



'US doesn't want to undermine India's strategic autonomy'

AZIZ HANIFFA

Daniel Twining, a consultant to the United States government on international security matters and a former member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, described as 'a canard' the contention in some circles in New Delhi and Washington that the US 'somehow wants to undermine India's strategic autonomy.'

Twining, who also served as foreign policy adviser to US Senator John McCain, added: 'What we want is for India to be strategically autonomous and to be successful and to prosper and to be a driving, vibrant democracy, and that it emerges as one of the world's largest economies and spreads its wings in terms of its strategic horizons. That would be good for us irrespective of whatever kind of alignment the US and India have.'

He was on the panel of American experts who discussed the future of US-India relations from the US perspective at the conference on 'India as a Global Power'.

Twining, who is writing a book on US grand strategy in Asia after the Cold War, said, 'India's success as a rising democracy does have important spillover implications, and that doesn't mean that the US and India ever have to do democracy promotion in the way that say the US and European countries work on democracy promotion in the world. But our interests on so many issues pull in the same direction.'

Doug Bandow, senior fellow, Cato Institute, who served as a special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, said, 'The growth of India is potentially very important. Because it comes at a time where the US feels the need to retrench... The rise of India helps suggest there won't be a void — which some people fear — but rather the reordering of



From left, Doug Bandow, Daniel Twining, Henry Nau, Sadanand Dhume and George Perkovich

international affairs.'

Sadanand Dhume, resident fellow at the neoconservative think tank, the American Enterprise Institute and a South Asia columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, said though India may not be in the business of promoting democracy, 'In the future, necessarily democracy is going to become more important for India. Not only in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but also in Pakistan, to the extent that even though India may have cooperated more with military regimes in the past, it is in India's long-run interests for democrats in Pakistan to gain control over the national security apparatus.'

George Perkovich, vice president for studies and director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, described the US-India relationship as 'a courtship.' He added: 'There's not going to be a marriage here and we should quit pretending that there is going to be.'

Twining said that it was not India but the US that has had

a very inconsistent relationship with China. In New Delhi's case, he said, Washington it has 'basically practiced the policy of balancing power in Asia since 1962. The great illusion was this period from 1947 to 1962, particularly this period after the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1950 — this illusion that somehow brotherhood and *bhai-bhai* could compensate for a lack of any kind of material strategy vis-à-vis China.'

Dhume countered that while the balance of power aspects tend to get emphasized in many arguments, the reality is that India is not even one of America's top 10 trading allies. He added: 'India and the US, though there are exercises and so on, India's military potential has not been reached to where it becomes that significant... Of the two — balance of power and balance of values — I would say balance of values is that much more important because India is already a compelling example of democracy, pluralism, freedom of speech, whereas it may be a compelling force in the balance of power questions in 10 or 15 years.'

Separating India's nationalists, realists, globalists

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'For many outsiders, trying to get a fix on India's foreign policy often is ambiguity and mixed signals,' said Dr Deepa Ollapally, associate director and research professor of international affairs at George Washington University's Sigur Center for Asian Studies.

Ollapally, the co-convenor of the conference organized by the Sigur Center in association with the Center for a New American Security on 'India as a Global Power', acknowledged: 'This shouldn't be entirely surprising. Because, first of all, India is a tumultuous democracy. Second, India's rise as a major power has been extremely rapid and, to an extent, unexpected... Where the country had a fairly strong foreign policy consensus for nearly 50 years after Independence, over the last several years what we see is policy being much more contested in India.'

Ollapally is co-editor of the soon to be

published *World Views of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia*, with Dr Henry R Nau, professor of political science at the GWU and author of *The Myth of America's Decline*. Ollapally said she had identified three major categories in India's foreign policy: The nationalists, the realists, and the globalists.

The nationalists, she said, comprise the standard nationalists, the neo-nationalists and the hyper-nationalists. The standard nationalists, she explained, were the 'long-standing, centrist group, historically making up the bulk of the Congress party. To a great extent the other nationalist groups are all breakaway or offshoots of this centrist tendencies.'

The neo-nationalists, she said, was a group that had gained voice after the 1991 economic liberalization 'as critics of India's new path and urging really continued focus on domestic priorities.'

The hyper-nationalists school, she said,

'became vocal mostly after the 1998 nuclear tests, promoting a more ambitious military posture and a truly international scope to India's foreign policy.'

The great power realists, Ollapally said, also emerged after the Pokhran nuclear tests. They were different, she said, in that they believed India was an emerging power and now on a par with other major powers, 'particularly on the global stage and becoming a pro-active political player.'

The liberal global school, which is post-1991 reforms, she said, was 'one that embraces globalization and economic integration.'

She added: 'While opinions may spill over between the schools, there are important divergences that will be lost if we don't do this kind of differentiation.'

Nau said the India conference was the 'first in a series of conferences,' that was an outgrowth of the Sigur Center's Rising Powers Initiative.



Deepa Ollapally