



## Center for Geopolitical & Strategic Maritime Studies

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## *Geopolitica-mente*

Thoughts to understand the world  
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### “The Pivot of the World: The Heartland in the New Cold War”

Central Asia represents a strategic centrality and a clash area among great powers. Russia, China, India, Turkey and the United States play their cards on Heartland

The Indian Union appears from space as a great wedge driven into the heart of Eurasia: a Hindu budding of the Russian Federation and a thorn in the side of the People's Republic of China.

It is precisely on this ambiguous geographical configuration that both Western nomenclatures play, especially the United States, and the Indian ruling class and chancellery, as demonstrated by Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to Washington, which took place in the wake of "The enemy of my enemy is my friend", clear summary, even if simplistic, of how each State brings grist to its mill. What the German geopolitical academy of the early twentieth century called the "living space".

The internal dynamics of a State, according to Carl Haushofer, in fact, finds a territorial correspondence in the expansion ("growth") of the frontiers/borders, which stops when it reaches a surface which satisfies the state's needs and which provides the people with the means for subsistence ("Borders and Living Space Act").

Internal dynamics which forcefully would lead the borders of the respective states to a wartime breaking point of the fault line as pre-war geopolitics envisaged among the possibilities for reconfiguring the global political-strategic order. The probable conflicts were thought to see the various states opposed, with the aim of extending their vital space, conquering the "pivot of the world" or preventing others from getting their hands on those portions of land and avoiding the creation of a Eurasian Super State (or a Russo-German

alliance), controller of the heart-pivot of the world, of the so-called world island, and therefore of the globe. Today, Washington's goal, for example, is to avoid any type of alliance between the states of Eurasia.



Eurasia from the space.

(<https://www.google.it/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fhumanitiesfutures.org%2Fpapers%2Fre-imagining-world-spaces-new-relevance-eurasia%2F&psig=AOvVaw2MoFvz-M0ouTqmCyciBRMq&ust=1691637105607000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBEQjRxqFwoTCJj93bjNzoADFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE>)

### A case study: India

The Indian Union is historically linked to the Russian-speaking populations (Russia today, Soviet Union

yesterday), but the USA would like to use India in an anti-Chinese perspective<sup>1</sup>.

India, like China, is basically a real continent: a collection of various nations and 120 languages, just to mention these two data, leaving out the religious data, although important in the evolution of Indian secular democracy towards a new political narrative linked to the ancient Hindu civilization.

In this context, Modi's goal is to make the country less uneven, trying to use the socio-economic axis to raise the country's standard of living and creating a neo-Hindu narrative that unites the Indian peoples.

From a demographic point of view, India, with almost 1.4 billion inhabitants, is the most populous state in the world (it has recently overtaken China) and its population is extremely young. This allows it, among other things, to have important Armed Forces (about 3 million and 800 thousand men). Also, India has the numbers to make up a huge market.<sup>2</sup>

The Union of India has several advanced technological centers: for example, the information technology sector, of which it is first in Asia for know-how, training, education and research. Many of its engineers moved to USA, resulting in an implicit but very strong synergy between the two states. In fact, the Indian diaspora in USA (the "Second generations" in particular) have founded important startups in AI research: (8% of the total US startups).<sup>3</sup>

In fact, in United States the Indian diaspora is second only to the Mexican one, and its members occupy influential positions in the sectors of high technology, business, banking and politics.

The artificial intelligence sector is crucial for raising the socio-economic standard of Indians and dampening the ethnic-linguistic-religious fault lines, which prevent

India from projecting itself as a regional and extra-regional power.

Artificial intelligence is also used in the welfare field for the distribution of basic necessities, in the health field (especially during the Covid emergency), also in the agro-industrial field in collaboration with US and Chinese companies.

The digital research sector linked to A.I. is the basis of the present and future computerized warfare and then intelligent warfare: a delicate and essential sector, given that India, together with Australia, Japan and USA, is part of the QUAD, or rather of that American-led alliance which serves to "contain" the geopolitical advance of China. From this point of view, the Indians have the complex role of containing the Chinese along the Himalayan peaks, an area historically disputed between the two countries, where it is very difficult to understand precisely where the borders are.<sup>4</sup>

The relations between India and Russia can be considered ambiguous: on the one hand, in an anti-Chinese function, India must integrate with its Western allies within the QUAD; on the other hand, when it came to voting in the UN to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India abstained. This attitude is also shared by other countries - such as Turkey - because it is guided by national interests.

India's ambiguity depends primarily on historical factors and a feeling of gratitude towards the Russians. Indeed, Indian industry was literally built by the Russians and as a result it is dependent on Russian materials for maintenance and is, in other respects, integrated into Russian value chains. From a military point of view, in the early 2000s, the Americans also allowed India - given the general climate of détente

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<sup>1</sup> "In the new world of the Cold War between the USA and China and that waged in the middle of Europe, of the post pandemic and of the Global South ready to emerge, the relationship between the two largest democracies on the planet certainly could not remain unchanged: on the contrary, it is all reversed, and certainly not in favor of the former. Today it is India that determines the success or failure of this relationship, which is infinitely more strategic for Washington than it is for New Delhi." (Nicola Missaglia, ISPI India Desk).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.geopop.it/lindia-diventera-una-super-potenza-mondiale-ruolo-alleanze-e-prospettive-di-delhi/>.

<sup>3</sup> *L'India diventerà una superpotenza?* High technology to unite the country (Limesonline - January 2023).

<sup>4</sup> China's military actions along the 3,500-kilometre common border with the Indian Union have increased. In 2020, the two countries came close to conflict as they had never happened in 70 years, when their troops clashed along the Himalayan border in Ladakh, but clashes also took place in December 2022 (source: limesonline.it).

with post-Cold War Russia - to purchase weapons from Russia, in particular air superiority aircraft.

Furthermore, despite the aforementioned closeness, India and Russia are divided regarding relations with India's worst enemy: Pakistan. In fact, Russia has been carrying out military exercises with Pakistan since 2016. In this context, Moscow was granted the use of the port of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea, strategically decisive for the Russians, as it allows access to warm seas (also to the Mediterranean via Suez and Bab el-Mandeb) as an alternative to the Black Sea (due to the Turkish control of the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles).

Perspective 2047 and relations with Moscow, Beijing, Washington

The centenary year of the Indian state will be held in 24 years, an important appointment for Modi's People's Party, which is aiming for re-election in the next electoral round.

Modi is expected to win a third term in less than a year in the next general election, and his popularity is partly attributed to his image as a respected and courted leader that has made India a major player on the world stage.<sup>5</sup>

For this reason, Delhi does not comply with the West on Ukraine in order not to lose the advantageous returns that derive from its friendship with Russia. At the same time, its role as an adversary of China leads it to be courted by the Western world and by USA in particular. A complex game that can lead to reprisals from one side or the other.

If the war would end with a Russia too weakened and therefore in a position of subjection to China, the rise of Indian power could inevitably be compromised.<sup>6</sup>

The broader West led by the United States understood this: after criticizing Indian "ambivalence", they toned

down and strengthened cooperation in strategic sectors.

Russia is not in a position to carry out an evident and strong foreign policy and therefore its relations with India have remained good but tepid, however praising the "constructive" role played by Delhi, described after Beijing as a privileged partner in the Concept of foreign policy published at the end of March 2023.<sup>7</sup>

On a geopolitical level, India is already an irreplaceable partner for the USA, whose public opinion does not like Beijing: it participates in every alliance created to contain Chinese economic (New Silk Road) and territorial expansionism in the Indo-Pacific. But not economically, at least not yet. Statistics say that economic ties could become more important, but time is needed and not even India intends to rush too fast.

The defense of national industry continues to be fundamental in Modi's economic programs: openness, yes, but with caution. It is the new form of moderate protectionism practiced everywhere, not only in India: the reformed version of the globalization of the early 90s of the last century.<sup>8</sup>

On the table of the meeting with Joe Biden then, the topics were numerous, ranging from industrial cooperation to the climate, to AI, to visas, and to security in the Indo-Pacific, obviously in an anti-Chinese key. But fears about the erosion of democratic spaces in India and the growing opposition to all forms of dissent from civil society are unlikely to find adequate space to be addressed.<sup>9</sup>

Global geopolitical dynamics are complex and ever-changing but, as highlighted above, India is currently collaborating fruitfully with China and Russia, establishing strategic ties that are not conditioned by relations with the United States. USA represents a state in decline, if we look at the definition given by Graham Allison when he mentioned Thucydides' trap, and India is perfectly aware that there will be important changes

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<sup>5</sup> "Modi, Biden and the enemy of my enemy. Narendra Modi welcomed in Washington with full honors. His visit is a message to China, but the one between India and the United States is more convenience than an alliance" (ISPI) - 22 June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> "India's risky double games", Limesonline - 8 June 2023.

<sup>7</sup> "Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> "India and China are irreplaceable. If Beijing remains a key player in Washington's economy, India instead establishes itself as an irreplaceable geopolitical partner." - ISPI - 23 June 2023.

<sup>9</sup> "Modi, Biden and the enemy of my enemy. Narendra Modi welcomed in Washington with full honors. His visit is a message to China, but the one between India and the United States is more convenience than an alliance" - ISPI - 22 Jun 2023.

and has chosen to remain "on the doorstep" and wait for events.

Big changes are probable in relation to the economic independence of the states and also to the economic strategies. The strategic partnership between India and China is seen potentially as a great danger to the United States. It is not only because both are atomic powers, but above all because they represent the two strongest and continuously growing economies with percentages that have not been reached in the West for many years.

At the end of the 18th century, India and China represented the most important economies<sup>10</sup> on the planet. The Industrial Revolution in Britain led to the impoverishment of the masses, colonial rule, and cultural and political setbacks.

The Indians, as well as the Chinese, do not forget and are well aware that the suffering was due to circumstances that both peoples were unable to manage properly. Situations similar to those in the past cannot recur. India and China are characterized by a

strong national and cultural identity (Confucian for China and Hindu for India), but problems and mistrust between the different cultures and ethnic groups still exist.

The 2024 US elections will be an important step, as will the progress of the war in Ukraine which will create imbalances in all the Eurasian powers (EU, Russia, China, India). India and China have many more strings to their bows and will be able to look to the future with greater serenity. No major foreign policy changes are foreseeable in the short term. The QUAD military alliance remains crucial for India, as it is seen as instrumental for the protection of its western borders, especially due to tensions with Pakistan, and eastern ones on the Chinese front. The historic friendship with Russia will remain for a long time to come but could be affected by some influences linked to the war in Ukraine.

Irene DA ROS

Irene Da Ros was born in a hot summer of 2002 in Udine arriving, for the and only time in her entire life, early. That explosiveness of the sun and those long July days are a bit the measure of her personality. For the rest she's always been a bit like this: an "insatiable fire" like the hunting name given to her by the Scouts since she was a child. In her life path she has always looked at the opportunities that arose in front of her, because her goal has always been to go further and cross the border. She is a curious person, who loves to get out of her comfort zone, to get involved, experimenting with new experiences and getting to know new points of view. In fact, she spent the first three years of high school in Vittorio Veneto in an international school (2016-18), but then she decided to change, choosing the Galilei scientific high school in Belluno, graduating in 2020. Now she is studying Political Science of Administration at the University of Trieste, where she is also the student representative in DISPES. She participated in an internship at the United Nations in New York in February 2020, having a dream for which she is fighting and studying: to join the Police. She works during the weekends in Trieste to pay for her studies and in her spare time she runs in the Dolomites.

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<sup>10</sup> "Countries ready to accept the BRICS currency one month before the summit in South Africa" -one-month-before-the-South-Africa-summit/).

