

# India's planned manoeuvre of influence and the departure of Abe and Howard

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INDIA, despite its demographic burden, is the fifth largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity and it has the third largest investor base in the world. India has proved itself to be one of the most vibrant democracies in the world. The US, on the other hand, emerged from the Cold War not as a country with unchallenged economic power and political influence, but as a superpower with unmatched military firepower. Many in the US felt that the country had overextended itself in international affairs at the cost of domestic issues and argued in favour of reviving the country's economic competitiveness, educational excellence and law and order situation.

While the end of the Cold War led to a gradual improvement in India-US relations, these shifts came to a halt in May 1998 when India conducted nuclear tests and the US imposed wide ranging sanctions. In March 2000 President Clinton visited India, the first visit by a US president in 22 years and since then India-US relations have developed at an unprecedented pace. The terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001 and subsequent support by India further galvanized the growing closeness. The 1.7 million-strong Indian-American community also acted as a liaison between India and the US. While the first wave of Indian immigrants to the US in the 1960s and 1970s were professionals like doctors, scientists and engineers, recent trends show substantial diversification of skills with consequential percentage of new ventures in Silicon Valley have been started by Indian Americans.

During the past few years, India was elevated as the strategic partner by the US to meet the global challenges of the 21st century in cooperation with Prime Minister of Shinzo Abe of Japan and John

Howard of Australia. US had the strong desire to increase mutual security against the common threats posed by so called terrorism. India is also very much hopeful about the successful transformation of the US-India relationship which will allow her to have a positive influence on the future international system. The partnership was not limited to security threats only but they were also making progress in the areas of developing bilateral business climate supportive of trade and investment and expanding cooperation in agriculture. Both the countries have launched the knowledge initiative on agriculture to link universities, technical institutions, and businesses to support high-priority joint agriculture education, research, and capacity-building projects. The creation of the Asia Pacific Partnership on 'Clean Development and Climate', which is supposed to increase collaboration to promote the development, diffusion, deployment and transfer of cleaner, cost-effective and more efficient technologies and practices.

The knowledge partnership is to generate cooperation in science and technology and promote industrial research and development and they also agreed to work together to promote innovation, creativity and technological advancement in the field of intellectual property rights to continue exploring further cooperation in space, space exploration, satellite navigation, and earth science. The decision of India and the United States to designate a representative to the Government Advisory Board of the International Centre for Democratic Transition located in Budapest to facilitate cooperative activities was another step towards more worldwide acceptability. The United States and India are also expanding cooperation to enhance job creation and economic growth, support

economic reform and liberalization. Over the last few years, US exports to India have more than doubled and to an extent helping to create better-paying jobs in the United States. The United States feel that trade is essential to promoting global economic growth, development, and freedom. The US also believes that effective democracies with governments accountable to the people are the best means of ensuring long-term stability and prosperity. And hence they decided to work together to support the growth and development of civil societies, including independent media and non-governmental organizations, in countries that seek such assistance. The United States and India have also reached a historic agreement on civil nuclear cooperation. The agreement addresses India's surging energy needs for its growing economy. India in return has agreed to take steps that will bring it into the international non-proliferation mainstream, including placing its civilian nuclear facilities and programs under IAEA safeguards and adhering to the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime.

The United States also agreed to help meet India's rising demand for energy by looking at new technologies to produce clean, safe, and reliable energy. They have also decided to create zero-emissions coal-fired power plant, enabling greater use of coal in an environmentally sustainable way. The United States and India, together with Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, are working on practical ways to improve energy security, improve air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. India finally has given in to the pressure of the United States to facilitate mutual logistic support during combined training, exercises, and disaster relief operations. The United States reaffirmed its desire to help meet India's

defence needs and to provide the important technologies and capabilities that India seeks starting a new era after about 50 years of suspicion on each other. Agreements are being completed that will allow for the launch of US satellites and satellites containing US components by Indian launch vehicles. Both the countries agreed to expand bilateral efforts on avian influenza by reaching out to the private sector, developing regional communications strategies, and planning an in-region containment and response exercise and to further strengthen cooperation on HIV/AIDS by leveraging resources, knowledge, and expertise. Since then the US Food and Drug Administration have given approval to thirteen generic antiretroviral drugs produced by Indian pharmaceutical companies. These drugs can now be purchased as part of the President's Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS for use around the world.

US initiated the Container Security Initiative (CSI), the Customs-Trade Partnership Agreement (C-TPAT) and the Megaports Initiative, which are intended to screen suspicious shipments before they reach the US shores. Herein also it is learnt that the Jawaharlal Nehru Port is to be the first in the sub-continent to join the US Customs' CSI. Although the Indian Customs and other authorities had strong reservations that CSI, under which US officials are posted in foreign ports, would affect the country's sovereignty. The US is understood to have assured New Delhi that this would not happen and the US is also believed to have agreed to consider favourably India's request for allowing posting of its own Customs officials in American ports. Many in India, of course criticise the US Government's excessive reliance on technology and equipment in preference to human resource as the answer to port security and not all Americans

are also convinced that the US has not overstepped its limits in the name of maritime security. After all, the security measures being prescribed by the US agencies for the host countries are costly to implement as these involve not only installation of expensive equipment but also compliance with various procedures and systems involving extensive training and therefore investments.

Looking back, it can be seen that Indian political elites, spread across various parties, managed to devise ways of warding off the overbearing Americans and learnt how to cope with a cultivated animosity in Washington towards New Delhi. After initial apprehensions about globalisation, the Indian elites - political, economic, and bureaucratic have failed to understand the depth of suspicion the average Indian has traditionally entertained about the US which have taken an intense discomfort over what US has been doing in Iraq and over what he is threatening to do in Iran. Since 1990s, Indian nationalism has taken different routes - the metropolitan nationalism, practiced by the new 300-million Indian middle class, are mostly interested in economic terms. These Indians have aspirations to improve their lifestyle many times over in their lifetime, and they believe that a serious and sustained economic engagement with the US is the key to those aspirations. These metropolitan nationalists have bought into the American dream and are willing to give the US the benefit of the doubt when Washington professes a democratic kinship. The metropolitan nationalist is morally at ease in his admiration for the US, partly because there is no Soviet Union to make a countervailing claim and China remains too distant.

The second stream of Indian nationalism is to be located in the vast rural India encompassing about 700 million Indians who struggle everyday with depriva-



tions and discomforts and remain unimpressed and uninterested in the US policies in India. To most of them, the US remains a distant country and suspects Washington of resenting India's rise as a great power. Many of them even questioned the government's ability to protect national interests in the ongoing nuclear deal negotiations. This suspicion has given further twist and turns over what the US has shown it is capable of doing to a country - Afghanistan, Iraq, in the name of "a regime change". In particular, the minorities in India, as elsewhere, have come to question the anti-Islam bias in the American formulations and policies. Most people may be living anywhere does not like the idea of any nation, however powerful, beating up another country. India-US relationship cannot easily graduate into a strategic partnership without all shades of Indian nationalism feeling comfortable

with Washington's global agenda. This is as much to do with the churning in a changing India as with the contentions within the minuscule strategic community.

With the departure of Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from the political stage of Asia-Pacific region, George Bush might be gazing wistfully at his catalogue of unfinished tasks in this area. Somewhere high on the list is bound to be their ambition of seeing India taking over as a strategic partner in South Asia with the definite aims of acting as an anchor of stability in the troubled region and as a democratic counterweight to authoritarian China. With that end in view, warships from the US, Australia, Japan, India and Singapore participated in a joint exercise in the Bay of Bengal last year, demonstrating a major expansion in the previously held bilateral exercise. India with its

stable democracy, billion strong population, sound economy and powerful military could be right fit in the four way partnership envisaged by Bush, Howard and Abe. But protests in India against both the naval exercise and a separate Indo-US civil nuclear deal indicate that such a tie at least for the time being appears to be suicidal for the Government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It is to be remembered that another federal government of India was almost toppled when India allowed refueling facility to US military Transport aircraft at Mumbai airport during the Gulf war. We have heard Abe speaking about creating an "arc of freedom and prosperity" and a "broader Asia partnership" incorporating Japan, India, Australia and US but for now it appears that such partnership with India as a pillar is doomed at best to uncertainty and failure.

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## The end of the Abu Mazen track and the Olmert dilemma

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CURRENTLY, both the Israeli and the US doctrines are to maintain the status quo. Both sides see eye to eye regarding the situation with the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and Syria.

There is also no difference in the perception of the relationship with Mahmoud Abbas. The Israeli policy is interested in continuing the dialogue with Abbas in order to have a free hand in striking the Hamas in Gaza. Israel is also interested in diminishing the influence of the Fatah as a political movement and to concentrate on the personality of Abbas as a leader, though an impotent one, who cannot impose his will on his own people, neither in the West Bank nor in the Gaza Strip.

In current talks with Abu Mazen, Israel aims to reach a framework agreement on all topics, including borders, Jerusalem, the refugees and the wall. In actuality, it is a paper or document that will have to materialize some time in the future, when the circumstances will permit.

It is therefore quite certain what the Israelis want to achieve from this dialogue with Abu Mazen. Consequently, Abbas' task is to finalize the framework document before the end of 2008, which will enable the Olmert Government to impress Israeli public opinion by claiming that he succeeded in reaching some achievements as a result of his talks with Abu Mazen.

In terms of security, this dialogue with Abu Mazen will give the Israeli security apparatus a free hand to strike the Hamas Movement in Gaza.

PM Ehud Olmert aims to achieve international support for his steps, mainly with the western European countries and the US. He argues that he is working toward progress with his Palestinian counterpart, Abu Mazen, and that he needs their support in containing Hamas, mainly through his militant policy towards the Palestinian population in Gaza.

Olmert wants further support for his strikes on civilian targets in Gaza by claiming that the military environment has been changed. Olmert and the Israeli military establishment need further support from the international community for their aggressive policy toward the Gaza population. Abu Mazen is playing a crucial role in that policy by holding a continuous dialogue with Israel. This gives

legitimacy to Israel continuing with its current policy.

After his meeting with President George Bush in the White House (24 April 2008), Abu Mazen suddenly discovered that he would not get anything until the end of 2008. Notwithstanding, this meeting in Washington with Condoleezza Rice was their eighth meeting since November 2007. In the beginning of May 2008 she came to the Middle



East and met him once again. On the 14th of May, Bush met him during his visit to Israel.

Nevertheless, the main question remains. Why, although Abu Mazen realizes that his meetings with the Americans and the Israelis will not give him anything towards a solution, and at the same time is creating a split in the Palestinian camp, does he continue to meet them? The answer is that he has nowhere else to turn. At the same time, his perception of the international situation is that all the keys are in the hands of the US. Actually, the US has the ability to affect a solution, however, not on solving the issues but rather on neutralizing and torpedoing the issues.

The situations are the same in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, with the Palestinian-Israeli question and also with the Syrian-Israeli question.

Abu Mazen put all his eggs in the George Bush basket. Bush is using the Palestinian issue in order to tell Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States that he is trying to do something constructive in the region. He is using the Palestinian situation in order to get a free hand with his policy in the Gulf and the American presence in Iraq. Dealing with the Palestinian cause justifies the American intervention in Iraq and in the Gulf.

Actually, the current policy is the same US policy that has been in place since the 1980s when Martin

Indyk invented the dual containment policy, which was meant to contain both Iraq and Iran, while at the same time giving the impression that they are trying to solve the Palestinian problem.

The current policy and the use of Abu Mazen is that same policy of one coin with two faces. Abu Mazen started to comprehend this, not only from the American side, but also from the Israeli side, which



is not giving any sign of progress. Sooner or later he will experience disappointment from both the Americans and the Israelis.

The Mahmoud Abbas track, therefore, is on its way to its end. He finally understands this after his 24th of April meeting with President George Bush. He realized that this president will never implement his promises towards the Palestinians, will not apply the road map and never impose any pressure on Israel. He will just use the Palestinian issue as a pretext in his war against terror and his relationship with the rich Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.

The Quartet and its chairman Tony Blair are following the same policy. The London Conference of the 2nd of May in support of the Palestinians was just another part of that containment policy and its policy of continuing to finance the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The instability in the Israeli government and the accusations of corruption against Olmert will only prolong Israel's stagnation policy.

On 9 May 2008 everything was revealed. Ehud Olmert was accused of illegally getting funds from American Jewish businessman Moshe Talansky. Now begins Olmert's battle for his political life. Olmert's aim is to convince public opinion that those funds were legal and that Mr. Talansky was just a

friend who worked with Olmert's close aid and legal advisor Uri Messer and his assistant Ms. Shula Zaken.

Olmert's strategy will be to fight and struggle strongly, while at the same time explaining the delivery of funds as part of the framework of local election campaigns from 1993 to 1998. His legal advisor will later argue that according to the Israeli political culture, all Israeli politicians have access to American Jewish funding by reminding us that Sharon, Barak and even Peres got such funds from the US.

According to Olmert's mentality, if he resigns it means that he confesses on all counts of the accusations against him. In that sense, as a lawyer, he will deny all the accusations and fight for clearing his name, even if it leads him to accuse his close legal aid and friend Uri Messer.

Olmert will also attack Talansky's personality and his motives. Later he will claim that this man's motivation came as a result of his ultra-Orthodox background and his desire to neutralize the peace process. Olmert will use the peace process as a pretext to protect his name.

Olmert can make many arguments for clearing his name, but he forgets two important factors: the media and public opinion. Today, at any moment, he can come under a strong media attack that could instigate Israeli public opinion against him. There is also the political and security system that could ignore him and start to perceive him as a lame duck. For example, they could treat him the same way as former President Katsav.

Olmert's strategy is to continue fighting legally and publicly. He already has 3 "Ivy League" lawyers who will push strongly to clear him of all accusations, especially the charge of receiving a bribe. He does not want to be remembered in the history of Israel as a Prime Minister who was removed from office as a result of a bribery accusation.

Olmert's current agenda is first to maintain his regime and personal political survival for at least one more year, and then second to influence who will inherit the leadership of the Kadima Party, especially not Tzipi Livni.

Deputy Prime Minister Livni is facing domestic problems as a result of not backing Olmert in this crisis. Olmert will try to survive as best he can, and at the same time

try to prevent Tzipi Livni from taking power in his place. Achieving these two goals will be his main strategy for the coming months.

Concerning his political management of the Palestinians, Lebanese or Syrian tracks, nothing will happen in the coming months because he has no mandate to implement anything. There is even a possibility for escalation, mainly in Gaza and Lebanon.

In Gaza he might not agree to a cease fire, which would lead to an escalation. That would coincide with his government's agenda to divert attention from his domestic scandals. Even if he does agree to the cease fire with Hamas in Gaza he will escalate the violence in the West Bank, while at the same time trying to talk with Abu Mazen because the Palestinian President has received direct instructions from the US.

Due to his domestic problems, it is in Olmert's interest to drag the negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas on forever. In addition, he will try to take the authority of the negotiations away from Tzipi Livni.

Concerning Gaza, as I stated before, Olmert might agree to the cease fire, although at the same time there is a great danger that he still might attack Gaza by ground in order to provoke a war.

Some specialists in Israeli affairs have claimed that Olmert has been aware of the police investigations against him since 2006. He initiated the Second Lebanon War in order to divert attention from his police investigations. Another question which might be raised as a result of Olmert's new legal situation and its international implications is what now becomes of Bush's promises of implementing the road map.

I can strongly argue that Olmert's new legal status will help Bush renege on his promise to implement the road map and establish a Palestinian State. Bush will now come to Israel and claim that the US will not interfere in Israel's domestic issues. As a result of these new circumstances and the status of Olmert as a lame duck, the US cannot deliver the Annapolis solution of a Palestinian State.

Any American solution and promise to the Palestinians and the Arabs will be gone with the wind.

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### S. Korea's Navy Chief visits India

Indian and South Korean naval officials are exploring possibilities for maritime cooperation in the region. The matter was discussed at length during the first-ever visit of a South Korean Navy chief to India.

In talks here with his Indian counterpart, Adm. Sureesh Mehta, Seoul's Adm. Jung Ok-Keun also spoke about how South Korea could help the Indian Navy build its shipbuilding requirements, a senior Indian Defence Ministry official said. The Navy chiefs also discussed holding joint naval exercises, the ministry official said.

During his May 19-22 stay in India, Jung visited naval facilities of India's Western Command and government-owned shipyard Mazagon Docks Ltd.

Sources in the Defence Ministry here said the South Korean Navy chief's visit comes at a time when Indian defense planners are discussing China's buildup of armaments, including nuclear submarines and missiles aimed against India. Seoul's defense minister, Kim Jang-soo, visited India a year ago.

### Japan passes law to allow military use of space

Japan passed a new law May 21 allowing the use of space for defence, an official said, reversing a decades-old policy amid increasing concern about military threats in the region.

While Japan has no current plans for a new defence project in space, experts say the law could clear the way for the launch of early-warning satellites.

The move comes amid growing concerns here about North Korea's ballistic missile development and China's military and space programs.

The opposition-controlled upper house voted 221 to 14 to revise a 1969 parliamentary resolution limiting Japan's use of space to non-military applications, an upper house official said.

The bill was already approved by the lower house last week.

The new law aims to remove any legal obstacles to building more advanced spy satellites and to help innovation in the country's space industry.

The opposition Japanese Communist Party was against the bill, fearing it would lead to a stronger military.

Japan's constitution says the country will never again wage war. Japanese troops have not fired a shot in anger since 1945, although the country has one of the world's largest defence budgets.

Japan has stepped up military research after North Korea stunned the world in 1998 by firing a missile over the Japanese mainland into the Pacific.

China also alarmed Japan last year by conducting a test to shoot down a satellite.

Japan has been stepping up its space pro-

gram and is now conducting the most extensive probe of the moon since the US Apollo missions of the 1960s and 1970s.

### BAE team among 4 picked for UK fleet tanker bid

A BAE Systems-led team has been pitted against rival bids from Italy, South Korea and Spain to build a fleet of naval tankers to support Royal Navy operations.

The Ministry of Defence announced May 21 that Fincantieri of Italy, Navantia from Spain and South Korea's Hyundai have been down-selected with the BAE team, which also includes naval designers BMT and the South Korean shipyard Daewoo Shipbuilding, in a competition to buy up to six fleet tankers for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA).

The British made the shortlist decision on the basis of prequalification questionnaires submitted earlier from nine original bidders. A decision on the winning contractor is expected next year with the first ship in service around 2012.

Construction of the tankers is the first phase of an expected 2.5 billion-pound (\$4.9 billion) Maritime Afloat Reach and Sustainability program to build a fleet of up to 11 logistics ships of various types for the RFA.

It's the second major shipbuilding announcement by the British government in the last 24 hours. The MoD on May 20 confirmed a 3.8 billion-pound program to build two aircraft carriers was to be undertaken by an alliance of companies comprising BAE, Babcock International, Thales and the VT Group.

The fleet tankers program has been immersed in controversy following the MoD's decision to throw open the competition to non-British shipbuilders.

Some people here reckon it will set a precedent under European Union regulations when the British come to decide where other, more sophisticated military logistics ships should be built.

For now, the argument has been forestalled by the decision to build the 65,000-ton aircraft carriers. The largest warships ever built in Britain will consume virtually every inch of shipyard capacity over the next four or five years, leaving no space for tanker construction.

The carriers are being built in modules at shipyards across Britain and floated to the Rosyth yard of Babcock for assembly. The in-service date of the first vessel is 2014, followed two years later by the second.

In a statement, the MoD said none of the builders had indicated their intention to build the tankers in the UK.

The RFA has often taken up second-hand commercial ships built overseas for logistics duties, but the Maritime Afloat Reach and Sustainability fleet tankers, at approximately 33,000 tons, are probably the largest fleet of new ships for the RFA or the Navy sourced from outside of Britain.

The MoD said the double-hulled tankers were urgently required, as most of Britain's current tanker fleet does not comply with upcoming international maritime environment standards.

Source: www.defenselinks.com