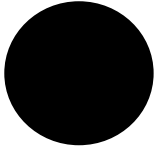


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India: Richer, Poorer, Hotter, Armed

Mira Kamdar

Few would have predicted 25 years ago India's dramatic rise as a global economic force, imagined that one day the iconic British luxury brands Range Rover and Jaguar would be purchased by an Indian company, or believed that the United States would form a strategic partnership with a staunch ally of its Cold War enemy, the Soviet Union. In 1983, India's claim to international attention was pretty much limited to its surprise win of the Cricket World Cup in England. This was a turning point for the game, no doubt, but hardly an event that augured the birth of a world power.

Yet, on the basis of its surprise leap over the past decade onto the stage of emerging powers, many are now predicting a fantastic future for India. They see India as the tortoise to China's hare, the second-place runner who may look like he's far behind but who in the end will out-distance the complacent champion. Viewed through this prism, India's democracy is supposed to confer a special advantage over China's state-directed system, messier in the immediate term perhaps, but better able to withstand in the long run the buffeting social, political, and environmental winds of rapid economic transformation.

Many Indians smell triumph in the promising turn their country has taken, cer-

tain that within the next quarter century, India will be restored to the position it enjoyed 300 years ago—an economic and cultural power that eclipsed all others on Earth, save perhaps China. Only this time around, India will also be a major military power, mightily armed to fend off both its pesky, less successful neighbors and the great dragon crouched on its northern border.

The Indian leadership also sees an ever closer alliance with the United States, the tottering but still formidable superpower, as India's ticket to faster growth and enhanced regional security. Meanwhile, the captains of American industry see in India's rise an opportunity to keep their own mature businesses humming, while Washington hastens to groom a loyal aide-de-camp on the Asian front where China, and increasingly Russia, menace the U.S. empire.

These predictions of India's future grandeur yet humble obeisance to American commercial and strategic goals will prove as misplaced 25 years from now as the sense a quarter century ago that India was destined to remain hobbled by what was then called its "Hindu rate" of growth and doomed to stay firmly lodged in the anti-American Cold War camp. The changes the world will undergo during the next quarter century

will be far more radical and wrenching than those of the last 25 years, making all predictions of India's or any other country's future extremely perilous. Still, looking through the carbon-infused haze of our crystal ball, some tendencies will certainly inform that future, whatever specific direction it may take.

Setting the Stage for 2033

India's impressive economic growth over the past two decades has led to some dizzying predictions of its future global eminence. None has generated more excitement than a report published five years ago by the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs on the economic futures of Brazil, Russia, India, and China: *Dreaming with BRICS: The Path to 2050*. What has ever after been referred to as "The BRICS Report," a name that has likewise stuck to these four mega-growth nations, pegged India as the future number two economy in the world, second only to China and bigger than the economy of the United States. A subsequent Goldman Sachs' report accelerated India's growth forecast, setting the date when the South Asian giant would surpass the economy of the United States at 2043. These reports point to India's sustained annual growth rate of between 6 percent and 9 percent over recent years, and highlight the fact that half of India's growing population is under the age of 25.

For the private sector, India represents both a barely tapped market and a cheap labor force of potentially gigantic proportions, at a time when consumption is lagging and workers in advanced economies are aging and relatively expensive. That India is a democracy with laws and institutions inherited from the British which are recognizable to Western investors, that India's elite speaks English, and that India's boom has coincided with and capitalized on the information technology revolution

are icing on the cake of strong economic growth.

The fortuitous timing of India's economic rise—coming at the end of the Cold War, as India became a nuclear power to be reckoned with (after it successfully tested nuclear devices in 1998), and as the United States searches for a reliable proxy in Asia to counter China's ascendance—has created something like a perfect storm of interest in India. Literally billions of dollars in investment have poured into India as a result. However, some of that money is already starting to flow out toward other emerging-market darlings such as Vietnam or back to reliable China or, as the threat of a global recession becomes more credible, into safe parking places.

While the BRICS reports reference India's inefficient use of resources and lagging infrastructure development as potential limiting factors on growth (and give the standard warnings that additional negative factors could result in diminished performance), they fail to take into account the ultimate brake on the perpetual global growth machine: limits of the carrying capacity of the planet. They also gloss over the speed and scale of the social, political, and environmental violence that is already part and parcel of the creative destruction of capitalist development in India.

We all know, if only intuitively, that the billions of individuals in India and China cannot adopt an American level of consumption over the next quarter century, even if Americans were to reduce their consumption dramatically. There simply isn't enough oil, wood, metal, or other basic resources left. We also know that the effect of global warming on these two rapidly growing economies that (like the United States) derive most of their energy needs from fossil fuels will be catastrophic, and indeed is already having dramatic effects. Far more prescient, and certainly more frightening than

the BRICS reports' predictions for India, may be warnings by economist William Cline of the Peterson Institute for International Economics that India's agricultural production will decline 30 percent to 40 percent over current levels by 2080 as a direct result of climate change. Over this same period, India is expected to add 450 million more people to its population.

The fact that India will still only have 4 percent of the world's fresh water does not enter into the BRICS reports' growth projections. Neither do political instability, corruption, terrorism, ethnic, caste, and religious conflict, war, pandemic disease, nor the potential worldwide collapse of industrial agriculture:

all existing inhibitions to India's rise that are not likely to disappear any time soon. Yet, it is precisely these factors that will have the greatest impact on India's future, its geopolitical role, internal stability, and on the quality of life it can deliver to its people.

Future Factors

Twenty-five years from now, India's current population of 1.13 billion will top 1.5 billion—adding another entire United States, and then some—and will continue to grow thereafter until it tops out at 1.6 billion people. India will then be the most populous country on Earth, China's population having leveled off due to its one-child policy. India will also have the world's largest youth population, with 450 million people under the age of 25, a figure arrived at simply by calculating the 18 million additional

people India is adding to its population each year over the 25 years.

While per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is predicted to quadruple from its current level of \$2,000 by some calculations, India will still be a poor country relative to



India's new nuclear family?

the current advanced economies. And its wealth is not likely to be distributed equitably. Today, 42 percent of Indians live below the World Bank's revised poverty threshold income of \$1.25 per day.

Despite India's impressive economic growth over the past two decades, more of its children suffer from malnutrition than do youths in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, India already boasts 50 million members of the very-rich, rich, and middle-classes—more than the entire population of many European countries. By 2033, if annual economic growth is maintained at between 6 percent and 9 percent, as predicted, India may have more of these reliable consumers than the current population of the entire United States. And, if India does everything right and boosts literacy, access to health care, agricultural production, and manufacturing jobs to ideal levels, there

may be even more Indians enjoying a comfortable standard of living than Europeans and Americans combined—a tantalizing market indeed.

It took the West several centuries to arrive at its current level of economic development—centuries that saw enormous upheaval, including revolutions and wars that killed tens of millions of people. For India to create an advanced economy where as many as 600 million people can prosper in a matter of decades will be a towering achievement. To expect that it will do so without friction and violence is unrealistic. India's population will be so large that up to one billion of its people are likely to remain, if not poor in absolute terms, at least much poorer than their more prosperous fellow citizens. The economically marginalized will be, as they already are, subjected to the alluring spectacle of the good life in a social environment awash in media and advertising. This is not a recipe for social harmony or political stability, especially if wealth continues to be, as it is today, unfairly apportioned along caste, regional, and religious lines—the very fault lines that threaten the foundation of a stable future for India.

India's perpetual struggles with class, caste, religious, ethnic, and regional conflict, and the secessionist movements that have plagued it from Kashmir to its long-troubled northeast are likely to get worse, not better between now and 2033. The intensifying scramble for diminishing resources as the effects of global warming become more pronounced will increasingly threaten India's prosperity, if it hasn't already seriously undermined it.

In the next 25 years, hundreds of millions of Indians will be displaced by rapid urban, industrial, and agricultural development. Rising sea levels due to global warming will set millions more on the move as people are forced away from India's 4,350

miles of coastline, even as climate change increases monsoon flooding, worsens summer drought, dries up rivers, and sears cropland.

The Maoist rebel movement that already controls 125 districts in India and is fueled by clumsily implemented and unjust development schemes will grow if the Indian state responds, as it historically has, with brute force to protect the interests of industry and without addressing the underlying social and environmental factors that are driving peasants and forest-dwellers into the rebels' camp. Corruption and a highly fractured political landscape will remain serious problems. India's democracy may well survive the next quarter century, but it is likely to be even more dysfunctional than it is today.

Indeed, all democracies are dysfunctional to some degree, as are all political systems, but some manage to deliver better representation and better governance than others. India's system has simply not proven particularly good at delivering basic services to, or representing the real interests of, the vast majority of its people. It is, however, a champion at conducting largely free and fair elections, and India's citizens doggedly go to the polls to throw out the current lot that hasn't delivered in favor of a new lot that promises better.

In terms of external threats, India could be caught up in wars over territory or resources with neighboring giant China or with any one of its unstable and worse-off neighbors: Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and especially Pakistan. The political and economic collapse of Pakistan, armed with nuclear weapons (as is India) and already a very real threat, would be extremely bad news for its larger neighbor on the sub-continent. China is already rumbling about disputed territory on its shared border with India. It is entirely possible that China may make a move to, in its view, reintegrate this

territory, a move India would vehemently oppose but about which it could do little. A nuclear exchange with either China or Pakistan—or both, since China has long supported Pakistan’s nuclear program—is the Armageddon scenario for India’s future, a scenario made more likely by the nuclear arms race now on among these three uneasy neighbors.

“A nuclear exchange with either China or Pakistan is the Armageddon scenario, now made more likely by an arms race among uneasy neighbors.”

Millions on the March

Today, 70 percent of Indians live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for survival. India’s minister of finance, P. Chidambaram, would like to see the current proportion of urban to rural residents more than reverse, with 85 percent of Indians living in cities and only 15 percent living in the countryside within the next 20 to 30 years. He points to the United States as an example of how moving people off their farms and into cities in order to free up land for large-scale industrial agricultural exploitation can boost production and economic growth. He does not appear conscious of the possibility for grave damage in this process. One need only look to an American environment threatened by multiplying lagoons of animal waste at factory farms, by chemical fertilizer run-off that has contaminated ground water, or by pesticides whose use has sky-rocketed over the past several decades. Nor does he seem to grasp the brutal destruction of a social fabric that once supported thousands of American mid-western small towns and family farms, towns with boarded-up main streets and farms sold at auction after families who had lived on them for generations were forced out by bankruptcy.

In fact, to see the environmentally and socially destructive force of large-scale in-

dustrial agriculture, he need only look at the history of the Green Revolution and its aftermath in India’s own Punjab state, where cancer rates from pesticide exposure and contaminated ground water are epi-

demically, the soil is prone to high salinity, and the water table is shrinking. Or, perhaps he merely shares the entrenched view that this social and environmental violation is the necessary price of industrialization, and that industrialization and development are indistinguishable or inseparable. This was perhaps true during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But this model of development is simply neither feasible nor sustainable in the twenty-first century. According to the 2008 report of the Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, an inter-governmental entity initiated by the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, on which 400 scientists worked for several years, industrial agriculture, with its dependence on fossil fuels and toxic chemicals, is in danger of collapsing. This transformation is already inflicting irreparable harm to the environment on which agriculture depends and the societies it supports.

Leaving aside the unfortunate side effects of the massive industrialization of agriculture, where will India put the hundreds of millions of farmers Mr. Chidambaram wants to move off their land? India is already home to three of the world’s 21 megacities: Mumbai (population 19 million), Delhi (pop. 15 million), and Kolkata

(pop. 14 million). Half the population of Mumbai lives in slums and more than 40 percent do so in other Indian cities. Even India's second- and third-tier urban areas are bursting at the seams and gobbling up surrounding farmland to build residential blocks. Productive agricultural land in India is disappearing at a rapid clip. As it is, India's cities cannot cope with the booming numbers of cars on their roads, cannot deliver water or sanitation to all residents, and cannot provide nearly enough housing. Current urban development trends do not indicate that this will change any time soon.

The Poor At the Gates of Privilege

With the exception of New Delhi's radical make-over in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2010, a renovation that is removing the city's poor from its core urban space in order to do make way for middle- and upper-class residents and visitors, India's cities are developing willy-nilly, with new growth on the periphery around a decaying and over-burdened center. Urban development in India is being almost exclusively driven by a booming private real estate sector that has been allowed to build just about anything, anywhere. New construction tends to be dominated by block after block of luxury apartments, many in gated communities boasting independent diesel fuel reservoirs to run generators, water tanks and filtration systems, private parks, schools, and social clubs, all within their walls.

The poor are massed outside the gates, using the exterior of the walls to prop up their own miserable shacks, deprived of any of the amenities found on the other side. Investment in public space and common infrastructure is minimal, aside from roads to accommodate some of the burgeoning traffic of private automobiles driven by the rich. Even the luxury high-rises going up everywhere in Mumbai or in Bangalore (and sell-

ing for as much or more per square foot as property in New York) are being built with no planning for parking, for pedestrians, for new playgrounds, parks, post offices, or public schools. The result is hopelessly overloaded roads where it can take hours to travel a few miles in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

The one exception to this is the Delhi Metro, an outstanding public transportation system that is being expanded as quickly as possible. Some other Indian cities have asked the Delhi Metro team to help them build mass transit systems over the next quarter century. With a credit crunch, the price of oil going through the roof, and the government of India less able to afford to subsidize costs for poor citizens who cannot possibly pay market rates for petroleum products, automobile sales in India, recently booming, have begun easing off. There is a slim chance that Indian cities will shy away from their current auto-maniacal road-building and move toward building transportation infrastructure that favors mass transit. One cruel irony in India is that no provision is being made to encourage bicycle use in urban areas, even though many people who cannot afford motorized transport use bicycles every day, weaving dangerously on the margins of the car-packed roads. This puts India's cities on the opposite trajectory from cities in advanced economies such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Paris, or New York, where bicycle use is being actively encouraged.

Given current development patterns, there is no reason to believe that Indian cities in 2033 will not be more nightmarish versions of what they are now: crowded, starkly divided between rich and poor, beset by inadequate public infrastructure existing cheek by jowl with luxurious private infrastructure for those who can afford it. Moreover, these urban nightmares will boast even worse air, noise, and water pollution—where there is water at all. More and more, the

rich will do what they are already doing: retreat behind the walls of private compounds with everything inside that they need on a daily basis, all provided in a secure, serene cocoon. This is the model for the so-called new cities being constructed now on the periphery of India's existing urban areas. The desire of the rich to abandon the poor to an urban space that is viewed as unredeemable will result in more private enclaves of wealth, and a further abdication of any notion of public space that includes the poor. The hundreds of millions of illiterate and unskilled or under-skilled farmers, whom India's current policy makers are working hard to get to abandon their land, will end up in slums many times larger than those that exist today.

The pattern of private enclaves with first-world amenities walled off from the third-world conditions all around is being extended by current policies from the residential domain to the industrial domain. India has green-lit a jaw-dropping number of Special Economic Zones—500 in all, with over 200 now operational. (This dwarfs China's six such zones.) The number of Special Economic Zones in India has grown so precipitously, it has alarmed the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), all of which have warned that an ex-



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In the shadows, India's rich and poor.

cess capacity of such areas is counter-productive to positive development. India is seeing the flight of so much business into these zones that offer special tax incentives, enforced labor compliance, infrastructure, and guaranteed 24/7 electricity and water (while, often just outside, people must do without these basic services), that tax revenue to the state treasury is being negatively affected. The creation of Special Economic Zones in India has become in many cases a

pretext for bald land-grabs by the private sector, facilitated by corrupt politicians who profit handsomely by brokering the deals—a shameful practice that will continue if, as expected, such zones proliferate over the coming decades.

An example of what could still be in store is Singur, the site chosen by Tata Motors to build its much vaunted Nano, the world's cheapest car. Production had to be shut down in August 2008 in the face of protests by the people whose land had been expropriated to build the factory. Political parties, smelling blood, jumped into the fray to profit from the conflict. In a tragic illustration of the desperation of the poor whose lives are upset by these events, one farmer committed suicide not because he'd lost his land, but because *after* having lost his land, he feared his son would also lose his job at the plant.

Stuck in the Twentieth Century

From the moment of independence, the government of India has pursued a development model that has favored urban at the expense of rural, the rich at the expense of the poor. The poor have been promised for three generations now that at some future point, if not their own lives, their children's lives will be better. In the meantime, however, they must be sacrificed. Jawaharlal Nehru told villagers in 1948 who were losing their ancestral homes and land for the construction of the Hirakud Dam: "If you have to suffer, let it be in the service of the nation." The attitude among India's elite that the poor should naturally sacrifice themselves to industrial development and the elevation of urban India to advanced-economy standards has not changed in more than 60 years, and is not likely to change between now and 2033.

A cheerleader for India's planned expanded nuclear energy program revealed the scope of this attitude in an e-mail comment-

ing on the approval in September 2008 by the Nuclear Suppliers Group of a waiver for India that would allow it to purchase nuclear fuel and technologies. Referring to the Union Carbide disaster at Bhopal in 1984, the worst industrial accident in history, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of chemical plant workers and their families, he wrote with astonishing callousness: "Did the world shut down its chemical industry after Bhopal? No, it intensified efforts to make [the] chemical industry much safer. It was worth it because chemicals are needed. So is nuclear energy."

Nehru called the new mega-dams whose construction he championed "temples of modern India." India's elite clearly sees nuclear power plants, whose expanded construction they covet more than any other industrial prize, as the new temples of modern India—dedicated to celebrating India's arrival as an officially recognized member of the world's nuclear club (from which it excluded itself by pursuing the development of nuclear weapons in defiance of international nonproliferation norms).

The fact that nuclear power is predicted to provide only up to 8 percent of India's total energy needs by 2033 at an astonishing cost of tens of billions of dollars pales in importance next to the psychological thrill of being able to point to these powerful atomic reactors and say, with pride: "We have them too now." Small-scale wind, solar, crop-waste, or methane units set up at the individual, village, or neighborhood level—which could provide far more power at far less cost and environmental risk—just don't carry the same symbolic weight as the tall cooling towers of a nuclear power plant.

One shudders to think what capacity for a Chernobyl-scale nuclear accident, or worse, may be in store in the name of the development of nuclear energy, especially if the victims of such an event are poor.

The attitude of too many of India's upper-class and upper-caste citizens toward the poor and the lower-caste (often one and the same)—condescension so extreme as to render them invisible on the glittering backdrop of their modern Indian lives—shows no sign of changing now or in the next quarter century. The nation's new consumer culture, the explosion of shopping malls, and television advertising, has fostered a new “if you've got it, flaunt it” mentality that is only likely to intensify as the size of this class explodes in the coming decades.

While a previous privileged generation had no choice but to

make do with just two antiquated car

models, the Ambassador or the Padmini, and generally dressed (particularly women) in traditional clothing, a new generation of affluent Indian consumers acts like kids in a candy store, excited by the myriad new possibilities of consumption and display.

“There are parties where you just don't drive up in anything less than a BMW 7-series,” one young man in Delhi confides.

Every major international brand of clothing is available in India and visible on urban streets. Westernized young women in skin-tight prestige-labeled jeans with bared and pierced belly buttons, well-cut hair dyed a dirty blond, and dangling an expensive designer bag on their arms pass women the same age from an inferior economic class dressed in a traditional *salwar kameez* they've had stitched up by a back-alley tailor or, if very poor, a length of ragged sari passed around bodies that look far older than their years. The Gandhi-inspired austerity that held sway over the immediate post-independence generation is long gone in today's fast-paced society of gluttonous consump-

tion. This is what makes possible the unimaginably offensive advertising display in the September 2008 issue of the Indian edition of *Vogue* magazine, which shows poor people modeling high-priced fashion accessories. The “mannequins” are not named. They are mere props for the outrageously expensive items on display—a Fendi bib, a Burberry umbrella, a Hermès bag—in the same way the poor in India's streets provide the backdrop everyday for the overt display of wealth put on by the rich, every

“A new generation of affluent Indian consumers acts like kids in a candy store, excited by the myriad opportunities of consumption and display.”

time they exit their luxury gated communities or guarded apartment towers.

Rich Consumers, Poor Voters

While the purchasing power of the rich and middle class is rising, the poor and the low-caste, which constitute the vast majority of the population, are wielding more and more political power. This division between the class that consumes and the class that votes constitutes a major challenge to India's future stability as a democracy. It is a trend that will continue to inform Indian politics and Indian policy, both domestic and foreign, over the next 25 years.

In India, it is the poor who vote and who, in any case, constitute the majority of potential voters. Every Indian government walks a delicate tightrope between pleasing the interests of domestic and international capital in order to attract investment and, at the same time, demonstrating that it is doing something for the poor on whose electoral verdict its survival depends. Un-

fortunately, many of even the best-intentioned programs for the poor end up far short of achieving what they are set up to do. The amount of money bled off by corruption exceeds the amount that ever makes it into the hands of the people for whom it is intended.

While elite Indian society remains overwhelmingly dominated by upper-caste Hindus, who hold the lion's share of high government posts and good jobs in the private sector, India's political landscape is increasingly dominated by the lower castes—even the untouchables at the bottom of the social and economic ladder—a trend that is only likely to intensify over the next quarter century. In India's democracy, politics is the one area where the lower castes will be able to exercise some kind of power over their destinies.

Will the Poor Revolt?

Or will they? "Fifteen governments, one direction!" trumpeted the business delegation from India at the 2007 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It remains to be seen if the rising power of lower-caste voters will translate into a national government whose policies will be more accountable to the interests of India's poor than to those of its corporate business elite. There is also the fear among many members of India's elite that a government of ill-informed and ill-prepared leaders drawn from the lower-castes could badly mismanage India's economic and regional security future. For that risk, they have only themselves to blame. If over the past six decades of independence India had improved basic literacy and access to secondary and higher education to levels commensurate with its great-power ambitions, there would be less reason to fear the election of a populist government drawing from the lower classes.

Whether or not India's evolving democracy can provide an effective safety valve for

mass frustration will depend on whether it can deliver more equitable growth. India has produced thousands of millionaires and scores of billionaires in the past decade, including Lakshmi Mittal and Mukesh Ambani, now the world's fourth and fifth richest men respectively, among the likes of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. India is likely to produce many more super-rich citizens over the next 25 years. But unless the country pulls off a miracle and creates more than 500 million jobs between now and 2033 for the peasant farmers it is planning to dispossess of their land and send into the cities, or unless it changes current development policies to favor sustainable agricultural practices by prosperous and educated farmers, these people will simply swell the ranks of India's destitute migrants.

Already numbering over 100 million, these internally displaced persons make up a mobile slave-labor pool working in construction, seasonal harvesting, brick-making, and other contract-labor jobs characterized by conditions of indentured servitude, or massed in the already overburdened urban slums where they form a more permanent underclass working as domestic servants, sweatshop workers, and at other informal jobs. The frustration of this corps of un- and under-employed people, who have been brutally pushed off their land and out of their traditional villages and whose massing in urban slums pits them against millions of others in a daily competition for survival, is like tectonic plates grinding into one another. A massive earthquake is waiting to happen. Small tremors of violence between people of different castes, religions, or regional origin do a little damage, but also relieve some of the tension. Still, no one knows exactly when the big one will hit.

Unscrupulous political leaders who espouse the ugliest us-against-them identity

politics increasingly exploit this powder keg of mass frustration, using the old British imperial maxim of divide and rule to ruthless effect. Whether it is Muslims who are targeted in Gujarat by Hindu nationalists under the protective umbrella of the state's chief minister Narendra Modi; or poor Bihari or Uttar Pradesh migrants in the slums of Mumbai who are attacked after Shiv Sena leader Raj Thakeray whips up his Maharashtrian crowd; or Christian churches, villages, and orphanages savagely ransacked and burned in Orissa by mobs of Hindu extremists; the capacity for the violent political exploitation of India's many social fault lines in an increasingly difficult and rapidly changing economic and ecological environment has only, I fear, begun to express itself. God knows what carnage will be visited upon hapless citizens of all faiths, castes and regions in India between now and 2033.

Terror Target #1

India has become the world's leading target of terrorist attacks. It will continue to be extremely vulnerable to such attacks over the coming decades. The United States National Counterterrorism Center's report on terrorist incidents for 2004 through 2007 placed Indian casualties from such attacks at 3,674, a number second only to terrorist casualties in Iraq during the same period. There has been a spectacular increase in the frequency of terrorist attacks on Indian cities in 2008. Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Jaipur, even Delhi have all been targeted with lethal results, as unsuspecting shoppers or strollers in crowded marketplaces or bus stops are suddenly hit with explosions from bombs hidden in bicycle baskets or other innocent-looking receptacles.

While India has traditionally blamed terrorist groups based in Pakistan for staging cross-border attacks on targets in Kashmir and beyond, the 2008 attacks represent a disturbing departure from an already frightening set of terrorist menaces. A new group calling itself Indian Mujahadeen has claimed responsibility for these new attacks. The group claims they are exacting revenge for the state-sanctioned mas-

“There has been a spectacular increase in the frequency of terrorist attacks on Indian cities, with devastatingly lethal results.”

sacres against Muslims that took place in Gujarat in 2002. These massacres were unleashed after one of the cars of a train carrying Hindu nationalist activists that had stopped in Godhra, a town near the Gujarat capital of Ahmedabad, was set on fire, incinerating more than 50 passengers. The exact sequence of events and who was in fact responsible for this horrible event remain unclear.

In any case, when minorities in India are massacred by mobs enjoying the support of state or local governments, no one is ever held accountable. While the vast majority of India's 150 million Muslims, the largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan, are not interested in violence, it is evident that some have turned, and may well turn increasingly, to terrorism to redress long-simmering grievances. They are also clearly benefiting from the willing support of anti-Indian Islamist terrorist groups operating in Pakistan, and may even, at this point, have linkages to international Islamist terror networks such as Al Qaeda.

This is the nightmare scenario for India's next quarter century: homegrown frustration, with endemic social and political injustice, linked up with the world's most redoubtable Islamist terrorist groups. India charges that the newest terrorist attackers are being aided and abetted by militant groups in Pakistan, themselves nourished by Islamabad, its Inter-Services Intelligence agency, and its military. If all this weren't disquieting enough, Kashmir, quiescent after a period of high tension and violence, has again been seized by secessionist demands following the bungled handling of the request by Hindu groups to build shelters for pilgrims near a shrine. With Kashmir again in play in the ongoing feud between India and Pakistan, and with Pakistan itself teetering on the brink of political and social implosion, the prospects for peace and stability in South Asia over the next quarter century have taken a decided turn for the worse.

Unfortunately, in these and all other cases (Maoist rebels, insurgents in Manipur, Khalistan rebels in Punjab) where the integrity of the state is threatened, the response of the Indian state, time and time again, has been a heavy-handed law-and-order response. As Human Rights Watch and others have charged, the army is called in and people are pretty much beaten, tortured, and disappeared into submission. With the possible exception of Kashmir, there is hardly an instance where a serious attempt has been made by India's government to address the underlying economic, environmental, and social factors that feed rebellion. Nor is there any prospect that such practices will soon change.

India will continue to be haunted by the specter of terrorist attacks and by unrest in Kashmir as long as the fate of the latter remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the majority of Kashmir's people, as long as Pakistan is in economic and political crisis,

as long as India's own Muslim population remains economically disadvantaged and skeptical of obtaining equal justice under the law, and as long as Al Qaeda and other Islamist terrorist groups operate in the region.

India will also remain vulnerable to terrorist and revolutionary violence as long as it treats the poor as obstacles to development rather than as its beneficiaries, and as long as the other countries surrounding India—Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka—are themselves torn by civil conflict and wounded by widespread poverty. All of these threats will be fanned by the intensifying competition for increasingly scarce resources, and the widening division between those who reap the benefits of the economic development path India is choosing and those who do not. In other words, India will remain one of the world's top terrorist targets for the foreseeable future, through 2033—and beyond.

Great Power Ambitions

My crystal ball tells me that in 2033, despite all I have written above, India will have earned a new place among the world's great powers. It will have used its strategic partnership with the United States to modernize and expand its military. It will have increased its store of nuclear weapons and perfected missile technologies used to deliver them. It will have enthusiastically participated in the militarization of space. Moreover, it will have used the technology-sharing it demanded from deals made possible by the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement to create its own advanced arms production industry, becoming a net arms exporter at prices the United States, Russia, France, and Israel can't beat. Finally, it will be a full member of the United Nations Security Council.

If we are lucky, India will use this new power and this new platform to lead the

other nuclear powers to disarm the world of nuclear weapons once and for all. Despite the considerable aid provided by the United States to build up its economy and its military, India will have maintained a certain cordial independence from American dictates. India's relationship with the United States will help the once triumphant superpower to transition less belligerently to a post-American world. India will have avoided an armed conflict with China and refused to join an attack on Iran. Its economic ties with China and the European Union will be strong. Russia will remain a valued friend (and source of energy). India's commitment to multilateral institutions will help the world negotiate its way through a period of protracted uncertainty about world order.

In 2033, India will be a member of the G-7, which by then may be a G-27, where again, if we are lucky, India will help broker an international trade and economic regime that is equitable and environmentally sustainable. Hopefully, it will have helped stabilize Pakistan and its other troubled neighbors. It will begin to mature out of its global role as the outsourcing destination for ethically prickly industry practices such as pharmaceutical human trials and genetic engineering experimentation, and will help create transnational ethical human and environmental standards for these and a host of new technology areas. India will still be a center for research and development for the most powerful actors of the twenty-first century, the largest transnational corporations, some of these based in India.

If India has the courage to imagine—now that it has rid itself of the great humiliation of exclusion from the ultimate power bloc of the world's official nuclear powers—a different mode of development, one genuinely adapted to the harsh realities of the twenty-first century, its companies will be world leaders. India will be the first country

to mass produce an affordable electric car while facilitating non-motorized and mass transportation for the residents of its megacities, all built according to green principles, creating a model for urban development around the world. India will have led the way to reducing not only its own carbon emissions through the mass implementation of decentralized alternative energy sources such as solar, small-turbine wind, and methane gas. At the same time, it will have played a key role in helping its giant neighbor China to reduce its emissions and even cajoled and shamed the advanced economies, including the profligate United States, into dramatically reducing theirs.

India will have abandoned its current race to imitate American-style industrial agriculture. Indian organic and fair-trade products will be the world's premium agricultural output, sought by savvy consumers the world over. India will have taken the lead to leverage its incredible knowledge base of traditional agricultural practices and its labor surplus to create a thriving sustainable agricultural model, bringing knowledge, education, and services to its 600,000 villages via the wireless technologies it has been so adept at exploiting. It will restore its underground aquifers and reforest its hillsides.

Under pressure from an increasingly politically powerful underclass, India's democracy will have resolved its crippling problems of corruption and poor governance. It will have delivered quality education and healthcare, housing, clean water, and sanitation to the vast majority of its citizens. Its policies will reflect the active civic engagement of an informed electorate, becoming a model for the world of the advantages of truly democratic governance.

Now that is what I call dreaming with a BRIC. ●