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5. Geopolitical Trends and Security Challenges across the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific Regions

G. Parthasarathy

India's foreign policy in the contemporary world will be guided by a number of diverse considerations. Now described as an "emerging power," the predominant focus of attention in India will remain on fashioning an environment, both external and internal, which will help the country to proceed on a path of around double digit economic growth, with economic growth being as inclusive as possible. In a diverse and pluralistic country like India, the very process of economic growth will inevitably generate social, ethnic, linguistic and sectarian tensions. While corruption and criminalization of politics are presently straining its body politic, adversely affecting economic growth and evoking public criticism, there is, nevertheless, confidence that India has the strength and resilience to overcome these challenges. Terrorism sponsored by radical, Wahhabi oriented Islamist groups, is going to remain a formidable diplomatic and security challenge. The American "War on Terror" has dispersed, but not destroyed the terrorist threat emerging from India's western neighbourhood. Moreover, with its demand for energy resources rising rapidly, India will have to focus increasing attention on the Persian Gulf, where over two thirds of the world's resources of oil and gas are located and regional rivalries and sectarian tensions have been exacerbated following the American invasion of Iraq.

The National Intelligence Council Report *Global Trends 2020* observed that Asia, with a relatively young population and work force, expanding educational facilities and the benefits of globalization, and 60% of the world's population, will become the manufacturing hub of the world in coming years. China and India will alone provide 1.1 billion of the labour force of 1.7 billion in the Asia-Pacific Region. In the next half century, as the developed world and especially Europe ages, a younger and better educated work force in Asia will become the driving force for global manufacturing and growth. The balance of power will shift—particularly from Europe to Asia. Given this scenario, India is developing a comprehensive policy of promoting widespread engagement not only with the fast growing Asia-Pacific Region to its East, but also with the oil rich Persian Gulf Region to its west, from where it imports 70% of its oil and where an estimated 5.8 million Indian nationals now live and work, accounting for the bulk of the \$50 billion total that Indians overseas remit to India every year.

India has made sustained efforts for economic integration, not only in South Asia and within SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), but also with the rapidly growing economies of East and Southeast Asia. Over the past two decades, India's "Look East" policies have enhanced its diplomatic profile in its eastern neighbourhood. As a full "Dialogue Partner of ASEAN" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), India has concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the ASEAN grouping, after concluding bilateral FTAs with two ASEAN members, Thailand and Singapore. It is now a participant in the annual East Asia Summit, which currently includes the leaders of China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand (with the US and Russia scheduled to join), apart from the Heads of ASEAN Governments. India's trade and investment ties with the countries of East and Southeast Asia are rapidly expanding. Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements with Japan and South Korea have been inked. Within South Asia, the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), though limited to trade in goods, is regarded as the first step towards establishing free

trade in investments and services, with the goal of progressively moving towards establishing a customs union and an economic union in South Asia. Supplementing efforts at economic integration within SAARC are moves for economic cooperation in the Bay of Bengal. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), an economic grouping comprising Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, acts as a bridge between South and Southeast Asia.

In this emerging scenario, where a common quest for prosperity and rapid economic growth is driving a process of increased Asian economic integration, how will the US and China, which are set to be the two major competing centres of global power, view other players in coming years? A US journalist described the US-China relationship as one “between a still dominant, but fading superpower, facing a new and ambitious rival, with suspicion on both sides.” China’s economy continues to boom, recording a growth of 10.3% in 2010. China has spent over \$ 100 billion in aid to developing countries during the past few years—exceeding the aid given by the World Bank. Chinese aid is ostensibly without strings, but is focused on acquiring access to natural resources in recipient countries. The United States, on the other hand, is presently mired in an economic crisis with high unemployment and with a budget deficit estimated at 10.64% of GDP.

While there has been a marked improvement in the climate of Sino-Indian relations in recent years, the relationship between India and China is still clouded by mistrust. While China views improved US-Indian relations with suspicion, India retains memories of close Sino-US cooperation detrimental to its interests, during the Nixon and Clinton Administrations. There is concern in India about what is perceived as China’s policy of “containment” of India, marked by growing Chinese interest in maritime facilities in countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan. China’s supply of weapons to the beleaguered regime of King Gyanendra of Nepal at a time when the international community was nurturing a process of democratic change in the country, as well as its continuing cooperation with Pakistan in nuclear and missile development, have only accentuated Indian misgivings. China’s growing “assertiveness” in its territorial claims on the Indian border State of Arunachal Pradesh, its efforts to undermine India’s efforts for regional influence by opposing India’s participation in forums like the East Asia Summit and the summit-level Asia Europe Meetings (ASEM), its ambivalence on India’s candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council and its attempts within the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to maintain global nuclear sanctions on India, indicate that dealing with China is going to be a major challenge for India in coming years.

Despite these differences and challenges, bilateral trade and economic relations between Beijing and New Delhi are booming and the two countries have embarked on a series of measures to enhance mutual confidence. Moreover, on multilateral issues, such as global warming and the Doha Round of the WTO, common and shared interests and perceptions have led the two governments to cooperate with each other. The Indian response to Chinese policies of “containment” and “strategic encirclement” has been largely defensive. But, as India’s economic and military potential grow and the country’s “soft power” expands, India is dealing with Chinese policies by adopting more proactive measures in its relations with countries like Japan, South Korea and Vietnam; by developing a larger footprint in its relations with ASEAN; and a more imaginative economic engagement with Taiwan. At the same time, there are significant constituencies for peace and cooperation in both India and China. There are efforts collectively by India, Russia and China to cooperate in the evolution of a stable, multipolar world order, in forums like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the G20. Conscious efforts are being made to keep tensions from escalating—particularly along the Sino-Indian border—and to widen engagement between India and China

bilaterally, regionally and globally. Common sense dictates that there is enough strategic space across Asia for India and China to cooperate and develop to their full potential.

In 1991, Deng Xiaoping advocated to his countrymen a strategy of “hide your strength, bide your time,” to enable China to develop rapidly, without being held back by global and regional tensions and rivalries. As its economic power and military strength have grown, China is widely perceived in recent years as flexing its military muscle, evoking concerns in its hitherto sanguine neighbours. China has, over the past few years, been more assertive in relations with countries across its Asia-Pacific neighbourhood, ranging from Japan and Vietnam to Indonesia and India, particularly on issues pertaining to maritime and land borders. Another issue arises from reports of China’s plans to dam the Brahmaputra River, provoking substantial concern in India and Bangladesh. There are concerns that what are presently run of the river projects, could well be the first step towards future diversion of river waters. China is not a signatory to the 1997 UN Convention on Transnational Rivers and the experiences of downstream countries along the Mekong Basin evoke concerns in India and Bangladesh. India has formal inter-State agreements on sharing river waters with Bangladesh and Pakistan, which have worked well, despite new problems arising from the melting of Himalayan glaciers because of climate change.

China recently declared that like Tibet and Taiwan, the entire South China Sea is an area of “core interest.” Territorial claims in the South China Sea have been enforced using maritime power. The visiting Commander of the American Pacific Fleet Admiral Timothy Keating was told by his Chinese counterparts in May 2009 that the United States should recognize the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean as China’s sphere of influence. China opposed Joint US-South Korean military exercises in the Yellow Sea, after North Korea torpedoed and sank a South Korean naval vessel. China has also been increasingly assertive with Japan in disputes in the East China Sea over the Senkaku Island and on differences over drilling rights in contested areas. The export of crucial rare earth materials to Japan was suspended in the wake of tensions over maritime boundaries. Consultations have now been held between India and Japan on measures to end dependence on China in such strategic areas. The crucial concern is whether China will become militarily more assertive and nationalistic as its economic and military power grows, or whether it will abide by the policies advocated by Deng Xiaoping.

There are concerns cross Asia that as Chinese economic and military power grow, the United States will become more circumspect and accommodating in dealing with China. The Chinese will, in turn, appear to respond positively to American concerns on issues like nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea. The Russians seem to be prepared to take advantage of this situation by extending selective support to the US on issues like their logistical needs in Afghanistan. Japan has already adopted a more China-specific defence posture. Japan’s New Defence Guidelines Programme of 2010 explicitly states that China’s “military modernization and its insufficiency of transparency” are a “major concern.” Naval exercises involving India, Japan and the US were held near Okinawa last year and India is expanding security cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries like Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. India’s partnership with Russia remains strong and multi-faceted.

While the US-Russian relationship has strengthened recently, a stable balance of power across Asia cannot emerge until there is a clear understanding and accommodation between the US and Russia on the vital issues of NATO expansion and an on what legitimate Russian interests are in the former Soviet Republics. Even if there are rivalries over access to energy resources, both the US and Russia share a common interest in resisting religious extremism in Central Asia and across the Caucasus region. It is crucial that differences between the US and Russia do not affect the invaluable role that

US-Russian cooperation can play in dealing with problems of extremism and terrorism emanating from Afghanistan and its neighbourhood. As the Global Trends 2025 report observes, Pakistan faces strains to its polity, arising from the conflict in Afghanistan. The northern supply route through Russia and Central Asia is crucial for a joint US-Russian effort to stabilize Afghanistan and its neighbourhood.

China will continue its military, nuclear, economic, and diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan and enhance its economic and military profile across the strategic sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. This will have to be dealt with by imaginative economic, diplomatic and military responses and a process of intense engagement with China. Efforts to build structures for cooperation in the Indian Ocean region can be initiated by building an inclusive and effective architecture for cooperation to deal with problems like piracy and natural disasters. It would be incorrect to exaggerate the possibilities of conflict between India and China. India will, however, complement its economic growth with modernization of its armed forces, improvement of communications along its borders with China and development of its nuclear and missile capabilities. India's interaction with ASEAN members and especially with Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia is regarded as essential in promoting this effort. The United States will maintain a naval presence in India's eastern neighbourhood and India and the US are cooperating in building an inclusive architecture for cooperation in East and Southeast Asia. India's interaction with the US and Japan is also set to increase in the quest for building a stable balance of power across the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

As Asia emerges as the hub of international economic growth in the twenty first century, it is the longer term Indian aim to see that tensions in the region are subsumed as far as possible, through greater economic integration in a common quest for prosperity, as Europe experienced in the 20th century. Moreover, there is a measure of confidence that while a rising China will continue to pose a strategic challenge, a conflict with China can be avoided not only through bilateral cooperation and confidence-building measures (CBM), but also by ensuring a measure of adequacy in India's defence potential. Two mountain divisions are being raised and frontline fighter aircraft deployed on India's borders with China. A substantive development of naval potential is underway, to ensure that the Indian navy has two operational aircraft carriers, two nuclear submarines and Scorpene-class submarines by the end of this decade. India is also acquiring maritime and airlift capabilities, which will enable it to respond appropriately to challenges across its Indian Ocean neighbourhood.

While there is a measure of optimism about India's eastern neighbourhood, the country's Indian Ocean neighbourhood, extending from the Afpak region, across the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Hormuz and the shores of Somalia, remain volatile. Relations with Pakistan improved substantially, with broad agreement reached even on the framework of a settlement to the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, during the period 2003-2007, when General Pervez Musharraf was Pakistan's President. This followed an assurance that General Musharraf would not allow "territory under Pakistan's control" to be used for terrorism against India. Relations experienced a setback following the terrorist attack on Mumbai in November 2008, which was carried out by members of *Lashkar e Taiba*, an organization based in Pakistan. While dialogue between the two countries has resumed, concerns remain that tensions could escalate, should there be another major terrorist attack on Indian soil emanating from "territory under Pakistan's control." In the meantime, the effort will be to see if it is possible to build on the progress achieved before 2007.

While Pakistan has not formally enunciated a nuclear doctrine, Lt. General Khalid Kidwai, the Head of the Strategic Planning Division for its National Command Authority told a team of physicists from Italy's Landau Network in 2002 that Pakistan's nuclear weapons were "aimed solely at India."

According to the report of the Landau team, Kidwai added that Pakistan would use nuclear weapons if India conquers a large part of Pakistan's territory, or destroys a large part of Pakistan's land and air forces. Kidwai also held out the possibility of using nuclear weapons if India tries to "economically strangle" Pakistan or pushes it to political destabilization. Most Indian observers acknowledge that while there was a tendency within political and diplomatic quarters in Pakistan to wrongly assume that India would be deterred from conventional cross border responses if it was made out that Pakistan's nuclear threshold was low, General Kidwai's elucidation, which came in the wake of serious tensions along the borders, was a realistic signal of the military's views on the thresholds of Pakistan's nuclear weapons strategy. They set the stage for preventing misunderstandings about nuclear thresholds leading to nuclear escalation. It should, however, be evident that in the event of another terrorist attack like that on Mumbai on November 26, 2008, the Indian response is likely to be measured, proportionate, carefully calibrated and internationally justifiable.

India's nuclear doctrine, first officially enunciated on January 4, 2003, asserts that it intends to build and maintain a "credible, minimum deterrent." This deterrent is to be based on a "triad" of "aircraft, mobile land-based missiles, and sea based assets." While adopting a policy of "no first use," the doctrine clarifies that its nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a major attack on Indian territory or against a nuclear attack on Indian forces anywhere. India also retains the right to use nuclear weapons in the event of major attacks on Indian territory, or on Indian forces anywhere, that use chemical or biological weapons. While concern has been voiced about strained relations between India and Pakistan leading to a nuclear conflict, India and Pakistan acknowledged on June 6, 2004, that "the nuclear capabilities of each other, which are based on their national security imperatives, constitute a factor for stability." Apart from a degree of mutual confidence which now exists because of a better understanding of each other's nuclear thresholds, India and Pakistan have cooperated in working out a series of nuclear CBMs. They have signed agreements on "Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons" and "Pre-Notification of Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles." India's nuclear arsenal and delivery systems are not "Pakistan specific," but geared to also deal with the existence of substantial Chinese nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities. Interestingly, in recent months, there has been the commencement of a Track 2 dialogue between India, Pakistan and China, on enhancing nuclear confidence across their borders.

The US intervention in Afghanistan was ill conceived and failed in military terms from the very outset. Actual fighting in the north and the takeover of Kabul was virtually outsourced to the Northern Alliance. More inexplicably, no attempt was made to block the exit route of the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership to safe havens in Pakistan, across the Durand Line. This has rejuvenated the Taliban and its allies, including the Al Qaeda, inflicting a heavy toll on American lives. With the Pakistan army unwilling and unable to crack down on groups long regarded as "assets," the US and its NATO allies are stuck in an apparent quagmire, even though the hope has been expressed that Afghan forces will take on counter insurgency responsibilities by the end of 2014. The stalemate in Afghanistan is unlikely to end at an early date. It is unlikely that the Taliban will accept a solution that requires it to eventually lay down arms and accept the present Afghan Constitution. It is equally unlikely that the Taliban will forsake its allies in Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda linked groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the North Caucasus Emirate, *Lashkar e Taiba*, *Harkat ul Jihad ul Islami*, or *Jaish e Mohammed*. And ethnic Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks, together with a section of Pashtuns in Afghanistan, will resist any attempt at a Taliban takeover. It is unlikely that peace and stability will return to Afghanistan, in the course of this decade—a development that will have profound implications for peace and stability not just in Pakistan, but regionally and globally.

India's Persian Gulf neighbourhood contains two thirds of the world's proven petroleum reserves and 35% of the world's gas reserves. Moreover, as energy demands increase worldwide, it is these countries, which maintain 90% of the world's excess production capacity, which alone can meet the growing demand of rapidly emerging economies like China and India and help tide over breakdowns in supplies elsewhere. India's major suppliers of oil from the Gulf are Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. An estimated 5.8 million Indians reside and work in member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Indians living in these six Arab States are responsible for the bulk of the \$50 billion that Indians working abroad remit annually. These six countries meet around two-thirds of India's oil needs. Iran provides 17% of India's oil imports, with some key refineries dependent on Iranian crude. Moreover, Iran remains India's transit point for trade with Central Asia, Afghanistan, and—through the Caspian—Russia. Iran and India share a common aversion to the return of Taliban style extremism to Afghanistan, but India joined the US and others on issues pertaining to Iran's nuclear programme. The assessment in the Global Trends 2025 report expressing doubt that Iran will inevitably go nuclear is broadly shared in India. But, in dealing with Iran, it would be a folly to underestimate the sentiments of of Persian civilizational pride that transcend internal political differences.

The Persian Gulf remains a crucible for ancient rivalries, civilizational (Arab vs. Persian) and sectarian (Shia vs. Sunni). The depth of these animosities was exposed when, alluding to King Abdullah, Wikileaks revealed the "King's frequent exhortations to the US to attack Iran and put an end to its nuclear weapons programme." Riyadh even reportedly offered over-flight facilities to Israeli warplanes, in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Israel has astutely played on Arab-Persian rivalries to ensure it remains the sole nuclear power in the Middle East. Moreover, despite all talk of their solidarity with the Palestinians, a number of Arab countries maintain covert and not so covert ties with Mossad.

The sectarian dimensions of rivalries in the Persian Gulf cannot be ignored. Iran has consistently stirred up Shia minorities in Yemen and Kuwait and the Shia majority in Sunni-ruled Bahrain. This rivalry is also being played out in Iraq, where the Shia majority has accused its Sunni Arab neighbours of backing extremist Sunni groups. Paradoxically, after endeavouring to follow a policy of "dual containment" of both Iran and Iraq for over a decade, the US is now finding that its ill advised invasion of Iraq has only brought the two countries closer together, with a number of Iraqi political and religious figures beholden to Tehran for the support they have received. As Charles Freeman, former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, recently observed: "These changes (in the Arab world) are occurring as the US withdraws from Iraq, leaving behind a ruined country under heavy Iranian influence. Iraq is incapable, at least for now, of resuming its historic role as part of an Arab coalition to check Persian aspirations and hegemony in West Asia." While Arab regimes may be dependent on American support, the mood in Arab streets is distinctly anti-American—a development that will inevitably affect the course of developments in the Middle East and shape the contours of global terrorism.

India's relations with Arab Gulf States have shown a distinct improvement after the visits of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah in January 2006 and Dr. Manmohan Singh to Riyadh in February-March 2010. India has received Saudi assurances of meeting of its growing requirements for oil. The desert kingdom and home of Islam's holiest shrines appears to recognize the need to reach out to countries like India and China, even as it maintains its strong security ties with the US. Moreover, relations with Oman, the UAE and Qatar have expanded significantly, with Qatar emerging as an important supplier of liquified natural gas (LNG). While India enjoyed a good relationship with secular Baathist-ruled Iraq, it is the Indian view that the invasion of Iraq was a serious mistake. It has ignited

Shia-Sunni rivalries across the oil rich Persian Gulf and led to the emergence of strong links between erstwhile foes Iran and Iraq. The entire balance of power in the Persian Gulf has been destabilized. The greatest threats to global stability are likely to emerge even beyond the present decade will emerge from rivalries, instability, violence and terrorism in the Greater Middle East. It is imperative for outside powers to devise common strategies and collective measures to maintain peace and stability in this region.

The Global Trends 2025 Report realistically acknowledges that the US will be one of a number of actors on the world stage, albeit the most powerful one. It notes that multipolar systems have been more unstable than bipolar or even unipolar ones. While noting that emerging powers and many Europeans dispute the right of any one power to be a global hegemon, the report observes this could well lead to less cohesiveness. But it is obvious that the new order that emerged with the end of the Cold War based on global economic dominance by the Atlantic alliance is no longer sustainable. But despite aging populations and the current economic downturn, Europe will remain an important player in the development of cutting edge technologies and economic assistance to developing countries. China and India are returning to the position they held two centuries ago, when they together they produced 45% of the world's wealth. They are, for the first time since the 18th Century, set to be the largest contributors to worldwide economic growth. These two countries are likely to surpass the GDP of all other countries except the US and perhaps Japan by 2025.

What now appears to be transpiring is the emergence of a “Multipolar World Order”, where the emerging powers have relatively large populations, with their governments increasingly recognizing the importance of economic growth and technological advancement as being key to power and influence. Wars between emerging powers or with existing economically advanced nations would undermine their economic power, erode their global standing, and remain unwinnable. Such wars appear unlikely, in an era of increasing economic interdependence. But, rivalries in the quest for influence and primacy in different regions of the world and for preferred access to natural resources would remain inevitable. It is evident that given its innovative and technological capabilities, its technological edge in military capabilities, its vibrant democracy and its openness to immigration, the United States is and is likely to remain, the dominant player in world affairs for the foreseeable future. But, mired in an economic morass and with rates of economic growth averaging 2-3%, the United States cannot exercise influence exclusively. The concerns in the Global Trends 2025 Report about a “Fragmented International System,” however, appear misplaced, despite inevitable rivalries for influence and access to natural resources. Unlike during the Cold war and in earlier eras, the rivalry for natural resources and political influence has necessarily to be moderated by the imperatives of global economic interdependence.

As mentioned earlier, the region stretching from South Asia to East and Southeast Asia is going through a historically unprecedented process of economic integration. Rivalries and tensions over territorial disputes, access to river water and other resources will, however, remain, along with concerns about the future directions of China's policies. The US has a crucial role to play in remaining engaged with this region, in participating in an inclusive architecture for cooperation and security and for securing a viable Asian balance of power. The recently expanded East Asia Summit which brings together the members of ASEAN with Japan, South Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, India, Russia, and the US, provides an inclusive and viable framework for seeking these objectives. These developments are taking place at a time when emerging powers are building groupings like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, where they can ensure that their interests on issues like energy, global warming, world trade and international finance are protected. Emerging countries will also seek to evolve a common approach to respond to efforts for “regime

change” through the use of military force, under the rubric of “Responsibility to Protect.” The emergence of the G20 as a forum to discuss global economic issues also reflects these changes in global power equations.

The *Tomorrow's Security Challenges* report alludes to the rise of non-state networks and possibilities of a return of Great Power confrontations. Given the volatility of the political situation across the greater Middle East, it is evident that the problems posed by local, regional and global terrorist networks will continue. As global communications and interconnectivity expand, networking between terrorist organizations will inevitably expand, posing a greater threat to global stability. The US and more significantly its European allies will remain vulnerable to such threats, given the growing population of immigrants and expatriate populations who bring local grievances and prejudices from their home countries. Manifestations of what some describe as “Islamophobia” in countries like France may, however, only increase the potential for terrorist violence across Europe.

Despite its military/technological edge, the United States will find it costly and difficult to respond to perceived threats through conventional military intervention, as it has done in the past decade in Iraq and Afghanistan. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan cost the American taxpayer an estimated total of \$1.1 trillion through July 2010. The Iraq invasion led to an estimated 655,000 Iraqis killed and 4.2 million displaced from their homes. It has only resulted in greater instability across the greater Middle East, with sectarian rivalries being accentuated and the entire balance of power destabilised. While the military intervention in Afghanistan was inevitable and internationally justifiable after the terrorist strikes of 9/11, the wisdom and necessity of military action in Iraq is questionable. Both these conflicts have established that counterinsurgency on foreign soil is expensive and often unwinnable. The AK-47, IED, and suicide bomber are great “equalizers.” They can render counter-insurgency operations in distant lands costly and unsustainable.

In these circumstances, it is important that, while avoiding massive commitments of ground forces, powers like the US deploy their military potential and particularly ground forces rarely, using them selectively and primarily as a deterrent. Ill advised and ill planned use of military power, which cannot achieve strategic objectives in a matter of days, only reduces credibility and invites challenges. Moreover, use of force has to invariably enjoy international sanction and legitimacy. As global economic interdependence grows, ways will be found for major powers not to allow competition to lead to confrontation. The global situation is such that no major power can prevail militarily over real or perceived rivals, without having to pay unacceptably high costs, nationally. The challenge lies in devising frameworks of consultation and cooperation, to avoid competition spiralling into confrontation.