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The Working Group on Indian Affairs is composed by Lía Rodríguez de la Vega, María Cristina Reigadas, Maya Alvisa, Verónica Flores, Lucía Ibarra, Silvia Rissi, Celine Cirilo, Sofía Delger, María Antonela Vittola and Diana Bruno

**Sushma Swaraj's visit to China and perspectives on the Prime Minister's trip in May**

The Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sushma Swaraj, arrived in Beijing on January 31 in a three-day visit to China, responding to the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, to discuss both bilateral and regional matters important to both countries in preparation for Prime Minister Modi's May visit to that country. This trip is the first for the new Secretary of Foreign Relations, S. Jaishankar, who served as the Indian Ambassador to China for four years and succeeds Secretary Sujhata Singh.

A meeting between the Minister and President Xi Jinping was reported by the media as an exceptional gesture that demonstrates the importance with which China regards India. Likewise, the media reported the President's calls for both countries to work together in their development strategies, a strategy which he referred to as the opportunity of the century. It is worth noting that Prime Minister Modi's "Made in India" program leans principally on the Chinese investment and has allowed for revived job creation in India's manufacturing sector.

On the other hand, the presence of Swaraj in the "Forum of High-Level Media Communication between India and China" allowed him to comment that India is committed to cooperation between the "two major civilized powers of Asia," which he believes is necessary in order for the countries to grow together in the framework of their mutual interests. With this in mind, he inaugurated the "Year of the Visit to India," with which he intends to attract more Chinese tourists to India and encourage contact with the local Indian community.

To some observers, the success of Swaraj's visit to China is evidenced in Russia and China's support of Indian membership in APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), which would allow for increased Indian access to the Indo-Pacific trade arena. Likewise, the issuing of a joint press release after the 13th Meeting of the RIC Ministers of Foreign Relations (that is, the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China) reassured them of India's commitment to developing a security infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region. However, there is still a need for dialogue between China and India in order to establish that the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, as part of their initiative of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, will not imply the militarization of those waters.

Likewise, according to President Jinping's declarations, there seems to be optimism regarding a solution to the countries' various border disputes, which would help the countries avoid additional tensions.

This trip took place following US President Barack Obama's visit to India and the signing of an extended defense agreement between India and the United States.

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AAP's Victory in the Elections in New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party (Common Man's Party) won the elections in New Delhi on February 7. On February 14, Arvind Kejriwal was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Delhi, with his party occupying 67 of the 70 contended seats in the general legislative elections. The three remaining seats were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which at the same time lost 29 seats. The Congress Party (INC) did not obtain any seats and lost the eight they had. The AAP victory is among the largest in Indian history, with the AAP obtaining 96% of the seats at stake.

There seem to be different reasons for the AAP's victory, including the following:

- Intense preparation for these elections following the party's poor performance in last year's.
- The reconstruction of the party's structure, especially the adoption of a positive agenda.
- The Delhi Dialogues, which efficiently contributed to the party's contact with voters and, consequently allowed the party to determine which issues to prioritize. Kejriwal emphasized that the AAP proposes specific solutions to issues related to water, electricity, plumbing, and telecommunications, convincing voters of a genuine concern for those in need.
- The party platform, which emphasized the importance of effective management.
- Kejriwal's apologies for his previous resignation from office. He had come to power in 2013 with the support of the INC and resigned 49 days later, after the Delhi Assembly rejected his anti-corruption bill. He delivered an apology at each of the ten public events he attended during his campaign.
- The fact that Kejriwal avoided naming, shaming, and arguing with his strongest opponent, Kiran Bedi (BJP). This seems to have contributed positively to his image among voters, while at the same time the opposite happened in the BJP's campaign.
- The securing of the Islamic vote, which in previous elections had been divided between the AAP and the INC. Support was largely due to the AAP's opposition to Hindu nationalist reconversion measures such as the Ghar Wapsi and associated organizations such as the Rashtriya Swayamseval Sangh (RSS).
- The votes that the Congress Party lost, including much of the middle and lower classes, which the AAP was able to pick up.
- The fact that the BJP acted late in its Delhi campaign. It had come from successive victories in the city, which led to excessive confidence.
- The fact that the BJP candidate, Kiran Bedi, also faced opposition within his party.
- The low level of polarization between Muslims and Hindus in Delhi, in addition to the AAP's prudent avoidance of such polarization.
- The fact that this election was not about Modi himself favoring the AAP. Notably, both Modi and Kejriwal are perceived by the public as non-corrupt and are looking to transform the Indian bureaucracy.

However, they have completely different views on the economy, as well as the role of religion in public life. At the same time, Modi's role in the elections was somewhat overemphasized, which turned out to be excessive and counterproductive.

The sheer number of volunteers involved in the campaign—somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000.

After the victory, the AAP established electoral objectives to win seats in Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. Nevertheless, even more so than the BJP, it seems that the INC should take notice of these goals, since the AAP seems to be going after the seats that the INC left vacant.

If Kejriwal's administration progresses, it will mean a greater danger for the INC, with the AAP likely becoming a challenge to the political polarization both in Punjab and further away. It will become an alternative both to replace the INC and to compete with the BJP. This also explains the INC's attitude on the Land Acquisition Act and the declarations of Rahul Gandhi on the matter. We are in a moment of truth for the INC. Although it continues to be the most significant pan-Indian opposition party, with real potential to reemerge as an alternative to the BJP, it must first implement the necessary changes to compete with the AAP.

Following its victory, the AAP proclaimed, "For us, the administration is easy. Our mission is to change the cultural policies, to form a model in which the common man is encouraged to become an actor in our democracy." In order to place more certainty in the party's future positions and political success, we must first wait for and the next actions of its leadership as they pertain to the party's supposed redefinition of politics and reinvention of democracy.

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The Indian Parliament's Lower Chamber (Lok Sabha) approves the Land Acquisition Act

The Indian Parliament's Lower Chamber (Lok Sabha) approved an amendment of the Land Acquisition Act to facilitate industrial projects. This is the first major reform of Narendra Modi's government, and it has generated several protests in the country from critics who are calling the amendment "draconian", "anti-farmer", and "anti-poor." Demonstrators include Bihar Prime Minister, Nitish Kumar, and some of his Ministers, who have fasted and made a vow that the state will not institute the reform, whatever the cost may be. The amendment still needs the approval of the High Chamber (Rajya Sabha), where Modi's party does not have the majority.

The governing Party (BJP), which holds the majority in the Lower Chamber, approved the measure, was rejected by the opposing Congress Party and Biju Janata Dal.

The law passed in the Lower Chamber included a series of nine amendments, which require, among other stipulations, that a member of the family affected by the sale of the land be hired. The Land Acquisition Act is meant to facilitate the purchase of land for defense projects, energy, industrial corridors and rural housing, given the presence of two prerequisites, which the present law acknowledges: the consent of 70% of the owners affected by each plan and the comprehensive study of each plan's potential social impact. These requirements were approved in 2013 under the previous administration. The amendment involves maintaining the present system of compensation, which values the land acquired at four times the market price in rural areas and double in urban areas.

Modi amended the Land Acquisition Act in December through an emergency executive order, but the order nonetheless needs to receive Parliament approval within six months of its issuing. It is the first of eight laws that have been issued through executive orders by the Prime Minister since his ascension to power.

Modi addressed the farmers in his radio program "Mann ki Baat," insisting that his administration's reforms cover the gaps left by the previous administration, and that opposition to the law is the result of a disinformation campaign created for political reasons. He subtly alluded to the Congress Party when he said, "Those who project themselves as sympathizers of the farmers and their protests have been using a 120-year-old law to acquire farmland for more than 60 to 65 years after independence, and now they are pointing at this government, which is trying to improve the 2013 Act." (DNAIndia, March 23)

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India extends its influence in the Indian Ocean and signs a cooperation agreement on civilian nuclear energy with Sri Lanka

On March 10, Prime Minister Modi departed for a five-day visit to Seychelles, Mauritius (he was the foreign head of state invited to the celebrations of its National Day) and Sri Lanka. A visit to the Maldives, which was initially considered as well, was suspended pending the judgment of Mohamed Nasheed, a pro-India opposition leader under accusations of terrorism (he was ultimately condemned to thirteen years in

prison). The present administration of Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen, who came into power in November 2013, has a markedly pro-China orientation.

In the Republic of the Seychelles, a country with which India has enjoyed significant military cooperation for the past three decades, Modi inaugurated the first of eight Radar Systems of Coastal Security. The network will be based on the Island of Mahé, the country's largest island and location of the capital city of Victoria, with the idea that five radars will be located on the continent and three on the islands. This will be in addition to the eight that India already set up in the Seychelles in 2012. Moreover, in 2014 India gave that country the multifunctional patrol ship *Tarasa*, which is designed to patrol for pirate and terrorist enterprises, illegal fishing, and similar activity.

At the same time, India assists in Seychelles' ports, islands, and Exclusive Economic Areas (EEAs), as it does with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India has already installed six AIS radars in Sri Lanka and plans to set up more in the Maldives.

In this way, India plans to discourage any extra-regional actors and show itself as a "security supplier." Its objective is to fortify the defense sector of these countries while intimidating extra-regional and non-traditional enemies such as pirates and religious extremists.

Similar developments have occurred in Mauritius, another country to which Modi travelled. Due to a request from its capital of Port Louis, the Mauritian ship *Barracuda* will assist Indian ships in patrolling the country's vast Economic Exclusive Zone in an attempt to stop piracy and illegal fishing, while also serving as testimony to the countries' defensive partnership. India has been a constant trainer of Mauritian defense and police forces. Through these efforts, the Mauritian and Seychelles islands could soon be added to the dialogue between India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, as National Security Counselors.

India's security vision is reflected in two key agreements signed during Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Seychelles and Mauritius, through which India acquires the right to develop infrastructure on the islands of Assumption and Agalega. The installation of patrol systems in these islands helps these countries to track undesirable activity, a process by which India will maintain its role as a preferential partner in the security of the Indian Ocean, especially considering the advance of China and the presence of United States there.

In February of this year, during the first foreign trip of newly-inaugurated Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena India signed an agreement with that country on nuclear energy cooperation for civil uses. At the same time, defense, security, and agricultural cooperation were extended, as was the participation of Sri Lanka in Nalanda University project. Moreover, Modi accepted an invitation to visit Sri Lanka, during which he had the opportunity to make a speech to the Parliament to remind them of the development aid that India had granted to the country. It should be noted that after Sirisena's rise to power, there was a delay in the Chinese State company's construction projects in the country (including the Colombo Port City), in order to review the conditions of their agreements. The agreements were made during the administration of Sirisena's predecessor, Mahinda Rajapaksa, for a cost of 1.4 billion dollars. All of this seems to have given India an opportunity to resume its initiative in Sri Lanka.

As for other regional actors' pressures, we must remember that Seychelles offered to allow China to build fuel recharging bases for its anti-pirate operations in Gulf of Aden zone. Although China dismissed this offer at the time, it is nonetheless still a possibility. In Sri Lanka, as in other countries, China's commercial initiatives that allow it a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean also betray its intent to extend its influence throughout the region, which has led to tension with India.

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India opposes the new North American proposal on the tenure of the alimentary stock in World Trade Organization

In an informal meeting of the WTO on March 20, the negotiators agreed that, in general, all agricultural issues on the Doha Round agenda are interrelated and must be resolved, as stipulated in the draft text of 2008. The obstacles that remain in the WTO's existing agricultural code pertain mainly to market access. Accordingly, they stipulated that there must be a substantial cut in customs duties and domestic aid, alluding specifically to direct subsidies to the agricultural producers.

However, the G-33, which is led by India and includes China, the Philippines, and the Cairns Group of food-exporting nations (such as Argentina), insisted that there was a need for substantial changes in the text. The G-33's countries opposed the proposal to cut customs duties according to present limits, instead advocating for targets based on reduction percentage.

India and other G-33 members were against the new North American proposal for a permanent regarding food security in developing countries. The group instead proposes the promotion of public stockholding in food security, within what is called "Green Box" —that is, subsidies that cause little to no commercial distortion, an initiative resisted by the United States, Australia and other countries. The main argument for this is that the present agreement does not offer developing countries enough adaptability in terms of food security policy, while the developed Member States can continue using practices that distort trade with very few restrictions. India maintains that the acquisition of public stocks at higher prices than the market price is a fundamental part of their efforts to guarantee food security, as it is the only way to acquire the quantities necessary for distribution among more than 800 million people suffering from food insecurity. Also, because the farmers usually face a reduction in the prices during the harvest period, a guaranteed price would benefit them significantly.

The North American proposal includes three principal elements: a review of the efficiency and trade effects of food security programs already in existence in order to determine whether they are meeting their goals; evaluation of the real and potential problems in the implementation of food security programs due to the constraints from the existing rules of the World Trade Organization; and the outlining of good practices regarding the possession and storage of food stock. India maintains that such a proposal may result in some countries being compelled to adopt a specific class of food security program, which is not included in the existing mandate. Other delegations confirmed that the proposal on domestic aid can limit the capacity of countries to make more ambitious reductions, because the text puts a global limit on all types of subsidies. India also suggested that there be a delegate designated by the official president to quicken the development of a solution before the end of the year.

Prior to the informal WTO meeting, on March 13 the IV Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and Farming Development of the BRICS--Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa--took place in Brasilia.

This concluded with these countries' commitment to expand cooperation between the members of the group on farming and nutritional security. During the event, policies concerning family farming, security, innovation, and a common system of farming information were discussed. In his final declaration, India's representative, Minister of Agriculture Radha Mohan Singh, reminded the participants that, according to the Food and Farming Organization, a considerable majority of the 209 million men and women withdrawn from a food crisis in the last decades live in the BRIC countries.

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Mithi Viridi's proposed nuclear power plant and its social extent

A Committee of Experts from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change recommended the establishment of a coastal regulation zone for India's nuclear power plant, Mithi Viridi. This plant is located in Bhavnagar, Gujarat district, and has a capacity of 6000 M-W. The proposed nuclear energy plant will have six light water reactors with a capacity of 1000 MW each, situated across 777 hectares. The project will be executed in three stages, each including 2000 MW of added capacity. The first stage is expected to be finished in 2021-2022 and the third in 2023-2024. However, India's Nuclear Energy Limited Corporation still needs to purchase the necessary land to proceed with the project. The problem that arises is that there are 152 towns and more than 200,000 persons in a thirty-kilometer radius of the location being considered.

The authorization for the establishment of the plant's means of entry (of sea water for cooling) and exit (with a discharge structure of 2.5, 3.5 km in the sea) is seen as a great challenge for the Indian Nuclear Energy Corporation Limited (INECL). The corporation has faced great opposition from local farmers and social activists, whose leader, Shaktising Gohil, assures the corporation that the farmers will refuse to sell their fertile lands regardless of the money offered,. In addition to economic reasons, the plant is opposed due to an increased chance of earthquakes in the area, as well as the proximity of Gujarat to Pakistan, which makes some fear the plant will be bombed.

The regulation zone's creation had been recommended by the authorities of the Coastal Area Administration of Gujarat in January of last year and the Ministry made clear that one of the specific conditions of the project's authorization is the non-displacement of people, houses or the fishing activity as a consequence of the project. The ministry, together with the National Oceanic Technology Institute (NOTI), has also asked the company to examine the possibility of deploying ultrasonic devices to divert maritime life from the ocean water entering the plant.

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Other brief news

- The government unexpectedly decided that S. Jaishankar would be the replacement of Sujatha Singh-removed after Obama's visit--as new Secretary of Foreign Affairs, chosen for his outstanding performance on several issues, such as the reconstruction of ties with the United States after the Devyani Khobragade incident, the cooperation agreement on nuclear energy for civil use between both countries, his performance as the country's longest-serving Ambassador to China, and his performance as Secretary in charge of the Americas between 2004 and 2007.
 - The Minister of Rail Transport, Suresh Prabhu, created two committees in fulfillment of the promises made in last month's budget. The Innovation Council "Kaya Kalp," headed by the previous president of the Tata Group (today its Emeritus President), Ratan Naval Tata, is designed to suggest innovative methods and procedures that will improve the railroad network. Vinod Rai, who was Controller and General Auditor, is expected to join the Committee. The other Committee, headed by the former Secretary Ajay Shankar, is intended to renew the frame of the "public-private" society of Ministry, in order to encourage private investment.
 - On March 16, Prime Minister Modi met with Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. In the meeting, Lagarde praised the country's efforts to revive its economy and suggested that these efforts be deepened. At the same time Modi acknowledged her comments and emphasized the necessity for increased Indian representation at high levels of the IMF. Lagarde also met with Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley.
- On March 23, Prime Minister Modi received a visit from the first Cuban Vice President, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez Mario. During the meeting, Modi expressed his support for greater cooperation in the areas of commerce, investment, health, renewable energy, biotechnology, human development, etc., while accepting an invitation to visit that country at a time to be determined.

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Brief Notes

Nuclear Energy in the bilateral relations India-Argentina

(by Lía Rodríguez de la Vega)

Regarding nuclear energy, on one hand India maintains its commitment to disarmament, while on the other it has conducted nuclear tests that are beyond the scope of its sanctions. This has caused a shift in Indian relations with the United States, as well as an acknowledgement that India is becoming a nuclear nation. Because its population and economic growth have created a greater demand for energy, India embarked in a nuclear expansion program which at the moment extends to every inhabited continent, with many agreements already signed (France, Russia, Mongolia, Namibia, Argentina, United Kingdom, Canada, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Uzbekistan and Australia) and others in consideration.

Regarding the generation of electric power, India's nuclear capacity is presently 4,120 MWe, which constitutes 3% of the total electric production of the country. India foresees a production of 20,000 MWe by 2020, with a final goal of 450 GWe in 2050, at that point making up half of the country's required supply of electricity. To make this possible, special projects have been conceived, planning different reactors which are expected to be built within a ten-year period. In these projects, India encourages both public and private investment in its development of nuclear energy. The strategy that it is carrying out requires the provisions both of uranium and of nuclear technology, with the prospect of participating in the international nuclear trade in the long run (Mishra, 2010).

Regarding Latin America, the presence of nuclear energy is insignificant and, while there are 439 nuclear reactors in operation in the world, there are only three countries in the Latin America that have them (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico), while India owns 21 (IAEA, 2014). However, a report from the IAEA stated that various countries in the area, such as Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, requested its support to begin generating nuclear power. Up until the present, the nuclear plants in the three aforementioned countries own generate 6.2% of Argentina's, 2.8% of Brazil's and 4.6% of Mexico's electricity (Argüello, 2010, Honty, 2011).

Argentina and Brazil have been developing nuclear technology for many years, achieving a significant infrastructure that includes nuclear energy plants, key parts of the nuclear combustion cycle, and technology for advanced reactors. Both countries are signatories of the Tlatelco Treaty, members of the Group of Nuclear Supplier Countries, and adherents to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Armaments Treaty, although they refused to sign the Additional Protocol (Bompadre, 2000, Argüello, 2010, Honty 2011). Mexico headed the proscription of the use of nuclear armament in Latin America through the Tlatelolco Treaty and has adhered to the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Armaments Treaty, also signing its Additional Protocol (United Nations, 2009). It is part of the Group of Nuclear Supplier Countries (Nuclear Suppliers Group, s.f).

In Argentina, the nuclear sector is in the hands of the firm Nucleoelectrica Argentina S.A., created in 1994 (Decree No. 1540/94). Its plants are Atucha I (the first atomic plant in the country and in Latin America, launched in 1974), Embalse de Rio Tercero, and Atucha II. In 2006, the Strategic Plan for the Argentine Nuclear Sector was put into service, which confirms the decision to continue this last plant's project.

According to Argentina's developments in the nuclear sector, its clients include Algeria, Australia, Egypt and Peru (Argüello, 2010, Heonty, 2011). In 2009, on occasion of President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's visit to India, various agreements were signed, among them one on cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The President of the CNEA, Norma Boera, was present at this meeting. She had previously participated in the International Conference on Pacific Uses of Nuclear Energy, organized by India's Department of Atomic Energy and the IAEA for the purpose of advancing negotiations of the general

guidelines of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India. This agreement is the first that India has signed with a Latin American country and indicates a desire to cooperate in terms of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Areas in question include the research, development, design, production and supply of nuclear combustion for nuclear energy plants and reactors for investigation, industrial production of components, materials for nuclear reactors and their fuel, and the production and use of radioactive isotopes. Likewise, the agreement intends to train and develop a work force in the mentioned areas (CNEA, 2009, Chatterjee, 2009). In line with this, in June 2014 it was announced that an agreement would be signed in which Argentina agreed to build a plant that will produce radioisotopes to be used in nuclear medicine. Indian scientists would design and build a reactor for the state-owned Argentine firm INVAP to use in its radiochemical plant (El Espectador, 2014).

Mishra (2010) writes that, in terms of the cooperation agreements for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, India is developing, choosing its partners with the following considerations in mind: a) the amount of uranium reserves that the country has; b) the type of nuclear technology that that country has developed and will share with India; and c) the convenience and strength of the bilateral bond existing with that country. Regarding Argentina in particular, there are several things to note. Although Argentina has proven uranium deposits, it stopped production in 1990 and has depended on imports. The present administration is looking to be self-sufficient, and experts believe this could encourage public and private investment. The two best-known sources of uranium in Argentina are the Sierra Pintada in Mendoza and the Cerro Solo in Chubut. The agreement signed with India hopes to demonstrate the vast experience and technological development that Argentina has in these areas. As mentioned previously, this confidence led to the 2014 agreement concerning construction of a plant that produces isotopes for nuclear medicine. The agreement seems to reinforce the countries' bilateral bond and make new agreements possible.

It must also be remembered that Argentina has agreements with the United States and Russia (both of which also have high-level nuclear cooperation agreements with India), as well as with China and others. Moreover, it must be noted that India's largest energy import from Latin America is oil, provided mostly from Venezuela (followed by Mexico, Colombia and Brazil), due to the instability in the Middle East and the sanctions imposed on Iran. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Videsh, Indian Oil Corp, and Oil India purchased 40% of the Venezuelan oilfield Carabobo 1, while Reliance Industries Ltd extended its agreement with PDVSA, giving it the right to explore other reserves and consider constructing new oil ducts and refineries in the country. Also, Coal India Limited considered acquiring carbon mines in Colombia, where the oil company Assam already controls an exploration area in the eastern plains and is in talks to obtain more. In Brazil, Suzlon Energy Ltd, an Indian company specializing in wind power, began a project in the northeast of the country in 2006 (Tuchman & Dukkhipati, 2010, RT, 2013).

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