

# An America adrift

PAUL KENNEDY

TEN years ago, a well-coordinated terrorist plot led to the assault upon the United States with disastrous loss of human life. The worst of all this was the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in lower Manhattan, where nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed.

The loss of America was immediate: The stock market closed down and then lost great value, and for a while the infrastructure system closed down. The world watched in awe, and many foreigners thought it served the arrogant American empire right; across the Arab world, including in supposedly pro-U.S. nations, there was rejoicing on the streets. Surely, then, America had been weakened?

But the response of the U.S. government was fast, decisive and, in a calculated way, quite brutal. The attackers were known to be of the Al Qaeda terrorist organization, it was known that they were housed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. And it was known how to project American military power into the mountains of Southwest Asia and crush the greater part of Al Qaeda; hunting down Osama bin Laden was a matter of time.

Two years later, in 2003, U.S. forces (with a few allies) poured into Iraq for a second time in recent memory and eradicated Saddam Hussein and his unpleasant regime.

This time, the world stood aghast for a different reason: The blunt display of America's military might, and thus the possibility that the United States had gone as far ahead in "hard power" capabilities compared to other powers (Russia, India, China, Europe) as the Romans had vis-à-vis the barbarian tribes 2,000 years earlier.

Russian nationalists, French intellectuals and Chinese planners were all upset, which probably made American hawks like Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld doubly happy. The United States was back on top.

But was it? And, even if it had displayed an impressive amount of military muscle, how long would that last? And of what deeper value was it to the preservation of America's long-term power position? Over the years that followed, the epic events of 2001 and 2003, the ground wars in Iraq and especially in Afghanistan became more protracted, more bloody and ever less clear for the American public to understand.

I cannot do the sophisticated polling that the Pew Foundation expert pollsters do, and the Pew polls show Americans nowadays much more uncertain about their post-9/11 position than they apparently were 10 years ago. But when I talk with the folks at my local hardware

store or Italian deli, I hear no Cheney-like pride or aggressiveness.

There is a feeling that these wars have lasted too long and aren't going anywhere, and an even stronger feeling that the White House and Congress should cease bickering and focus all their attention upon America's undoubted domestic ills.

Is isolationism in evidence at my hardware store and deli? You bet it is. Nobody talks much here about the rise of China. Nobody cares about Putin's Russia. Latin

increasingly lonely and sick of overextending itself. To the average American, few other countries are worth fighting for.

When the actual day of the 10th anniversary occurs, the ceremonials arranged by the White House will be sensitive, intelligent, suitable. How could they not be? And it will be proper to respect what President Obama is trying to do, and to respect American emotions. These events will undoubtedly attract all the chatter of the absurdly short-term media in this country, eager for



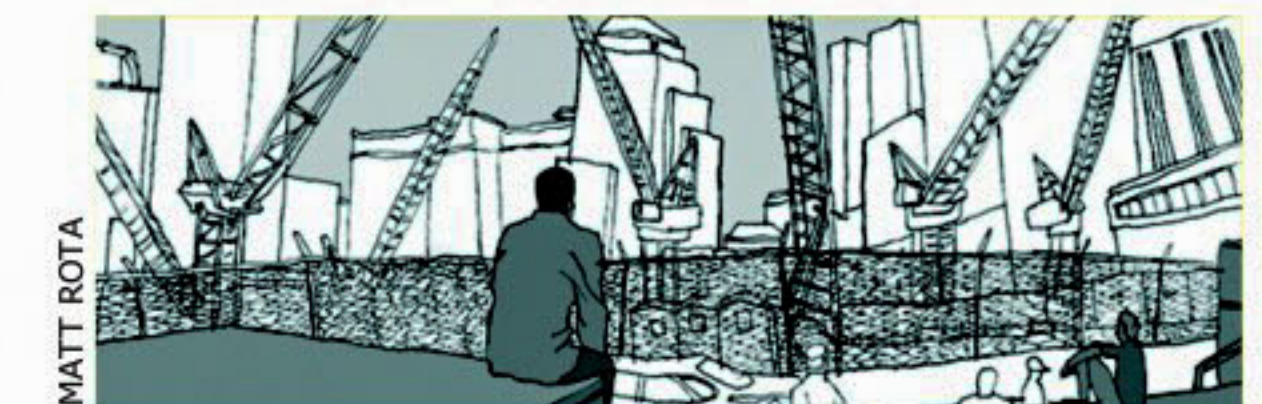
America and Africa, apart from helping starving babies, are off the mental map. India is marginally on the map. The Middle East is just full of stupidities -- why can't we just get out? And the situation in Israel is to most Americans just an embarrassment. Europe is, except for college students planning an exchange program, not a place of interest; nobody knew of Dominique Strauss-Kahn until he was hauled off the Air France plane.

If asked "which foreign country would you fight for," the largest number of those Americans polled would say Britain, but that is because those polled feel that Brits are the only people who have fought alongside America in a world in which the superpower feels

instant coverage and unintelligent commentary. Obama will strive to be above that.

But what of those of us who are attempting to step back from these memorials and ask questions about where America is in the world now compared to a decade ago? Has the United States been weakened, or strengthened? How has its foreign policy been affected, in the largest sense?

And perhaps the real answer to that critical last question might be this: That the largest effect of 9/11 upon America is that it became distracted. Distracted in two very important ways. In the first place, it was distracted from many other things that are going on in



the world. Secondly, it's been distracted from the erosion of its financial strength and international competitiveness.

Let us look briefly at the first matter. In its own hemisphere -- surely among the most important areas in the world to U.S. interests -- a new Latin America is emerging, unsteadily but observably. There is human catastrophe in Haiti, an uncertain future for Cuba, the continued idiocies of a sick Chávez regime in Venezuela, and drug-gangster wars from Bolivia to Mexico.

Yet there is also the extraordinary transformation of Brazil, the success of Chile, and the quiet recovery of Argentina. But does the United States have a positive, carefully crafted strategy for Latin America? Of course not.

Africa, apart from a few lights of promise, trembles over the pit of environmental and demographic disaster, but Washington leaves that problem to the World Bank. Europe fades further away. Russia is neglected. An India-Pakistan policy is, well, hard to describe. And American views on China range from blind enthusiasm to calls to build up the U.S. Navy immediately. And all this neglect for adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq that are now being wound down. This will be hard to explain to history students in 50 years' time.

Even more worrying has been a decade of distraction from attending the "common wealth" -- that is, the common good of America itself and of its citizenry. The Bush administration's combination of expensive foreign wars and inexcusable tax cuts that favored the rich has had dreadful effects upon U.S. federal deficits, upon America's growing dependency upon foreigners, and upon the long-term future of the dollar.

The social fabric is fraying, the underclass is growing -- it is observable year upon year in the soup kitchen where I work -- and the public-school system crumbling. Under-investment in our roads and railways and power systems is visible every day. And, as if any more bad news was needed, along comes a Tea Party with policies that would make America's double-distraction even worse.

This, then, may be the real legacy of 9/11, long after U.S. troops are withdrawn from those high Hindu Kush ranges.

For here was the decade when America turned its attention away from its own domestic condition and from its need to have a wider view of global change.

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Source: NY Times.

## India's leadership and its implication for South Asia

SIFAT UDDIN

INDIA'S leadership is much talked about now a days in South Asian politics. There has been a persistent and sharp contrast between South Asian states, as a whole, and India. Where a number of South Asian states are in a strained relationship with the West, India on the contrary is enjoying a bonhomie relationship. For last few months it has been receiving many world leaders at home with success. 'Incredible India', is truly proving its diplomatic professionalism in dealing with other states, even USA, to keep its national interest intact.

### 'Bandwagoning-Balancing'

The present India's foreign policy appears to be, to borrow a phrase from Robert Kaplan, 'Monsoon: Indian Ocean and Future of American Power', published in 2010, an 'ultimate paradox'. How does it constitute a paradox? Yogesh Joshi explained it well. He said that the Indian foreign policy is the perfect example of fusion of 'Bandwagoning-Balancing'. It is bandwagoning with the US for its national interest but, at the same time, balancing American power by professing its slant towards a multipolar world. India successfully convinced Mr. Obama to support its causes. During Obama's visit to Delhi he openly supported, for the first time, India's bid for permanent membership in United Nations Security Council. On India's persistence, it also agreed to help India obtain the membership of four important instruments of the non-proliferation regime -- the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group.

How is India balancing against global powers? May be India is piggybacking on the US to reach global power status but she is not blind to the pitfalls of too much dependence. She may support the US leadership but, very much logically, not the US centered unipolar world. India strongly supports the idea of a multi-polar world order, most evident in the proceedings of multi-lateral settings such as the BRICS. India's warm relationship with the US does not, necessarily, mean that she will listen to the every exhortation placed by Mr. Obama. For example, India did not consider the bids of two US aviation giants for providing the Medium Multiple-Role Combat Aircraft to the Indian Air Force, though Mr. Obama exhorted India on this bid. We have seen how India was silent on United Nations Resolution 1973, brought against the Libyan govern-

ment. India has been maintaining relationship with Iran at significant level. She supported Syria, the worst human rights abuser, in its candidature for the United Nations Human Rights Council. But it is relevant here to note that both Iran and Syria are at daggers-drawn with the US. That's how India is 'bandwagoning' with the US but at the same time, 'balancing' against the US leverage.

### Leadership in South Asia?

Hillary Clinton during her last visit to India in July, 2011, reiterated the ever increasing importance of India to the world and, of course, to the US. She said, "I can tell you that we are, in fact, betting on India's future. We understand that much of the history of the 21st century will be written in Asia, and that much of the future of Asia will be shaped by, most importantly, by the 1.3 billion people who live in this country." In that Chennai speech Ms. Clinton had some real ges-



tures towards India besides some 'tall talks'. But why Washington is so enthusiastic about India? To this common question there is popular answer - because Washington wants to offset against China in Asia. In fact Washington seeks to create a bigger circle, Washington-Delhi-Tokyo, which may be extended with the inclusion of Seoul and Manila in near future.

But India's leadership in South Asia, as Ms. Clinton indicated, will be a tough call. Leadership in a region calls for some components. The aspirant state is expected to have good relationship with its neighbors. Does India have any trustworthy friend in South Asia? India has 'neighborly problems'. She has two nuclear armed, hostile states on two sides. One of her neighbors is war depleted and a breeding ground of insurgency. Bangladesh, another neighbor, changes its status with India with the change of governments. India also has

'adequate' suspicion about Bangladesh. On the other, Nepal and Bhutan are the only two neighbors, upon whom India has more or less influence.

Ms. Clinton talked about the 'neighborly problems'. She expressed her anticipations that India would emerge among her neighbors as a 'benevolent leader'. She said, "...opening of India's markets to the world will produce a more prosperous India and a more prosperous South Asia. It will also spill over into Central Asia and beyond into the Asia Pacific region." At present, India is enjoying an economy of steady GDP growth ranging from 8 to 8.5. But does it really spill on her neighbors? From the perspective of Bangladesh, there are still many barriers including tariff and non-tariff barriers in trade between Bangladesh and India.

In an updated statistics it is found that the trade gap between India and Bangladesh rose to \$3.80 billion in 2010-11 fiscal year from \$2.90 in the year before. Trade officials and businessmen talk about the standardisation of Bangladesh's exportable items by Indian authorities still remains a key. New Delhi is yet to make any tangible arrangement for removing the non-tariff barriers to trade that restrict exports of good number of items from Bangladesh to India despite, repeated assurances.

Besides trade issues, there are many other historically prolonged- unresolved issues between India and Bangladesh. Ms. Clinton didn't deny this grave concerns which are equally important for both sides. In her Chennai speech she said, "India also has a great commitment to improving relations with Bangladesh, and that is important because regional solutions will be necessary on energy shortages, water-sharing, and the fight against terrorists."

This has been the continued state of affairs between India and Bangladesh. This scenario does not differ very much in the aspects of India's relations with other neighboring states, with a couple of exceptions. India's leadership in South Asia requires resolving those issues first. India may enjoy a comprehensive economic and military power but that doesn't mean an easy and unabated leadership for her in South Asia. Many scholars opined that the problem is rooted in India's mindset. India's foreign policy is still revolving around Kautilyan discourse. India can bring a shift in her foreign policy and brighten the possibilities of leadership in South Asia.

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## Al-Qaeda offshoot acquires Libyan air missiles

AL-QAEDA'S north African branch has acquired a stockpile of weapons in Libya, including surface-to-air missiles that are threatening air travel, the EU's counter-terrorism coordinator said Monday.

Due to the turmoil in Libya, members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have "gained access to weapons, either small arms or machine-guns, or certain surface-to-air missiles which are extremely dangerous because they pose a risk to flights over the territory," said Gilles de Kerchove.

At a news conference marking the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, de Kerchove said that while the threat of strikes by mainstream Al-Qaeda followers had decreased, AQIM was taking root both on the Arab peninsula and in Africa, posing a mounting threat.

"It is a group that is Africanising and seeking to extend its area of influence," he said.

Like other Al-Qaeda affiliates in Pakistan and elsewhere, AQIM had gained support among locals by using ransom money and possibly drug-related income to fund social services unavailable from cash-strapped African governments.

It had extended its area of action from northern Niger, Mali and Mauritania to northern Nigeria and as far south as Senegal, he said.

To put a brake on any further extension of its influence, European Union nations needed to help African countries such as Chad and Niger to reintegrate the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers who have fled home from Libya in the past months. Mali alone faced the return of 210,000 people, he said.

Plans were underway also to aid information-gathering and counter-terror centres in Algeria and Mauritania, and to back Malian efforts to redeploy seven to 10 military bases in its remote barren north as well as provide basic services for the population there.

Source: defencetalk.com

