

China, India, US: Wh

By Madhuri Santanam Sondhi

Globalisation with its complex economic inter-linkages has further rendered sharp inter-state competition unrealistic

AN East European joke during the Soviet era went as follows: a Pole at prayer was suddenly visited by God and promised fulfilment of any wish. "Let China invade Poland three times," begged the supplicant. "And how will that help you or your country?" asked God. "Ha," replied the Pole, "that way China will invade the Soviet Union six times!" Poland's long history of geo-strategic vulnerability predates even the communist era. Subjected to yet another partition under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the infamous Katyn massacre at the end of World War II was perpetrated by "liberating" Russian troops, and the Yalta Pact placed Poland under a humiliating period of Russian domination till the collapse of the Soviet system. Hence Zbigniew Brzezinski, son of a Polish diplomat of the earlier regime, not surprisingly developed as a committed opponent of Russian imperialism and totalitarianism. Building on the Kissinger-Nixon breakthrough with communist China to contain the USSR, the Brzezinski-Carter duo terminated formal diplomatic relations and defence

treaties with Taiwan and later took Chinese help in frustrating Soviet expansion in Afghanistan by establishing jihadi training camps and bases in Chinese territory (not so well known as those they set up in Pakistan).

Bitterly opposed to European fascism and totalitarianism, Brzezinski's ideological outrage stops at China's doorstep whether Maoist or post-Deng, despite her continuing abysmal record on citizen rights or democratic freedoms. In Tibet, Sinkiang and Mongolia Asians have been colonised with far greater ruthlessness than was ever experienced in Eastern Europe, and are being demographically swamped by Chinese immigrants to the point of extinction. Passing this over, in *The Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (Basic Books, New York, 2007) Brzezinski wistfully hopes that perhaps China digging into her own historical past might discover ideas on how to deal with tributary states. Perhaps a Freudian slip, for the rest of the work is couched in impeccable democratic and egalitarian language: it is perhaps a re-surfacing of the kite-flying of the Carter years when hopes were expressed for co-hegemonism by the US and China in the western and Asian spheres of influence. India hardly figures in Brzezinski's

future scenarios and his scholarly inattention to India is surprising. If India is at all mentioned, it is in terms of the archaic prognostications by western scholars in the Fifties which contrasted Pakistan, the strong mono-religious state, with India's centrifugal linguistic and ethnic pulls. He attacks George Bush for even considering recognition of

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India's nuclear status, despite the stringent conditionalities attached. The double standards get unselfconsciously thicker: he expresses concern at India's threat to the non-proliferation regime, but ignores China's overt and covert (through North Korea and Pakistan's AQ Khan network) continued proliferation. Attributing India's nuclearisation to an ongoing sibling quarrel with Pakistan, he warns of Kashmir as the nuclear flashpoint that might have been.

Who is accommodating whom

As ML Sondhi wrote in the wake of Pokharan II, "India's nuclear weapons programme has everything to do with China and little to do with Pakistan," since the latter could at any time be handled with India's conventional military superiority. It was after India's defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, followed by the 1964 nuclear weapons

when the unit of analysis clearly needs to be Asia." Moreover, "If both India and Pakistan can be persuaded of a stake for themselves in peace and cooperation, 'the nuclear threat in the subcontinent will take care of itself'." The Pentagon's declared policy of "balance and integrate" in its East Asian Strategy Report of the Nineties has been

foreshadowed the policy of integrating China system by unconditionally campaigning for her Security Council, driven by the hope that thereby the present prime minister could learn from his predecessor's policies to also factor in security and stability into the agenda of Sino-Indian rapprochement

test by China that led to Pokharan I in 1974, three years after the formation of Bangladesh had critically weakened Pakistan's military credibility. As for the non-proliferation regime, it was "fatally wounded the day China transferred a nuclear weapon design to Pakistan, thereby undermining the basic presumption that the existing weapons states were responsible powers: India's action is simply not in the same class of irresponsibility. Hence it is useless to define this as a sub-continental issue

described as the outcome of a clash of views between those who wanted to contain, and those who urged integrating, China into the international system, by strengthening the US-Japan relationship and bringing China into the WTO and other international institutions. Globalisation with its complex economic inter-linkages has further rendered sharp inter-state competition unrealistic. In a recent talk in New Delhi Ashley Tellis redefined the Pentagon's China engagement policy (which he hinted

India could not but follow) as integrating China not only into international institutions but forging bilateral economic ties and interdependencies while simultaneously "investing in increasing the power of other states located on its periphery". In other words, a country's strength and security no longer depend solely on economic integration with its friends but on generating "national resources from the economic relationship it enjoys with a competitor — even as it prepares to use those very resources generated from economic interdependence to cope with the geopolitical rivalry that exists with that competitor". Such policies cannot eliminate state competition nor guarantee a stable balance of power, but are optimal given the widespread simultaneous pursuit of power and plenty.

China herself plays a sophisticated diplomatic game. While pushing for increasing trade and investments to sustain the growth that finances her military expansion, she threateningly demonstrates her military potential in space, by shooting her satellite, and in the oceans with her rapidly developing nuclear submarine fleet. Along with increasing trade and cooperation with China, India finds the surrounding ocean dotted with a string of "Chinese" naval bases, from Pakistan's Gwadar to

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Burma's Coco Island. Before the recent G-8 summit, she was also treated to the Chinese Premier's bland claims to Arunachal, displaying an uncompromising stance on the border if not contempt for her "lesser" neighbour. In the light of the shifting balance of power towards Asia, especially to China, James Mann in *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away the Chinese Repression* (2007), examining the strategy of integration asks, "Who's integrating whom?" "Is the United States now integrating China into a new international economic order based on free market principles or is China now integrating the United States into a new international political order where a government's continuing eradication of all organised political opposition is accepted or ignored?" One may further ask, is India integrating into the Chinese order as a tributary state through a policy of appeasement?

Jawaharlal Nehru had foreshadowed the policy of integrating China into the international system by unconditionally campaigning for her admission to the Security Council, driven by the hope that thereby India would benefit. The present prime minister could learn from his mistakes and fine-tune his policies to also factor in security and national interest on the agenda of Sino-Indian rapprochement. COURTESY ASIAN AGE