

INDIA'S GLOBAL EMERGENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH ASIA

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“[India] has a substantial military apparatus, a growing economy with some world-class sectors, and democratic political institutions that have withstood countless vicissitudes. Consequently, India's place in the global order at the Cold War's end merits careful scrutiny”.

Sumit Ganguly, *India as an Emerging Power*.¹

1. Introduction

With the end of Cold War, the composite and implausible changes have taken place in the global and regional politics. The 'strategic shifting' is the common inclination to understand the interface of these changing realities. In South Asia, the strategic transformation is rather visible and has enormously drawn global attention. Many South Asian countries are now at the stage of maturity and are interlinked with high level global politics. The complex bilateral relations, the engagement of competitive military upsurge, and the delicate multilateral framework make it more critical in sustaining peace and human development. The strategic and military modernization and the nature and scope of its rising power have scared the entire region. Particularly, India's hard slog to enlarge its strategic ties with global powers and its geo-political ambitions vis-à-vis Pakistan's mind-set of being disgraced/ back sided and its efforts to be interlinked with global powers could untie *Pandora's box* for other countries to seek their strategic options.

India has emerged as a military power in regional and global security affairs, a trade partner with multiple-digit GDP growth rate, and a liberalized market economy with stable investment opportunities. Stephen P. Cohen, in his book titled *India: Emerging Power* recognizes various domestic and international factors behind India's global emergence. He discusses the material capabilities, domestic politics, relations with regional countries including Pakistan and China, and new strategic partnership with the United

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¹ Ganguly, S. (2003), ed., *India as an Emerging Power*, London: Frank Cass, p.1

States that shaping their perceptions in the world, and its power prospects.² During last few years, India has initiated a series of ladders to renovate its strategic cooperation with many power states. Since 1990s, India- a leading non-aligned and long-term communist alliance country- has improved strategic relationship with the United States. The nuclear deal between India and USA has substantiated India's apparent entry into the global elite Nuclear Club with *de facto* membership. Despite the Palestinian cause, growing ties with Iran, and the large sentiment of South Asian Muslim populace, Indo-Israel relations have been growing in a new rapidity. The Indo-Israel defense partnership has reached a critical mass in recent years.³ India is also strategically potential candidate to be awarded a permanent seat on an expanded UN Security Council. Thus, all these strategic triumph has epitomized the global emergence of India. These can directly and indirectly influence the strategic matrix of South Asia and its small states.

However, considering complex bilateral relations and India's skeptical role in multilateral framework in South Asia, this study would be an endeavor to conceptualize specific implications of India's global emergence for South Asian region. To do so, this study begins by analysing empirical issues of India's global emergence. It argues that three factors are critically important to understand India's global emergence: (i) India's growing military capabilities, (ii) global integration of Indian economy, and (ii) its new strategic partnership with key global powers. These give India political and economic clout in regional and global spheres, and thereby furthering India's rise to power. The paper then turns its focus on general patterns of bilateral and multilateral relations in South Asia *vis a vis* India, and attempts to conceptualize specific implications of India's global emergence for South Asia largely based on thee basic assumptions regarding the future impact of India's global emergence on the region.

2. India's Global Emergence: Empirical Issues

Since the post-Cold War period, India has been evolving from a consumer of security to a producer of its own security.⁴ It is moving

² Cohen, S. P. (2001), *India: Emerging Power*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press; Cohen, S.P. (Summer 2006) "India Rising", *The Wilson Quarterly*, Massachusetts: the Brookings Institution.

³ Watson, P. "Arms at the Heart of India-Israel Embrace," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 September, 2003.

⁴ Tellis, A.J. (1996), *India: Assessing Strategy and Military Capabilities in the Year 2000*, Santa Monica CA.: The Rand Corporation, p.12.

forward with its strategic agenda to be global power both in military and economic terms. In the 21st Century, India has been emerging as a key global strategic, economic and political power marking 'India Century'. Thus it is obvious to know what makes India different in power and status. Is it India's military might, diasporic diplomacy, the decade-long economic 'stealth miracle,' the strategic affinity with global powers, democratic credibility and cultural diversity? However, the next section attempts to bring out the empirical issues that make sense of 'Indian Century', and India as emerging global power.

2.1 India's Military Capabilities

India is continuously upgrading military hardware, software and overall capabilities. The goal is to match with other powerful states in the world *vis-à-vis* China and Pakistan. India has the third largest military in the world. It has approximately 1.32 million military personnel, ranking behind the United States (1.36 million), and China (2.31 million), and ahead of North Korea, Russia, Pakistan, Iran, France and the United Kingdom.⁵ It has been trying to improve its power-projection capabilities through the development of several variants of the Agni missile that increase its reach to various parts of Asia. The new technologies are being used by India to advance the technological capacity of its military. For the last decade or so India has been pursuing active missile defence structure in two ways: (i) with the help of strategic partners like Russia, the United States, and Israel, and (ii) developing an indigenous technology.⁶

India's current conventional military strength also bolsters the impression of great power. With more than 700 combat aircraft, India has the second largest air force in Asia. Its navy has emerged as a potent force with two aircraft carriers, 14 submarines, and 90 vessels in other categories. Coupled with a naval air force that consists of 46 combat aircraft and 75 armed helicopters, the Indian navy is bigger than that of Germany. India has made a concerted effort to upgrade its ISR, precision strike, and missile

⁵ Excluding reserve and paramilitary forces. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, (London: IISS, 2003)

⁶ See, for details, Gregory Koblenz, "Theatre Missile Defence and South Asia: A Volatile Mix," *Non-proliferation Review*, Spring-Summer 1997, p. 55; "India Developing Ballistic Missile Defence Regime," *Pakistan Times Foreign Desk Report*, 13 February 2005; Andrew Feickert and K. Alan Kronstadt, "Missile Proliferation and the Strategic Balance in South Asia," *CRS Report*, 17 October 2003, p. 16