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India's relationship with China is one of the most consequential relationships of the 21st century that will greatly impact emerging strategic dimensions in Asia-Pacific and at the global strategic theatre. The increasing profile, regularity and importance accorded to the annual Indo-US strategic dialogue is testimony to the increasing engagement between these two countries. The spadework that has been done before any Indo-US summit proves the importance accorded to the relationship.

The emerging Indo-US strategic partnership is a vital component in the foreign policies of both India and the United States and is poised to gain increasing importance as Washington seeks to recast its foreign policy with its rebalancing strategy towards Asia-Pacific. And, America's strategic reorientation is found largely commensurate with India's reinvigorated 'Look East Policy' that seeks a larger role for India in Asia in its foreign relations. Numerous reports have fairly concluded that the rise of a powerful and democratic India in the Asian region and at the global stage is in the interest of the United States and that the existence of American influence vertically and in Asia is in the interest of India. No doubt, an effective policy convergence between the two countries is vital but the road ahead, especially so between two large and functioning democracies, cannot be all roses and no thorns.

And, one of the most significant opportunities and challenges in fostering a robust strategic partnership is the form of managing China's rise. America's complex tango with the Chinese leaves the Indians nervous and concerned at the prospects of a world jointly managed by a power in relative decline and a power seemingly outpaced. Even as India and the United States see a paradigm shift in their relationship, both the countries are often found wielding different perceptions of how the countries maneuver their strategic skills in the future. If the

Independence of India a robust and resilient country in the world order that China's rise cannot be considered as a focal point in the context of managing India's strategic interests. Indians remember how the American government during the Cold War, in regular fashion, offered rhetorical flourishes on how India could serve

as a democratic counterweight to the communist Chinese model, and constantly stated how the Americans had discernible stakes in the success of India. But, the same USA later on ignored the Chinese through sycophany, giving a red carpet for 'red China' to the UN Security Council. Now, so, when the Americans concerned with the rise of a possible peer competitor in the eastern hemisphere, try to counter India as a possible counterweight, Indians have reason to be cautious, even as Indians struggle to match the rise of an economic and a potential military threat along its eastern borders. Beijing's maneuvering has been condemned by many countries in Asia, including India.

India has indeed emerged in many ways, from becoming independent as a poor country to one that commands an economy that is fairly consequential for the health of the global economy. By dint of its demographic and territorial size, it had the potential of being a major power in the regional and international system. Even during the Cold War, newly independent India and the United States standards for economic cooperation, and economic cooperation in the region. An interesting dynamic is playing out in the region, but the same time, Southeast Asia has called for the inclusion of countries like India and the United States so as to offset the unilateral rise of a country like China. And, this is commensurate as a response to China's increasing aggressive stance in its territorial marking. The Southeast Asian countries cannot ignore the influence of China in the economic linkages in the region, which has created an economic gridlock in the region. But the same time, Southeast Asian countries do not want to be overawed by a rising China. Hence, they are in the process of playing the abidance of balancing a potential hegemon in the region. China does not have a free hand in acting unilaterally in the region.

The process of the East Asia Summit and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia are symptomatic of the efforts of the Southeast Asian countries to bring other powers into the table. But, things are more complex when one looks at the bigger picture. The US, India and some of the South-East Asian countries have different priorities with India regarding freedom of navigation, especially in the South China Sea over which Beijing claims uncontested authority. But, at the same time, economically, New Delhi, Washington and most of South-East Asia are so interconnected to Beijing that one can hardly foresee any major conflict. Thus, when it comes to hodging China, responses are subtle and attention geared towards 'how to manage rising China without provoking any major state incident having global ramifications.' Hence, just as Washington and New Delhi look for ways to control Beijing' aggression, they also prepare various diplomatic cautious so as to prevent any clash landing. Both the countries know that a China economically destabilized will not be good either for the US or India.

For long, India has been seen as a leader and cheerleader in the developing world and a voice for the least developed countries at the global arena. But, India is undergoing a phase of transition, as it shows signs of graduating from a mere developing country, to an emerging potential power player, and whose voice would not only be heard but listened to at the high table of agenda-setting in global affairs. The direction of global affairs has largely been determined by a handful of powers that have the capabilities and also the willingness to shape the course of international affairs. China's rise has often boomed larger than that of India's in the sheer scale of growth and implications in regional and global affairs. Nevertheless, India despite the deficit capabilities in relative terms and the policy debated lack of political will, garners much attention regarding what probable role it could play in changing the global order. And, when it comes to India's currency to rising status in the global sphere, the relationship is more consequential than the one between India and the United States. Irrespective of the presence of many naysayers on both sides, who frequently discount the significance of US-India relations, Indian-Indo-US relations has indeed traversed a long path and has certainly crossed a threshold in terms of increasing convergence and confidence in each other. If for India, the US is important as a country that could substantially help push India's influence globally, as it did with the signing of the civilian nuclear agreement and helping India gain the NSG waiver, India is equally important for a robust and lasting influence of US policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region. India with its size geographically and demographically, an enduring democratic political system and increasing power capabilities could be a what some call the "swing state" in the changing global order. And defence cooperation between the two countries spanning across all the forces is an inevitable component of any American strategy plan to share more with India in terms of maintaining security and sustaining strategic stability in Asia-Pacific. In fact, a strategic partnership cannot be envisioned without a robust defence component. In recent years, India has awarded around $9 billion worth defence contracts to US companies. Major sanctions on Indian defences and the lifting of Indian military restrictions on nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) has maintained an unbroken peace on India's nuclear arsenal and in preventing any unwarranted transfer of technology and also in respecting its unilateral moratorium on further nuclear testing. The continuation of the Indian military in safeguarding its nuclear arsenal and the stability of the western countries, and the eventual testing of nuclear weapons right under the noses of the western powers, led the path for its much debated elevation from a "middle power" to an "emerging power".
and now mutual business interest exists. India needs high-grade defence technologies from the US and Washington needs India's defence market to create more jobs in America's defence industries. As America has not been India's major supplier there are many challenges largely in differences vis-a-vis procurement laws. The US is very restrictive about technical know-how of its weapon systems and has laws which restrict transfer of technology. And many in the Indian side still have some reservations in going too close to the Americans for weapons procurement. They are concerned about possible American demands for political concessions and compromises that might, in turn, erode India's strategic autonomy. And, when one assesses the present and the future of the Indo-US relationship, there is a need to factor in history as well. One needs to understand that the two countries were practically on opposite sides of the fence during the Cold War. The Non-Aligned movement (NAM) was conceived during the Cold War with India as a founding member so that newly independent countries like India could stay out of the global race for supremacy between the US and Soviet Union. Western countries including the US who were blinded by the Cold War power race where US officials deemed Non-alignment hypocritical and leaning towards the Soviet Union. India had to take help of the Soviet Union on various occasions, after the United States boycotted in Pakistan as an alliance member. Its containment strategy against Communist. During the Cold War, Washington often wrongly equated Non-alignment with 'neutrality'. The basic idea behind Non-alignment was to enable newly independent countries to make independent decisions based on the merit of the matter, keeping their national interests in mind. Clearly, reliance as expected from neutral countries was not the nature of Non-Aligned countries. Non-Alignment was about maintaining independence to take independent decisions and not about remaining mute and neutral spectators. Structural constraints imposed by the Cold War period circumscribed all other aspects of commonalities that the political value-system in the two countries provided. Understanding of core shared values between the countries never really translated into shared interests that could create avenues of cooperation.

The two countries today share a larger strategic vision that looks at the security and stability in the Asian region, and to preclude any destabilizing role that China's rise could play. India and the United States can jointly play a stabilizing force in the emerging Asian balance of power, making sure that no unilateral foreign forces enter the region whose influence would later be detrimental for both India's and America's interests. There is an overriding sense of priority accorded to the relationship, and both the countries stand high at the emerging strategic preferences in Washington as well as New Delhi. The much mentioned bi-partisan support for the Indo-US relationship in Washington still holds ground, and similarly in new Delhi, the emerging strategic partnership, despite constraints, has grown under both BJP and Congress led governments. The people-to-people contacts between the two countries, and growing economic and strategic leverage of the Indian diaspora in the US is a major asset that any government in New Delhi should seriously harness.

It is politically naïve to expect big-bang deals like the Indo-US nuclear agreement to happen often, especially between two democracies like the US and India, with large bureaucracies and so many constituencies to take care of. Even as the two countries struggle to fully implement the nuclear deal, one cannot brush off the positive dividends that the signing of the agreement created in other fields, the most significant of which is defence cooperation. Serious challenges do lie before the two countries. One of the most significant challenges is the issue of the Indian nuclear programme, a difficult issue for the US and India to reconcile. The US is concerned about India's development of a nuclear programme, and at the same time, it is not willing to commit to a moratorium on nuclear testing. The US also wants to see more transparency and accountability in the Indian nuclear programme. This issue remains a major obstacle to furthering the Indo-US nuclear agreement.

What is needed from the Indian side at least, is to come up with a strategic plan viz-a-viz the India-US relationship, wherein along with the 'lakshman rekha' of Indian foreign policy, it also lays out, in clearer terms, what India can and is willing to invest in its partnership with the United States. A more nuanced understanding and clearer view is required of why India and the US need each other, what the US expects India to do, and what India is willing to do, what India wants the US to do, and what is the US is capable of and willing to do. The US-India partnership is not just about an economic or technology-oriented relationship; it is about building a strategic partnership that is based on shared values and interests.

The Indo-US relationship is significant because it is a relationship between two of the world's largest democracies and economic powers. It is a relationship that is based on mutual interests and mutual respect. The Indo-US relationship has the potential to be a model for other countries to follow. It is a relationship that is based on trust and cooperation, and it is a relationship that is based on shared values and interests. The Indo-US relationship is significant because it is a relationship between two of the world's largest democracies and economic powers. It is a relationship that is based on mutual interests and mutual respect. It is a relationship that is based on trust and cooperation, and it is a relationship that is based on shared values and interests. The Indo-US relationship is significant because it is a relationship between two of the world's largest democracies and economic powers. It is a relationship that is based on mutual interests and mutual respect. It is a relationship that is based on trust and cooperation, and it is a relationship that is based on shared values and interests.

Many western commentators have criticized India as a 'naysayer' when it comes to taking up international responsibilities and burden-sharing. India traditionally has had many 'lakshman rekha's or boundaries when it comes to international engagements, especially so with great powers, and a not so exemplary history of 'Indo-US relationship' has not helped matters. But, it is also true that as India's power grows and the horizons of its national interest extends beyond the inner circle of South Asia, it is gradually developing the intention and willingness to get into the shoes of a 'great power'. And as the US tries to preserve its pre-eminence in the Asian continent amidst debates regarding its relative decline, and as India's foreign policy becomes more consonant with its increasing capabilities, the two countries are on a convergent path that can be ignored only at the peril of prime mutual interests. As the joint statement from the latest Singh-Obama summit in September 2013, pointed out, "...The two countries have crossed a threshold in their relations where both recognize that successes at home and abroad are further advanced by their cooperation."

What is needed is a strategic plan that addresses the US-India relationship, wherein along with the 'lakshman rekha' of Indian foreign policy, the US also recognizes India's role in the world. A more nuanced understanding and clearer view is required of why India and the US need each other, what the US expects India to do, and what India is willing to do, what India wants the US to do, and what is the US is capable of and willing to do. The US-India partnership is not just about an economic or technology-oriented relationship; it is about building a strategic partnership that is based on shared values and interests.