

India: Living in the Pocket of Uncle Sam

Mera pyara Bharat-- "I love my India"

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Global Research, September 16, 2012

Region: [Asia](#)

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With a population of 1.2bn people, many believe that India is the arena where the future direction of humanity is being played out. Mired in poverty and still bound by tradition, it is on an insatiable quest for modernity. Containing some 17 per cent of the global population, the route to development chosen by India may well impact the people living here and elsewhere throughout the planet. However, given current events, the future of humanity may not be determined in India, but by events in a much smaller country - Syria.

When the Soviet Union fell apart, there was much talk from the US of a multi-polar world, where Washington would be just one influential player among many - a world where an autonomous India would play a vital role. It was nice sounding talk. But that's all it was - talk. In the wake of the collapse of the USSR, the US has been hell-bent on achieving global superiority.

The US's orbit of influence has extended throughout Eastern Europe and into many of the former Soviet states in central Asia. While Bush senior was mouthing media-friendly words about multi-polarity, Dick Cheney was at the same time stating that the US sought world domination. Look no further to see the US track record by casting your mind back to events in the former Yugoslavia, Libya and Iraq. Look no further to see its role currently in Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan. To date, the US has been responsible for millions of deaths and maimings in its quest for superiority, but its project now appears to be reaching a critical point.

Unfortunately for the Obama regime, it's no longer the early 1990s when the US believed it reined supreme and Russia was in disarray and China still relatively weak. China has emerged as a genuine global player and Russia has a new-found confidence under Putin. If China and Russia thought Libya was worth sacrificing, they regard the more significant Syria as a different matter entirely.

A former Soviet ally that still has strong links with Russia, Syria plays host to Russia's only naval base outside of the former USSR. That in itself is something the Russians think is worth defending, given their build up of naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean and their military hardware supplies to Syria. Both Russia and China know that if the US, its allies and its proxy Free Syrian Army topple the Assad government, all roads then lead to Tehran.

But the US will not stop with Iran. Moscow and Beijing are also firmly in Washington's plans for destabilisation too via exploiting political and ethnic divisions, especially in the border regions of Russia and China. It's a high-stakes game because some within the Pentagon think it's better to draw China into a military conflict now, when it can still be defeated, rather than later.

Of course, Washington knows that if military confrontation can be avoided, even better. And, to this end, much US foreign policy is now directed towards undermining China's growth and outmaneuvering it across the globe. While China lost ground in Libya, it is loathe to do so in the much more strategically important countries of Syria, Iran and Pakistan.

As far as India is concerned, the US regards it as a key pawn in its geo-political aims by containing China and not as some equal, autonomous partner in a mythological multi-polar world, despite what many in the Indian media may like to think.

With this in mind, it is always revealing to see how the Indian media reacts when a high-ranking US politician visits its shores. Much of it turns sycophant. It happened when Obama visited in 2010, and it occurred again earlier this year as Hillary Clinton touched down in Kolkata for a three day visit to India. Media people hung on Clinton's every utterance, looking for the odd phrase that, in their eyes, confirmed India as the great global power.

According to many of the news anchors and columnists, Clinton's decision to honour India with her presence implied that 'we' really matter - India as the US's bilateral partner, engaged in forging an important strategic relationship for the century ahead.

It's a strange love affair, however; not a match made in heaven, but in a fool's paradise. The US is pressurising India to reduce its imports of Iranian oil and to open up its economy further to its powerful corporate players, not least foreign direct investment in the retail sector. Economic growth in India is hitting the buffers, sovereignty is being ceded as foreign interests gain control, the poverty alleviation rate is as low as it was 20 years ago and the US-led 'globalisation' project has led to maximal gains for a minority but minimal gains for the great mass of ordinary folk, while causing great turmoil as state-corporate players gain free rein to loot the country for their own gains.

The response by many well-off, middle class people to this is usually, "But look at the improvements in India," a ...

they then proceed to state how economic neo-liberalism has led to an improvement in their own personal situation. By failing to account for the broader picture, such a response reminds me of a Noam Chomsky quote that goes something along the lines that even under slavery, the conditions of many slaves improved.

Last month, on 15 August (India's Independence Day), people wrapped themselves in the national flag and chanted "Mera pyara Bharat" (I love my India). Unfortunately, 'independence' for India is almost becoming a euphemism for living in the pocket of the US. But maybe India shouldn't feel too alone. The old colonial master, Britain, among many others, is to be found there too.

*Originally from the northwest of England, **Colin Todhunter** has spent many years in India. He has written extensively for the Bangalore-based Deccan Herald, New Indian Express and Morning Star (Britain). His articles have also appeared in many other publications. His East by Northwest site is at: <http://colintodhunter.blogspot.com>**

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