



India needs a new, integrated approach to Eurasia

The time has come for it to begin a strategic conversation with Europe on Eurasian security. This will be a natural complement to the fledgling engagement between India and Europe on the Indo-Pacific.

Balancing continental and marine strategy:

1. Delhi's Indo-Pacific strategy has acquired political and institutional traction, thanks to intensive Indian diplomacy in recent years. It must now devote similar energy to the development of a "Eurasian" policy.
2. If the Indo-Pacific is about Delhi's new maritime geopolitics, Eurasia involves the recalibration of India's continental strategy.



Afghan Situation:

1. This week's consultations in Delhi on the crisis in Afghanistan among the region's top security policymakers, following the US withdrawal, is part of developing a Eurasian strategy.
2. For Delhi, it makes sense to use the broadest possible definition of Eurasia in reimagining the region. The most important development in Eurasia today is the dramatic rise of China and its growing strategic assertiveness, expanding economic power and rising political influence.
3. Beijing's muscular approach to the long and disputed border with Bhutan and India, its quest for a security presence in Tajikistan, the active search for a larger role in Afghanistan, and a greater say in the affairs of the broader sub-Himalayan region are only one part of the story.
4. As the world's second-largest economy, China's commercial influence is felt across the world. Physical proximity multiplies China's economic impact on the inner Asian regions.

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5. The impressive expansion of China's Belt and Road initiative across central Asia and Russia, onto the shores of the Atlantic, and Europe's growing economic interdependence with China have added to Beijing's powerful leverages in Eurasia.
6. These leverages, in turn, were reinforced by a deepening alliance with Russia that straddles the Eurasian heartland. Russia's intractable disputes with Europe and America have increased Moscow's reliance on Beijing.

Eurasian Focus:

1. India has certainly dealt with Eurasia's constituent spaces separately over the decades. What Delhi now needs is an integrated approach to Eurasia. Like the Indo-Pacific, Eurasia is new to India's strategic discourse.
2. To be sure, there are references to India's ancient civilisational links with Eurasia. The collaboration between the Sangha and the Shreni in the Buddhist era produced lasting interaction between the two regions. India's inward orientation after the decline of Buddhism did not stop the flow of Central Asian forces into the subcontinent.
3. The Partition of the subcontinent and India's physical disconnection from inner Asia, however, cut India off from Eurasian geopolitics. Overcoming the geographic limitation — represented by the Pakistan barrier— will be central to an expanded Indian role in Eurasian geopolitics.

India's Eurasian strategy:

1. While there are many elements to an Indian strategy towards Eurasia, three of them stand out. One is to put Europe back into India's continental calculus.
2. As India now steps up its engagement with Europe, the time has come for it to begin a strategic conversation with Brussels on Eurasian security. This will be a natural complement to the fledgling engagement between India and Europe on the Indo-Pacific.
3. India's Eurasian policy must necessarily involve greater engagement with both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.
4. A dedicated military office in the Indian mission to Brussels, where both EU and NATO are headquartered, will be a crucial step towards a sustained security dialogue with Europe.
5. Second is to intensify the dialogue on Eurasian security with Russia. While Indo-Russian differences on the Indo-Pacific, the Quad, China, and the Taliban are real, Delhi and Moscow have good reasons to narrow their

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differences on Afghanistan and widen cooperation on continental Eurasian security.

- 6. Third is the substantive Indian collaboration with both Persia and Arabia. If Persia's location makes it critical for the future of Afghanistan and Central Asia, the religious influence of Arabia and the weight of the Gulf capital are quite consequential in the region.*
- 7. India's partnerships with Persia and Arabia are also critical in overcoming Turkey's alliance with Pakistan that is hostile to Delhi.*

India will surely encounter many contradictions in each of the three areas — between and among America, Europe, Russia, China, Iran, and the Arab Gulf. As in the Indo-Pacific, so in Eurasia, Delhi should not let these contradictions hold India back.