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INDIA'S MARITIME STRATEGY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: ISSUES OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This essay is an analysis of India's maritime strategy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from the end of the Cold War to 2015. The main focus is on India's strategic culture. Even though it is widely recognized that India does not have a strategic culture, this essay suggests that India's strategic culture does exist, although in its infancy. Gathered from scattered writings in the press, academic journals, think tank publications, biographies and autobiographies, this essay hypothesizes that, first, India does have a strategic culture but is somewhat muddled and not yet conceived of concretely, and second, that India does have a grand strategy paradigm about operational policy in the IOR, which is a component of strategic culture. It argues that despite becoming a nation-state only in 1947 and that the sub-continent's history bears testament to a variety of strategic cultures, such as the Mughal, Maratha, Kalingan, Chola, Mauryan, Assamese, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati and Kashmiri strategic cultures, a post-Cold War India is slowly evolving a more singular strategic culture we can call 'Indian'. An attempt is also made to provide a glimpse of India's strategic culture from a neo-liberalist angle in order to lessen doubt and confusion over the issue.

Keywords: Grand strategy, Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), Maritime strategy, Strategic culture, Power.

INTRODUCTION

A report drafted by the RAND cooperation in 1992 was entitled Indian Strategic Thought (RAND Cooperation, 1992). In it is described the influences of geography, history, culture and British rule (era of the Raj) on Indian strategic thinking. The author of the report was George K. Tanham and he concluded that India does not have strategic thought or a strategic culture. Tanham argued that due to a lack of a monolithic political entity in India, there is a lack of strategic thought. This conclusion came as a shock to Indian strategic and academic communities. Since then, a debate emerged whether India has a strategic culture or not (Xinmin, 2014). Rodney W. Jones wrote that India has a history of strategic thought, captured in the symbolism of the pre-modern Indian state systems and the Vedic civilization which date back several millennia. Harjeet Singh believed that geographic variables have contributed to a lack of "Indianism" (Singh, 2009). India lies at a focal

point in the Asian landmass and has always been susceptible to outside invasions and plundering. "Its vast territory, complicated internal structure and strong cultural tension have helped it avoid long, continuous rule by any single empire" (Xinmin, 2014). Due to this, it was not possible for a strong strategic culture to evolve, given several disruptions in Indian history and civilization.

Some authors like Gautam Das justify India's lack of strategic culture by saying that geographical India was made up of many kingdoms at different times with few political empires (Das & Gupta, 2008). This made it difficult for the formulation of a static strategic culture from which modern strategists and decision-makers in government can draw upon (Xinmin, 2014).

It is necessary to carry out research on Indian strategic thought and culture because we will be able to know how India's strategic culture is able to exert an impact on its strategic choices and international behavior, the "strategic cultural paradigm" (Johnston, 1998). According to Johnston, "There is the assumption that the strategic environment constitutes

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the central paradigm of a strategic culture, comprising the role of war in human affairs, the nature of the adversary and the threat assessment, and the efficacy of the use of force. Second, based on the acceptance of the central paradigm, a set of operable policy preferences can be enforced in order for time to be deduced. Obviously, the focus of this strategic cultural theory is the culture of war and the efficacy of the use of force" (Johnston, 1998).

Simply put, a country's strategic culture can explain its security behavior.

"Strategic culture is made up of a country's worldview, judgment of subject-object relations and model of behaviors based on that country's geography, history and economic and political development. Interaction among these symbols can forge a collective national identity distinct from other countries, while also limiting the social and cultural environment of its strategic decisions" (Johnston, 1998).

John Duffield claimed that a country's security culture is formed by the strategic preferences of the entire society and political elites on some policies and actions that are different from other countries (Duffield, 1999).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion in this essay is best understood by applying the neo-liberalist theoretical framework. Systemically, states look for military and economic security in their relations with one another. Realism posits that international relations are determined by a constant state of war that interdependency gives rise to coercion among states in the form of balancing, bandwagoning or hedging. Neo-liberalists agree, but emphasize that economic strength is the ultimate basis for military power (Bajpai, 2010). They argue further that economic well-being is akin to power which can be more effective than military power. Therefore, due to the inter-dependence among states, relations need not be based on force. According to Bajpai, "in situations of 'complex inter-dependence', force is unuseable or ineffective" (Bajpai, 2010).

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In the Indian context, the neo-liberalist approach to researching strategic culture is the most relevant. Since

economic well-being is vital for national security, an impoverished Indian society can't feel or be secure. This leads to dissatisfaction and insecurity among the people. In order for India to feel secure, trade and economic interactions in the form of free market policies for example, will ensure mutual gain between states. Therefore, India's strategic culture must encompass the notion of interdependency and focus on trade, investment and technology, not just war.

Overall, India's strategic culture is best explained when "governments and peoples are more clear-headed and did their cost-benefit calculations correctly" (Bajpai, 2010). Also, rivalry and violence would be conceived as irrational because military conflict cannot be "sustained as economic globalization moves forward. For neoliberals, force is an outmoded and blunt instrument unsuited to the new world order" (Bajpai, 2010). The Narendra Modi "doctrine" (2014) is close to explaining what India strategic culture should encompass. He mentions *vikas vaad* (development) and *vistar vaad* (expansionism), both characteristics of a Grand Strategy, strategic culture and neoliberal thinking.

METHODOLOGY

Johnston (1998) argues that in order to establish the existence of a strategic culture it is necessary to show that there exists a set of strategic preferences that are consistently ranked in some canonical texts (Bajpai, 2010). He also suggests that actual state behavior representative of a strategic culture must be based on preferences that anchor the thinking of decision-makers which will determine government policy (Johnston, 1998). Arun Prakash states that India's maritime history is a description of past events, on *what* happened and not *why* it happened (Prakash, 2013). Methodologically, Prakash suggests that it has left research on India's strategic culture in a void. However, since 1998, the Indian navy has produced a strategic framework for the deployment of maritime forces in peace and in war (Prakash, 2013). In this essay, we will focus on scattered writings in the press, academic journals, think tank publications, and biographies and autobiographies of past decision-makers. It will refer to three documents, namely *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2004) and *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy for the 21st Century* (2007) and *Nonalignment 2.0* (2012). In conclusion, this essay will analyze Narendra Modi's thoughts for the Indian Ocean and beyond (Cronin & Baruah, 2014).

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES

This essay hypothesizes that, first, India does have a strategic culture but is somewhat muddled and not yet conceived of concretely due to the absence of an amalgamation of strategic cultures of pre-Independence Indian/Hindu states. Second, that India does have a grand strategy paradigm about operational policy in the IOR, which is a component of strategic culture. Discourse on these two hypotheses includes an historical understanding of India's actions in its maritime neighborhood.

DEFINITION OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

More than four decades ago, a global debate on strategic culture emerged. At the height of the Cold War, answers were sought after to questions about the origins of strategy and how policy decisions on strategy were formulated (Al-Rodhan, 2011). For example, the United States and the Soviet Union (as well as their satellite states) wanted to know how the adversary made decisions to protect their national security. The discourse centered on the role that culture played in safeguarding their respective spheres of influence. The term strategic culture was coined by Jack Snyder in 1977, when he wrote "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options" (Al-Rodhan, 2011). He defined strategic culture as the sum total of ideals, conditional emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of the national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to [...] strategy" (Snyder, 1977).

Johnston defines strategic culture as follows: Strategic culture is an integrated set of symbols (i.e. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors, etc.) that acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious (Johnston, 1998). According to Bajpai, strategic culture consists of two parts: The first is the central strategic paradigm—the basic assumptions about orderliness in the world. Included here are assumptions about the role of war in human affairs, about the nature of the adversary, and about the efficacy of the use of force. The second part is grand strategy, or the secondary assumptions about operational policy that follow from the prior

assumptions (discussed above). These may be gleaned from various texts written over time by statesmen, soldiers, scholars, commentators, and diplomats (Bajpai, 2010).

Strategic culture thus integrates cultural symbols such as religion, myths and legends with historical memories of ancient states and civilizations. It determines a state's security policies and how they affect their relations with other states. The latter is reflected in a state's strategic doctrine.

INDIA'S GRAND STRATEGY PARADIGM

According to David Scott, there is a significant meaningful degree of naval strategy for the Indian Ocean backed up by the government. Since 1992, there have been government announcements and on-going commentaries by think tanks like the National Maritime Foundation that "there may indeed be a strategy for the Indian Oceanin which a degree of consensus is noticeable over India's aspirations in the IOR". Also significant is the establishment of the National Security Council set up in 1998 which suggests that India has some form of a Grand Strategy and strategic culture.

Prakash, writing in 2013, suggests that the:

"IN aims to achieve conventional deterrence by maintaining a preponderance in conventional maritime capability, i.e. a sufficiency of warships, submarines and aircraft which will undertake the full gamut of operational missions, the idea being to never leave friends as well as potential adversaries in doubt about India's capabilities at sea. Given the dominant location of the peninsular India, astride Indian Ocean sea lanes, such a maritime force can guarantee the safety of international trade and energy lifelines and capabilities at sea port (Prakash, 2013).

From this, we can roughly decipher what Indian strategy is Neil Padukone, in his book *Beyond South Asia: India's Strategic Evolution and the Integration of the Subcontinent* (2014) says,

"India's worldview that took shape after independence when India took onto itself the project of securing the Indian subcontinent. Analysts have called this strategy as 'India's Monroe doctrine'—referring to the US foreign policy declared in 1823 which viewed any interference by European countries in North or South America as an act of aggression requiring US intervention. On similar lines, the Indian subcontinent was seen as a single geographic and strategic unit. This understanding, combined with the colonial experience

convinced Indian policymakers that securing the strategic unity in the wake of new borders which were essentially 'demographic and marginal' and not strategic required a two-pronged approach. One, keeping the subcontinent united and two, denying extra-regional powers any presence in the region. The first aim was instrumentalised by denying autonomous tendencies of the smaller neighbors, particularly if they tried to bandwagon with extra regional powers. The second aim was aided by Non-alignment, which was 'meant to be the practice of realpolitik cloaked in idealism'" (Padukone, 2015).

Padukone's Grand Strategy is a component of strategic culture. An Indian worldview informs Grand Strategy, so indirectly reflects what the strategic culture of that nation may be. In the Indian context, her worldview is colored by a detachment of the political establishment from security issues (Prakash, 2013). This may explain the lack of a tangible, composite strategic culture in India. Having said that, India does have an historical tradition of independent states, each with its own strategic culture. In post-Colonial times, India's political and maritime decision makers have been finding it difficult to articulate a united strategic culture, but there are glimpses of it in the writings on Indian maritime policy. In the late 1980s, India had adopted a long-delayed naval acquisition program under which the IN inducted a second aircraft carrier and a nuclear attack submarine along with numerous warships, submarines and aircraft (Prakash, 2013). This threw India into the international limelight when the cover of Time magazine (Asia Edition) was titled "was titled e (As Superpower" (Time Magazine Asia Edition, 3rd April, 1989). For the first time, there was room for India to articulate a Grand Strategy. How India sees itself is critical to this undertaking. According to Ashley Tellis, there are three ways in which India sees herself. First concerns the economic component of Grand Strategy. India began managing economic growth primarily through autarky and dirigisme. In the post-Cold War era however, it is shifting to a vision that has greater room for globalization and a greater acceptance of market forces (Tellis, 2012). Second, India has focused on building state capacity, trying to balance the state and market in achieving room for globalization while minimizing security competition. All three strategies fall within the neo-liberalist framework mentioned earlier.

INDIA'S MARITIME STRATEGIC DOCTRINES AND STRATEGIC CULTURE

India has three main maritime doctrines, namely, Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004), Freedom to Use the Seas: Indian Maritime Strategy for the 21st Century (2007) and Nonalignment 2.0 (2012). What is India's attitude towards war and the use of military force to attain political ends? Is it informed by a definite strategic culture? The three doctrines were written in the hope of answering these questions. With regard to the first doctrine, Indian Maritime Strategy (2004), India's National Security Advisor, Shiv Shankar Menon asked, "Is there an Indian doctrine for the use of force in statecraft? This is not a question that one normally expects to ask about a power that is a declared nuclear weapon state....But India achieved independence....through a freedom movement dedicated to truth and non-violence, and has displayed both ambiguity and opposition to classical power politics" (Menon, 2011).

Menon asks an important question and puts forward a relevant conceptual conundrum about the use of power in Indian state behavior. India's achieving independence through peaceful means does confuse the matter of the role of strategic culture because there is no concrete reference to similar examples in antiquity, historical memory, myth, or other texts written over time. Prakash further comments that this demonstrates the "inability of Indian statesmen to apply themselves sufficiently, to strategic issues" (Prakash, 2013). Both Menon and Prakash allude to the fact that with the 2004 Doctrine, India had failed to achieve any political end-states with the aid of military operations. They opine that India did not have a strategic culture to draw upon. The basic problem was that there was a "detachment of the political establishment from security issues" (Prakash, 2013). Therefore, India was still in a strategic cultural void to which no national security paradigm could refer (Prakash, 2013).

The 2007 Doctrine, Freedom to Use the Seas appears to be an extension of the 2004 Doctrine with some exceptions. It was released after the Indian Navy (IN) had acquired hardware, systems and weaponry, as well as trained human resources reminiscent of a professional maritime force. The 2007 document was a "force planning document which set out the capabilities required for its execution" (Prakash, 2013). This time, the Doctrine set out to itemize a full spectrum of four

basic missions relating to conflict. These were, in the fashion styled by Sun Tzu himself, Military, Diplomatic, Constabulary and Benign roles (Prakash, 2013). These four basic missions represent deterrence in India's Grand Strategic thrust. "Deterrence, at the Grand Strategic plane, involves the use of nuclear weapons as political instruments of state policy, their actual use being contemplated only 'in extremis' in the second-strike mode" (Prakash, 2013). From the 2007 Doctrine, it is clear that India had officially formulate the Grand Strategy, this being a component of strategic culture and one step closer to an Indian worldview.

The foreword to the Doctrine 2007 defines maritime strategy as "the overall approach of a nation to the oceans around it, with the aim of synergizing all aspects related to maritime activities to maximize national gains" (Freedom to Use the Seas, 2007). Also, it is mentioned that the partial fulfillment of India's Grand Strategy is inevitable, given that India's maritime strategy has "economic, commercial, political, military, scientific and technological facets" (Freedom to Use the Seas, 2007). A section of the document discusses the relations between doctrine and strategy, a step closer to articulating a strategic culture. It says "Doctrine is evolved from government's policies. Strategy is derived from doctrine. If a strategy brings success, it reinforces doctrine" (Freedom to Use the Seas, 2007). However, this does not sufficiently explain the role of strategic culture from which the IN can draw upon. At best, it is assumed but muddled in the comparison of doctrine and strategy.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Doctrine 2007 present India's perspectives on and implications of Indian maritime history. They stress the fact that without doctrine, India could not develop a strategy without a point of reference. So, one can assume that it is a step closer towards the establishment of a strategy based on a point of reference, i.e. from which we can put the pieces together to solve the puzzle of Indian strategic culture as that point of reference. We can assume this because, "even though India remains a young nation-state—somewhat tentative and unsure about the use of power" (Prakash, 2013), she has three substantial doctrines which stress the need to "project power, catalyze partnerships, build trust and create interoperability, and when required, use convincing power to achieve national aims" (Freedom to Use the Seas, 2007). This, too, alludes to India's strategic culture.

In chapter 2, the evolution of recent maritime history is given prominence. Going back to 1948, India's maritime vision was captured in the first Naval Plans Paper. The IN would acquire cruisers and destroyers, to be situated around small aircraft carriers in order to protect the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and merchant shipping and trade. India's quarrel with Pakistan over Kashmir forced the deployment of India's army and air force "to defend territory. This rationale was to dominate Indian military thinking for the next half of the century" (Freedom to Use the Seas, 2007). Three to nine chapters proceed to delineate maritime trade and security of energy, maritime domain awareness, strategy for employment in peace, strategy for employment in conflict and strategy for force build-up. This directly defines the IN's Grand Strategy, but is silent on where it is derived from. Impressive, but it begs the question of what the ancient, mythical, or methodologically scientific investigations into the IN's evolution of strategic thinking. Here again, we are left to infer a strategic culture, albeit a muddled one which is not explicitly represented.

The next logical step in our analysis is to state the obvious; that an enquiry into the traditions, values and institutional culture of the Indian Navy (IN) warrants examining a wider range of factors that constitute her strategic culture. A statement of a former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, in 2009, mentions that "In military terms, both conventional and non-conventional, we neither have the capability nor the intention to match China, force for force". (Geraghty, 2012). Although India is uncomfortable with China's growing footprint in the IOR, it has no intention of jeopardizing its delicate relationship with China, or precipitating their ties into irreversibly and overtly hostile territory. As late as 2012, therefore, the two countries continue to engage in subterranean maneuvering, jostling for position, while seeking to manage tensions at the surface and avoid them spilling over to overall confrontation. India is somewhat tentative and unsure about the use of power. In response to Tanham's analysis of India's strategic culture (1992), a contemplative Indian would survey the contemporary strategic environment and ask relevant questions like, 'why were invasions over its north-western passes never stopped or defeated?; why were rulers of Indian states unwilling to unite against invaders; why was no thought given to maritime

defense, or to strategic defense of India as a whole?; and, what is the explanation for the 24 year hiatus between India's first nuclear test in 1974 and nuclear weaponization in 1998? These probing questions reflect the notion that India and more directly, the IN are aware that some form of strategic culture can and should emerge. To stress this point, in the second half of the 20th century, there emerged public discourse, led by India's national security establishment, in the area of national security strategy. An independent group of academics were tasked with examining India's strategic environment. The product was a doctrine entitled *Nonalignment 2.0*, published in 2012, which has offered recommendations regarding India's role in the international order (Khilnani 2012). *Nonalignment 2.0* is an attempt to identify the basic principles that should guide India's foreign and strategic policy (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012).

Nonalignment 2.0 suggests that strategic culture always refers to power (hard and soft), and now, in this new document, India has proven that a strategic culture is in the making. India's legitimacy is summed up in the statement, "India must remain true to its aspiration of creating a new and alternative universality", the key word here being universality (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012). The report further states that India's primary strategic interest is to ensure an open economic order (*Non-Alignment 2.0*, 2012). Neoliberalist theory suggests that India is slowly becoming prominent in economic liberalization (primarily trade in goods and services, and finance) (*Non-Alignment 2.0*, 2012). Due to a growing post-9/11 gambit of global security challenges, India realizes that their primary aim is to maintain territorial integrity which encompasses land, sea and space frontiers. It also includes the protection of trade routes, access to resources and protection of the Indian diaspora (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012). It can be argued that as part of India's strategic culture, India has propounded the concept of conventional space being available under a nuclear overhang (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012). This means the shaping of India's military power must have a significant maritime orientation which should be India's strategic objective (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012). "The role of hard power as an instrument of state is to remain ready to be applied externally or internally in pursuit of political objectives (*Nonalignment 2.0*, 2012).

CONCLUSION: INDIA'S STRATEGIC CULTURE UNDER THE NARENDRA MODI ADMINISTRATION AND BEYOND

India's newly-elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's main drive is a stable and secure growth that will make India economically stronger. Commenting on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) manifesto, Modi said, "The vision is to fundamentally reboot and reorient the foreign policy goals, content and process, in a manner that locates India's global strategic engagement in a new paradigm and on a wider canvass, that is not just limited to political diplomacy, but also includes our economic, scientific, cultural, political and security interests, both regional and global, on the principles of equality and mutuality, so that it leads to an economically stronger India, and its voice is heard in the international fora" (Time Magazine interview, 2015).

What are the strategic and security dimensions of Modi's worldview? Modi's neoliberal approach is essentially one of engagement with potentially-hostile powers, including China. India's area of security interest prioritizes strategic challenges where China will figure prominently. Most importantly, Modi is expected to replace an Indian mindset from thinking 'South Asia', to a larger area, i.e. the IOR; and from 'Look East' to 'Act East'. The IOR is a strategic link from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca making it a highly volatile span of sea water in terms of global stability. Modi realizes that India and the Indian Ocean are regarded as the appropriate half-way points between West Asia and Southeast Asia. To contemplate India's strategy and security in such a vast area requires a total revision of the leadership mindset. This mindset will have to look at India as playing a leading role in other regions which are connected by the Indian Ocean. These regions are Southeast, Central and West Asia. For instance, India cannot fight a globally operated and coordinated terrorist and fundamentalist menace by being confined to one particular geographic region, i.e. South Asia. The role has to be more forwardly offensive rather than defensive. Under Modi, a resurgent India must get her rightful place in the community of nations and international institutions.

Rising hegemonies in the IOR, mainly the US and China have prompted India to coordinate with other countries in the IOR that are equally affected by such developments. India should focus on improving relations with India's South Asia neighbors. Bi-lateral and multi-

lateral steps that India has taken with Southeast Asia, for example, should be geographically-expanded under Modi's leadership, in order for India to be a dominant player in the IOR. Modi has deep trust in Indian values that allowed for a thriving Indian sea power. For instance, according to Sardar K.M. Panikkar (1895-1963), an Indian statesman, diplomat and visionary, Indians possessed the skills to construct ocean going ships, sturdy enough to venture into the distant reaches of the Arabian Sea and had in use a matsya yantra (magic compass) for accurate navigation. What lies behind this seafaring greatness is deep Indian values which Modi adheres to. He will have to prove how he can combine economics with military power, a neoliberal strategy that has not been applied by other Indian leaders before him. In the realm of economics, previous Indian leadership had led to strained relations with the U.S. Under Modi, this has changed. First of all, in 2014, Obama had extended a formal invitation to Modi for a visit to the US and has expressed keenness to work closely with him stressing that this should be a defining partnership in the 21st century. Obama's message was conveyed in an official letter to Modi by Deputy Secretary of State William Burns when he called on Modi in New Delhi. Modi had accepted the invitation, and visited in September 2014. One can see India's strategic culture in the making.

Interesting developments await us on the maritime front. The commissioning of the INS Vikramaditya in late 2013 has made India the only Asian nation other than pre-war Japan to operate more than one aircraft carrier at a time. Modi visited the carrier on July 14, 2014. In light of India's other carrier, the INS Viraat, being 60 years old, India is constructing an indigenous carrier even though there is a shortage of funding. Modi will have to make sure the construction speeds up or Beijing will swarm the IOR with more of her aircraft carriers. (mentioned in China's defense white paper of 2013). According to Modi, India's maritime strategy including its industry will have to take precedence. It is a positive message that Modi is showing the world, when he visited the Indian armed forces at sea soon after his appointment as Prime Minister. Modi is definitely aware that the origins of the IN can be traced back to Gujarat, his home state. This may urge Modi to reflect on India's long-neglected maritime imperative and strategic culture, as well as to think of India's strategic future in maritime terms. Strategically, India seems to be

balancing with the US and Japan, rather than hoping for a less aggressive Chinese behavior by acting as a regional moderator.

Modi has to focus also on the leveraging of India's soft power, the building of 'Brand India', especially in diaspora communities, an emphasis on trade in foreign policy, and the expansion of India's diplomatic corps. Modi is also fully aware that he has to improve India's national security with a more joined-up, whole of government approach, overhauling the intelligence agencies, revamping the defense industry, modernizing the military and dealing with terrorism with a firm hand. Overall, Modi's embodiment of leadership will be centered on deeper economic engagement within and outside of the IOR, and safeguarding core Indian interests backed by a more credible military, particularly on the maritime front. A cover story in India Today (May 26, 2014) called Modi a 'man of destiny' who has been given the peoples' mandate to reshape the idea of India. The article goes on to say that Modi does not just want to govern India, he wants to remake it. There are two parts to this: one is the crafting of a new kind of neoliberalist pluralism which rejects the secularism practiced by the previous Congress-Party dominated coalition. The second aspect is to reinvent the nation as a center-staging of the economic agenda and to rebuild India's image as a global powerhouse. Modi desires that India expand her diplomatic, economic and military relations with China en route to becoming a great power. *Vikas vaad* (development) and *vistar vsitar vaad* (expansion) as well as *Ahimsa* or the self's orientation are the driving forces behind Modi's desire to show a sovereign India with a 'self'. Modi is clearly including strategic culture in his administration, with his own form of doctrine. Modi is aware that he has to revive an effective foreign policy which has been in shambles since economic mismanagement, corruption, inflation, a growing balance of payments deficit and declining growth rates were incurred by previous leaderships. Modi wishes to guarantee national security by returning defense spending to a level of 2.5% of GDP. Also, this has to be accompanied by rapid development of hi-tech industries, particularly in aerospace, shipbuilding and communications. The defense ministry will have to be restructured with greater integration between the armed forces, defense scientists and bureaucrats. The nuclear command structure also has to be revamped. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, U.S., Israel and select members of the EU

should be crucial partners in the effort to enhance defense production capabilities. All this bodes well for an India to reach superpower status and to lead in the IOR. What lies beyond for India's strategic culture?

More debates have emerged about the geographical security nomenclature that makes up the IOR, Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. The regional security debate has implication for India's strategic projection. There is a move away from an Indian Ocean and towards an Indo-Pacific security construction. "This means that, culturally, 'Australia identifies primarily with Europe; that, economically, Australia's strongest links are with Asia, and especially China; and that, militarily and politically, Australia is aligned with the U.S. (Rumley, 2012). India's Indo-Pacific role is clearer, especially after Modi's visit to Japan in September 2014. Japan committed to increase its investment in India's economy as well as to transfer equipment technology to the Indian defense sector. (Singh, 2014). A stronger maritime partnership is envisaged as "both nations committed themselves to increasing their maritime interaction and reaffirmed support for the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's continued participation in the annual Indo-US-Malabar maritime exercises" (Singh, 2014).

India has been projecting itself as a benign power, till today. This is part of India's strategic culture. India has never coveted territory beyond regional confines even though it has constantly been attacked from outside, both in medieval and colonial times. This is a strategic culture that was defensive, non-expansionary and accommodative. (India Together, 2015). With Modi at the helm, India's regional orientation and strategic behavior seem to be changing. Indian strategic culture seems to be evolving. Below are some examples.

Threats and strategy drive arms acquisitions. Similarly, military modernization is a sign of emerging peer competition. India sees that the only way is to keep modernizing the armed forces, paying more attention to offensive capabilities. The net effect of such arms acquisitions on stability in the IOR is a function not just of power and strategy, but also of these variables as refracted through the prism of culture. The Modi government, in 2014, had appointed a new defense minister, Manohar Gopalkrishna Prabhu Parrikar to run the world's third largest military. When newly appointed, he exposed the huge backlog of procurements (The Week, November 23, 2014). Besides emphasizing the development of an indigenous defense

industry, Parrikar will have to make the Defence Research and Development Organization produce results faster, especially in projects such as the light combat aircraft Tejas and the Arjun tank which have been pending for decades. Parrikar will have to ensure to provide the IN the firepower it needs to counter the Chinese and the Pakistan navy in the high seas and around its maritime territory.

Another form of proof that India is evolving her strategic culture is seen in a McKinsey & Co. study in 1990 that high performing companies distinguished themselves by execution, not just on strategy. Modi's interest in the 1990 study reinforces his determination for India to build up a strategic culture that is also based on execution. Modi has surrounded himself with people of execution ability, those who can set clear, measurable goals with small implementation teams. He recognized those who took initiative and risks, and punished those who played safe and behaved like bureaucrats. This is clearly strategic culture in the making (India Today, June 30, 2014).

Lastly, and quite importantly, Modi made it clear to Obama during his 2015 visit to India that India's independent foreign policies would not allow any third parties (in this case, the U.S.) to forge a common front against China. Modi's China policy is firm and unbending to U.S. urges. An online network reported:

"The great American fear today is that Modi might put India-China relations on a predictable footing. From the Chinese commentaries on Obama's visit, Beijing is aware of the American attempt to hustle Modi towards the US' rebalance strategy in Asia. And Delhi is hastening to clarify that proximity to the US will not translate as alliance against China. An element of strategic ambiguity has appeared" (Strategic Culture Foundation, 2015).

It is clear, therefore, that India's strategic culture is not clearly visible, but evolving.

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