Internal balancing would require building up its comprehensive national power. External balancing would require closer partnerships with other countries in the Asia-Pacific. As the signals from Beijing remain ambivalent, what India needs is a combination of both.

The fundamentals of India’s Look East Policy are sound but recalibration and new impetus are essential to expedite the fulfilment of ‘internal and external balancing’. As C Raja Mohan notes, “In the end, it is not about choosing between any of the options. India will have to move forward on all the fronts. Internal balancing, alliances, and asymmetric approaches are as old as statecraft. They are not inventions of modern political thought from Europe or America, but date back to the era of Kautilya’s Arthashastra. China’s rise and America’s response to it have laid before India its greatest geopolitical opportunity and the biggest diplomatic challenge since independence. It is up to the Indian policy community to rescue the debate in Delhi from empty slogans, return to the first principles of statecraft and reconnect it to inherited strategic traditions.”²⁴

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23. Kanwal Sibal, ‘Ties with China, US Not Exclusive’, Mail Today, June 26, 2012, www.mailtoday.com (Accessed March 14, 2015).

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