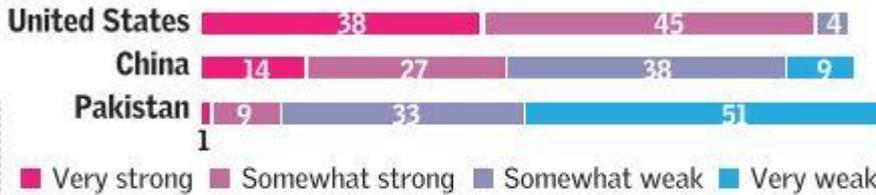


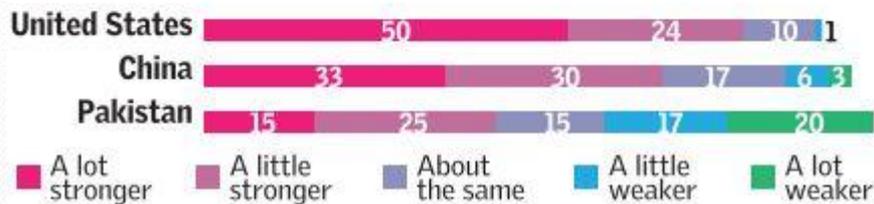
How the world looks from India

Amitabh Mattoo
Rory Medcalf

Strength of India's relations



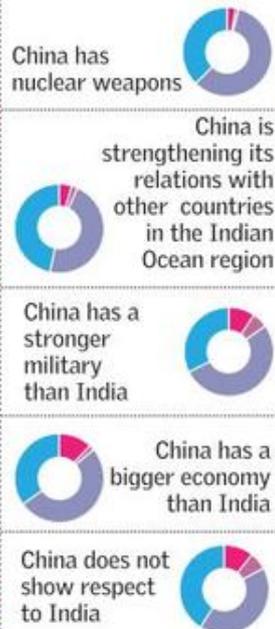
Strength of India's relations (IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS)



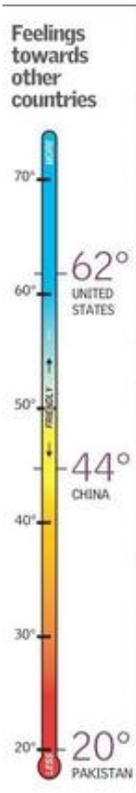
Views on China



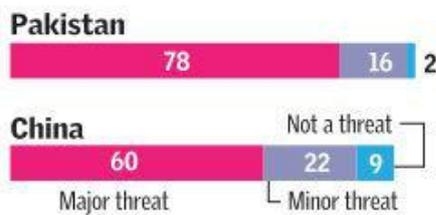
Reasons China poses a threat



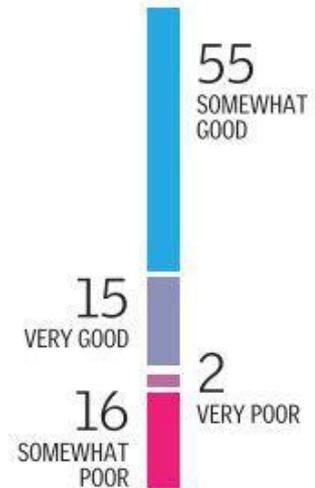
Disagree Strongly disagree Strongly agree Agree



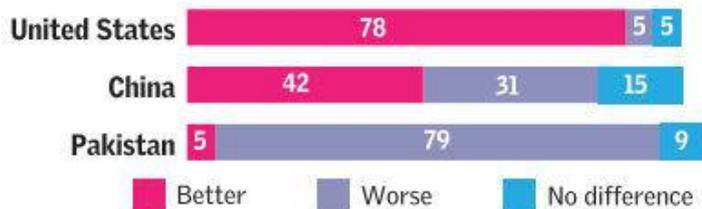
Possible threats



India's relations with South Asia



Would you like if India is more like....



The Government of India may have rolled out the red carpet for Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, who arrived in New Delhi yesterday, but popular opinion in India is deeply sceptical of Chinese ambitions in Asia and its policy towards India. This is the clear verdict of arguably the most comprehensive survey of Indian public opinion in recent years. But while there is great warmth for the United States, and discomfort at China's rise, the percentage of Indians who believe India should cooperate with China at the global level equals those who support plans to contain China. *India Poll 2013*, the findings of which are being released today, was carried out late last year, much before last month's incursion by Chinese troops in Ladakh.

Predictably, there continues to be deep concern within India about possible terrorist attacks from Pakistan as well as the motives of the Pakistan Army, but a courageous, reconciliatory move towards Islamabad by the Indian Prime Minister would invite widespread domestic support.

India Poll 2013: Facing the Future is a survey of opinion of 1,233 adults, a representative cross-section of Indians from all sectors of society; interviews were conducted face-to-face in India between August 30 and October 15, 2012. The poll was commissioned by the Australia India Institute at the University of Melbourne and the Lowy Institute for International Policy, and the fieldwork conducted by a reputable international polling company.

China and threat factors

Not surprisingly, Indians see Pakistan and China as the biggest foreign threats to their nation. Only nine per cent of Indians believe China does not pose a threat, while 84 per cent believe it does, with 60 per cent identifying it as a major threat. Seventy per cent of the respondents agreed that China's aim is to dominate Asia. The responses were roughly equal, however, between those who believed that India should join with other countries to limit China's influence (65 per cent), and those who believed India should cooperate with China to play a leading role in the world together (64 per cent). In fact, some Indians clearly hold both views at once, an interesting sign of the tensions or indeed duality within Indian foreign policy expectations.

From all those who had identified China as a threat, over 80 per cent agreed that threat was for the following reasons: China possesses nuclear weapons, it was competing with India for resources in other countries, it was strengthening its relations with other countries in the Indian Ocean Region, and it was claiming sovereignty on parts of India's territory. Only a slightly smaller number believed that the threat was because of China's stronger military, its bigger economy, its military assistance to Pakistan, and because it does not "show respect" to India.

On a scale

This does not mean, however, that Indians do not want better relations with China; 63 per cent of the respondents want bilateral ties to be stronger. On a scale of 0 to 100, in terms of feelings towards a country (with 100 meaning very warm, and 0 very cold) of the 22 countries listed, China ranked right in the middle along with Brazil, at 44 degrees; the United States, Singapore, Japan, Australia, France, Nepal, Russia, Great Britain, Sri Lanka and South Africa ranked higher.

While the findings may suggest a schizophrenic Indian attitude towards China, the message is relatively straightforward. Indians are deeply apprehensive about what they perceive as China's assertive or even aggressive attitude towards India, fearful of its policies in the region and anxious of its growing capabilities. And yet, while Indians generally hope that relations with China will become better and with little ill feeling towards the Chinese people, there is a lack of clarity on how India should respond to a Rising China. Should India partner with China to create a united front among Asia's rising giants, if possible? Or be part of a balancing coalition to ensure that China's rise remains peaceful and not destabilising at a time when there are widespread concerns that Beijing is aspiring for a dominant role in Asia? It is

this policy dilemma which New Delhi needs to resolve. Likewise, Chinese diplomacy clearly faces a major challenge in terms of Indian public perceptions.

Pakistan

On Pakistan, the findings are along predictable lines, but with a significant counter-intuitive finding. Ninety-four per cent of Indians believe Pakistan is a threat, of which 78 per cent consider it a major threat. Of all those who identified Pakistan as a threat, over 90 per cent did so because of the possibility of terrorist attacks from Pakistan, the Pakistan military's animosity to India, its possession of nuclear weapons, and because it claims sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan ranks lowest in terms of warmth of feeling in the list of 22 countries.

And yet, despite great scepticism about Pakistan, 89 per cent of Indians agree that ordinary people in both India and Pakistan want peace. Eighty-seven per cent agreed that a big improvement in India-Pakistan relations requires courageous leadership in both countries and 76 per cent felt that India should take the initiative in seeking peace with Pakistan. Seventy-two per cent felt that trade and economic cooperation would bring peace between the two countries, while 67 per cent felt that without an agreement on Kashmir, peace would not be possible

In sum, the findings suggest that if Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were to have a summit meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and take the lead on a dialogue with Pakistan, he would have popular support. While a grand reconciliation with Pakistan had been central to Dr. Singh's vision of South Asia, he seems to have abandoned the goal for fear of a political backlash. *India Poll 2013* indicates that even in the last year of the present government, peace with Pakistan is an opportunity worth pursuing.

Ties with U.S.

At 62 degrees, Indians feel most warmly towards the U.S. in the list of 22 countries surveyed. Eighty-three per cent feel that India's relations with the U.S. are strong, while only four per cent think they are weak, 75 per cent want them even stronger and only one per cent want them weaker.

During most of the Cold War and beyond, suspicion of America was a striking feature of Indian, particularly elite, opinion, even while the U.S. became a "land of opportunity" for Indian professionals. American sanctions after the 1998 nuclear tests further compounded this feeling. In January 2009, however, after the U.S.-India nuclear deal, Manmohan Singh surprised many by telling President George W. Bush: "The people of India deeply love you." *India Poll 2013* confirms the affection the people of India have for the United States, if not for a single President.

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