**Why is India obsessed with Pakistan & how can it counter China?**

By Sanjeev Nayyar October 21 2016

To see with pictures <http://www.firstpost.com/world/daring-the-dragon-its-time-for-india-to-forget-pakistan-and-focus-on-ways-to-counter-china-3065312.html>

After a period of uncertainty on reforms and growth, the tide began to turn for India around mid-September in 2016. The reasons were many. After two years of below normal rain, this year's monsoon was good and well spread. Good rain means a revival of rural demand. Then there was Reserve Bank of India making some profound changes for the development of the corporate bond market. The Goods and Service Tax (GST) and Bankruptcy code were passed by the Indian Parliament. RBI permitted the issue of "masala" bonds to meet additional Tier-I and Tier-II capital requirements. The Seventh Pay Commission and the One Rank-One Pension scheme would have lead to a surge in consumer spending.

In short, things were looking up, but then URI happened.

There was an immediate shift in national mood from positive to negative due to the inability of successive governments to reign in Pakistan. Social and electronic media captured the public outrage. Sensing the public mood, the government and politicians talked tough. Through articles and television appearances, army veterans and retired diplomats shared options on how India could retaliate.

The strategic intent of India's enemies has been to keep India embroiled in local conflict so that it does not focus on nation building. In short, let India be a country of no consequence and threat. Thus, whenever there is a ray of hope and a resurgence of national confidence something is done to drive Indians into despair once again. And mind you, this is not the first time such a strategy was used.

Then came the surgical strikes. The nation's mood swung like a pendulum. The chest thumping was as if India had won the cricket World Cup final against Pakistan in 2003. But the cynics could not digest it. So, they asked whether the surgical strikes indeed happened.

But the way Indians reacted before and after the strikes reflects their hatred for Pakistan.

According to [*Statisticstimes.com*](http://statisticstimes.com/economy/india-vs-pakistan-gdp.php), "India's nominal GDP (2014) is $2,050 billion as against Pakistan's $250 billion. On purchasing power parity (PPP) basis, GDP of India and Pakistan is $7,376 billion and $882 billion, respectively. India is the third largest economy based on purchasing power parity (PPP) method after China and the US. The GDP of Maharashtra ($289 billion) alone is greater than that of Pakistan." <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/india-vs-pakistan-gdp.php>

By every yardstick Pakistan is a smaller nation than India. Then why do Indians consider Pakistan as enemy number one?

It's because Pakistan was created as a nation state (seceded territory) from India, India won four wars against Pakistan — 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999, and Pakistan has been exporting terror to India since the 1980's. Pakistan is a visible enemy unlike China, and that's why the farce of beating the retreat ceremony takes place every evening at Wagah Border where pseudo nationalism is at its best.

Another reason is because both countries are cricket rivals just like England and Australia. From the times cricketing ties were resumed in the 1980's till the time Saurav Ganguly's boys returned victorious in 2004, Pakistan was seen as arch rival. After that, the size of India's economy grew significantly, and India had beaten Pakistan often. So, the passions have dropped.

From a psychological perspective the reason could be different. Indians believe India can defeat Pakistan, so it captures popular imagination. But the same is not true for China because it has comprehensively defeated India in 1962, is distant and belong to a different race.

When politicians want to prove their nationalism, a reference is made of Pakistan because we treat Pakistan as India's principal enemy. But this status has not been accorded to China. Even though Pakistan belongs to the "Ivy League of Terrorism" because of Chinese support. This has resulted in India benchmarking itself against Pakistan instead of China thus lowering the performance bar.

And if the latest developments in India-China relations have established anything, it's that India has more reasons to be cautious of China than Pakistan whether it's China's attempts to encircle India through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and Bangladesh, surprise invasions in Arunachal Pradesh, or blocking its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group. However, a straight-out war against China may not be a sustainable choice for India, and requires a more refined and diplomatic approach. Here are a few ideas on how Indian should China without going to war:

• The government and people of India must be focused on development. No terrorist attack or surprise invasion of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh should deter us.

• We talk too much. Let actions speak. Only the insecure boasts of every achievement.

• The hype about becoming a superpower is spread by those who want to pursue their national interest by inflating our egos. When India has arrived, the world will get up and take note. The aware will sense the change and know it's time to work even harder.

• More Indians must travel to China, Japan, South Korea, Germany, US to know of the rapid strides made by these countries. It would be a reality check and tell us how much distance India has to cover.

• Identify sectors where Chinese over-capacity have forced them to export, for example, steel where China has idle capacity of 300 mt. The Modi government's call for a significant expansion of steel capacity drew a sharp rejoinder from China's [Global Times](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/992952.shtml) which expressed concerns whether India could become a global "steel-producing colossus". China is worried its exports would fall when India increases capacity. Therefore, India must single-mindedly focus on increasing capacity. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/992952.shtml>

• Identify areas where India outperforms China and work hard to take an unbeatable lead, for example, in corporate transparency. According to a July 2016 article in China's [Global Times](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/993887.shtml), "The survey, released by Berlin-based global anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International supports a view that India has the most transparent companies and China the most opaque firms?" <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/993887.shtml>

• India's booming smartphone market presents a huge opportunity for Chinese companies. The government must do what it takes to promote domestic design and manufacturing of smartphones, be it through incentives to Indian companies.

• Because of India's warped policies Chinese toys dominate the sector today. India must make amends by creating Industrial Parks for toys. Factories to have global scale and flexible labour laws, etc, so that they can compete effectively. The Chinese want to capture markets and make countries dependent on them. Because the author runs a site on Indian culture, one receives marketing emails from Chinese vendors of brass images. Savdhan Tamil Nadu!

The aam aadmi can help by demanding Made in India products. However, if only Made in China products are available, one should buy non-Chinese brands because profits are made by brand owners, and not contract manufacturers.

• Indian Think-Tanks must put studies on the state of the Chinese economy, and the success of Chinese investment in overseas ports and related projects in the public domain. This along with information about scale of debt burden, borrowings by local governments, bad debts, inventory of unsold homes, etc, would help Indians have a realistic assessment of Chinese strengths and weakness.

• Identify the sports where China dominates but India has competence, for example, badminton and then build world champions. Due to India's recent dismal performance at the Olympics some Chinese papers mocked India. They went quiet after PV Sidhu defeated world number two Wang Yihan of China in Women’s Singles Quarter-finals in badminton. Sports victories enhance national confidence, unite the nation and are tools of psychological warfare.

• Continue the tradition of "Kashmiri Buddhist scholar [Kumarajiva](http://www.speakingtree.in/article/when-china-loved-india) who sparked a cultural renaissance in the east around 1,600 years ago, when the Chinese, eager to learn from India, became his avid students". "Today, too, scores of Chinese and international scholars are all looking towards India to explain the philosophical meaning behind this invaluable heritage,” says Prof Dr Shashibala. Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller Hiuen Tsang is the most remembered symbol of Indo-Chinese cultural ties. <http://www.speakingtree.in/article/when-china-loved-india>

• During a recent visit to Kaivalyadhama, the well known Yoga institute near Mumbai, the author met with Chinese and Japanese guests who had come to study there. The institute offers Diploma in Yoga Education and Therapy etc. Indian Missions abroad must aggressively promote the study of Yoga in India.

• The governments of Bihar and India must work jointly to transform Bodh Gaya into a pilgrimage destination that outperforms Mecca. It is a Buddha-given opportunity for Nitish Kumar to write his name in history.

• Buddhism alone is not good enough to build good relations with Vietnam. More Indians must visit Vietnam and Cambodia to discover their magnificent temples and culture.

Reboot ties with Myanmar, India's gateway to south-east Asia. The friendship highway through Myanmar and Thailand needs to be completed within a 18 month deadline. India should attract Burmese students to Indian universities through scholarships or exchange programmes, as well as invite Myanmar politicians to observe how democracy works in India, and introduce direct flights/bus services between Imphal and Mandalay.

• India must accept that Russia and China have a common goal of keeping the US out of Asia. Thus, Russian decisions may be influenced by this new found alignment of objectives.

• Improve the quality of life in all border states starting from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. Border population are India's first line of defence. Aam aadmi can contribute by visiting these places. Tourism increases incomes.

• The Government, media and the people of India must give up their obsession with Pakistan and Kashmir Valley.

The media can play a significant role in the nation building effort by keeping public opinion focused on this mission and not give excessive publicity to negative forces. India behaved like a good boy on the world stage for far too long. Whilst one is not suggesting we become a rogue state, one must learn from Vijay Amritraj.

Those born during 1950-60's will recall that Vijay Amritraj, Jimmy Connors and Bjorn Borg were considered the ABC of world tennis in the 1970's, but among them, Amritraj is forgotten. When an opponent played a good shot, Amritraj applauded and earned great respect as a gentleman. But he never won a Grand Slam tournament and failed to realise his potential.

India must play to win.

The author is an Independent Columnist. He tweets with the handle @sanjeev1927