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Globalization and the Deepening Indian-U.S. Partnership in an Age of Entrenched Anti- Americanism

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One of the topics often debated in the larger context of globalization is whether or not globalization is fundamentally a neo-colonialist/neo-imperialist force (this view might be regarded as the Noam Chomsky school), or whether it is better represented as more of an open-access, competitive landscape on a truly global scale (this view might be regarded as the Thomas Friedman school). While Friedman may be credited with some accuracy in his popular depiction of various heretofore exploited or disempowered nations coming rapidly into the "rearview mirror" of American consciousness and commercial competitiveness, most notably in his recent study *The World Is Flat*, he gives too little credence to the potency of American efforts to shape the world in its own image. Even as he focuses in the opening pages of *The World Is Flat* on the CEO of Indian mega-accounting corporation MphasisS in Bangalore (actually, nearly all of Friedman's examples of globalization and India center on Bangalore), Friedman downplays or dismisses the continuing dominance of American ideology on the global stage. He also largely elides the American interests that drive the changes he characterizes as new market developments arising largely independently of American ties (aside from the obvious one of offshoring). Friedman, along with the vast numbers of globalization analysts, is right to focus on India with its economic opportunities centering on computing, telecommunications, offshored services, and broad manufacturing potential, but it is wise to not lose sight of the fact

that Post-Cold War opportunities for American corporate and political interests ultimately appear more domineering than the Friedman school of globalization seems willing to concede. To what extent, then, are the recent gains in India driven by U.S. interest; and, on the other hand, to what extent are they independent of U.S. direction?

Seen in the context of Vladimir Lenin's early twentieth century reflections on colonialism and dominance, the main thrust of our contemporary globalization can certainly be read as a logical next phase of imperialism, albeit with methods employed that are often less overt than Lenin would have recognized, more often open to ideological alliance and power-sharing, and having goals that often lie outside of directly appropriating place/space. In the case of India, resistance to American corporations, products, media, etc. is now steadily giving way to partnership. As the world's largest democracy, and now having an economy that is opening further to direct U.S. investment, corporate presence, and product representation, and as a nation strongly favorable to the U.S. hard line against terrorism and the spread of militant Islamism, India seems interested in aspiring to becoming what Ramachand Guha describes as a "United States of South Asia" (40). To isolate some of the keys to this rapidly emerging acquiescence to an Americanized model and a vision that encompasses anticipated fruits of an increasingly strong India-U.S. partnership (beneficial for both nations, though largely driven by the U.S. world view), it is essential to briefly consider some passages from Lenin regarding the future of global capitalism, a bit of recent history regarding the emergence of primary components of U.S.-driven globalization, and some of the evidence of India's initially reluctant but now much more rapid opening to American interests and involvement. Along with this, one cannot help but wonder what this emerging partnership entails or implies in an era of otherwise vehement anti-Americanism abroad.

The Marxist/Leninist vision has held that capitalism is bound to imperialism, as the increasing need for raw materials and for opening new markets necessitates a restless, expanding search for unexploited regions. The quest, inherent in the nature of capitalism, involves open competition for these regions and resources until such time as hosts of lesser competitors fall away in the capitalist "battle" and an eventual dominant force, a monopoly, emerges/triumphs. At some point, as Lenin argues in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, monopoly/imperialism and the saturation of markets defeats capitalism by exhausting free competition. As Lenin expresses it,

[Is it possible] that capitalism would have developed more rapidly if free competition had not been restricted by monopolies in general ...

or by the monopolist possession of colonies by certain countries? ... This "meaning" is meaningless. ... the more rapidly trade and capitalism develop, the greater is the concentration of production and capital which gives rise to monopoly. Monopolies have *already* arisen—precisely *out of* free competition! Even if monopolies have now begun to retard progress, it is not an argument in favor of free competition, which has become impossible after it has given rise to monopoly. (137)

However, aside from anti-trust measures being initiated during Lenin's era and the persisting sense that free market competition is akin to "natural law" (*Highest Stage* 17), Lenin's own Marxist sense of historical inevitability relies on the conviction that "free competition gives rise to the concentration of production" (18) and power, involving the appropriation/domination of all physical territories, writing as he was during the latter stages of the age of high imperialism. His historical extrapolation rests in the currency of his epoch: raw materials, industrial production, etc. Right at hand for Lenin, of course, is the premier example of Britain's imperial development and, especially, its principal focus on India as being at the heart of its global ambitions—first in competition for its territory and resources, then as its largely monopolist holding. While Lenin's projections regarding the exhaustion of capitalism may at some point be realized, the region or "territory" that he had not taken into account, a fertile and almost endlessly variegated region (which at our contemporary moment accounts for well over six billion discrete units), is the region of individual mind. The energy of competition ultimately concentrated on this realm does not necessarily aim at political submission (as in the British Raj) or at capturing a lengthening list of geopolitical entities, but centers more on the tastes/habits/appetites/consumer preferences of each individual across the globe. The capitalist-competitive landscape—even *IF* it were finally concentrated solely or almost solely in American interests—ultimately then "buys time" via its exponentially extended frontier of fertile global competition for what is now commonly referred to in advertising-speak as "mindshare" or, more to the point, "global mindshare." Each individual stands as a potential conquest. The concentrated power actually (potentially) deepens as the frontiers of globalization extend beyond national borders to the "borders" of personal, individual purchasing power and consumer preference across national borders.

The various facets of the broadly tossed about term "globalization" are, to clearly focus or limit this discussion, largely assumed within the primary forces of (1) democratization and (2) free market economics.¹ India is already established as the world's largest democracy, so U.S. pressure to democratize will not be essential to its designs within India,

but surely opening India's markets further to American corporate engagement is of immediate (and long term), vital interest. Certainly the United States has played the dominant role in encouraging and accelerating the global spread of the forces of democratization and free-market capitalism, and U.S.-based corporations have positioned themselves effectively as by far the most lucrative (though not the exclusive) beneficiaries of these changes. The opening of new economic frontiers (particularly in developing nations, most notably former colonies, now often referred to as "emerging markets") relies on media-based efforts to capture ever greater "mindshare" and develop more viable corporate roots across national boundaries. In effecting the essential adjustments to individual and/or cultural habits/tastes that will favor a product's or corporation's longevity, American corporate advertizing savvy has led and continues to lead the way.

However, one must ask in relation not only to India specifically, but also by extension to the larger global stage: when it is clear that globalization itself bears a distinctly American flavor, that is when it distinctly involves and conveys the spread of so much that is intrinsic to American material (and aesthetic and political) culture, what *happens* to the momentum of globalization when it runs up against a rising tide of international anti-Americanism, an anti-Americanism that is often reported as being at an "all time high"?

Rising anti-Americanism, especially since the assault on Iraq in 2003, is largely taken for granted, but it is intriguing (and extremely important) to note that anti-Americanism in India is far less pronounced than in nearly all locations abroad. In fact, as a Pew Research Center survey notes, "America's image has actually improved in recent years" ("India: Pro-America, Pro-Bush"). Their 2005 study (released in February 2006) found that approximately 71% of Indians have a favorable view of the United States; this is up from the summer of 2002, when 54% expressed support of President Bush and his policies—easily the highest mark of support among the sixteen nations surveyed ("India: Pro-America"). Indian support of or attraction to the United States begs the question of whether capturing corporate mindshare in India will be necessarily easier than elsewhere, and what the implications might then be for the advancement of globalization within a larger field of otherwise anti-American populations.

As Naomi Klein has succinctly outlined the fundamental process of capturing mindshare in her now standard anti-globalization work *No Logo*, the first great globalization maneuver made in the corporate sphere was the shift away from heavy overhead, labor, and production expenditures and toward an emphasis on establishing *image* or *brand* as the new frontier of capitalist success. The brand as a locus of meaning and value became in the 1980s the dominant key to a new form of

global expansionism: the brand embodies values, and to associate oneself with the brand, with the personal and/or cultural values of the brand, is to become a registered success story in the corporate competitive effort to appropriate mindshare. It also allows the corporation to expand its line of products and/or services into a variety of items or areas associated with the values of the brand. Klein offers as a prime example the Virgin brand of Richard Branson (24 ff), which began with a record label, then expanded to a music/media outlet, to a music festival in various countries (all branded Virgin Festival), to an airline, a railway line, a vacation organizer, privatized space flight (Virgin Galactic), telecommunications devices and gaming technology, health and beauty products, books and comics, and so on. Once the personal identification with what the brand represents occurs, and trust in the brand as a locus of values is in place, the sales follow. Market share inevitably follows mindshare.

The focus on capturing mindshare cannot be exaggerated. The shifts in expenditures from production to advertising and corporate sponsorship are staggering: the years from 1985 to 1997 saw a 700% increase in corporate sponsorship, and the Nike corporation increased its advertising expenditures during that same period from approximately 50 million dollars to more than 500 million dollars annually (Klein, table 2.2, p. 33 and table 1.2, p.19, respectively). The "triumph" of neo-liberal economic philosophy inherent in broad-based deregulation, coupled with the shift in emphasis to branding rather than domestic manufacturing (with the much lower cost for production being realized via offshoring), opened the new global emphasis on "markets" that we presently witness.

Despite protectionist interests in India to, for example, keep Wal-Mart at bay, the world's second largest corporation (behind only Exxon-Mobile) is ready to set up shop in the subcontinent. A 2005 article in India's *Financial Times* points out that Wal-Mart's eagerness to enter a highly fragmented market dominated by traditional "mom and pop" stores and stalls has helped to "galvanize a protectionist lobby, ostensibly on behalf of the 12 million shopkeepers who account for 97% of India's US \$205-billion retail sales" ("Wal-Mart Assault"). However, as the author notes, Wal-Mart's \$285 billion turnover annually is larger than all of these, combined. Wal-Mart itself points to its contributions to India's export economy, noting that it alone accounted for well over one billion dollars annually since 2004 via outsourced textile production, and the corporation has plans to increase its outsourced textile production in India to \$1.5 billion ("Wal-Mart Assault").

Washington lobbying efforts urging India to open its economy further to foreign direct investment (FDI) are supported by the roughly

six million Indians who travel overseas each year and are exposed to “modern retail” and “international shopping formats” (Ratore) and who are interested in seeing more efficient, calculable, predictable, controlled retail environments.² In fact, construction of 93 malls in 14 cities over the period 2005-07 have been planned for ... and Wal-Mart has, as of August 2006, been allowed to set up offices in New Delhi and Mumbai “to explore business opportunities in the country” (Ratore). Their purpose at this early stage is to “study and formulate market strategy, identify Indian partners to facilitate entry into India and uncover other investment opportunities” (Ratore). The Indian government allows foreign direct investment of up to 51% in single-brand retail ventures, but “it has been speculated that there will be a further relaxation of FDI norms which will enable entry of multi-brand retailers like Wal-Mart and Tesco to enter India” (Ratore). Wal-Mart has operated in China since 1996, may be largely credited as a principal force in helping to create the “Chinese economic miracle,” and certainly sees “India as a missing piece” in its growth-oriented global puzzle (“Wal-Mart Assault”). Its current strategy has been to form a joint venture with Bharti:

Bharti will handle the front-end of owning and running the stores, which are likely to be co-branded. The terms of the deal haven't been disclosed, but media reports put Wal-Mart's proposed investment in the venture at \$100 million initially, rising to \$450 million in a few years. (“Wal-Mart Enters India”)

This accelerating openness of India to American-driven globalization efforts, following some initial resistance,³ reflects a general softening of Indian attitudes toward the U.S. over the past two decades, in particular, resulting chiefly from the enormous economic gains realized primarily via the boom in the software industry, as well as the tremendous growth of outsourced services to India. U.S. battles against Islamism have also aided relations with India, but this ideological war has also, on the other hand, fed some of the longer-standing anti-Americanism in India, at least on the far left. For example, on one side there is the representative vitriolic anti-Americanism voiced by Arundhati Roy in any of her polemical publications following upon the success of *The God of Small Things* (1997), and encapsulated in one of the many statements she has published in the aftermath of 9/11:

What is Osama bin Laden? He's America's family secret. He is The American President's *Doppelgänger*....He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid waste by America's foreign policy; its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of

‘full-spectrum dominance,’ its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes, its merciless economic agenda that has munched through the economies of poor countries like a cloud of locusts. Its marauding multi-nationals who are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think. (113)

Roy's vociferous anti-Americanism, with its implicit fear of American corporate interests appropriating ever greater shares of Indian culture and economy, while internationally notable, is not (as mentioned above in relation to the Pew Research survey of Indian public opinion) representative of the majority Indian attitude toward the U.S. or current U.S. international policy. Her views are also notably countered by a voice as equally prominent as Ramachandra Guha's:

Within India, the austere socialism of Nehru's day has now been replaced by the swaggering buoyancy of consumer capitalism. In cultural terms, America, rather than Britain, has become the locus of Indian emulation. Politically, too, the countries are closer than ever before....The current admiration for the United States has all to do with power. Strategic thinkers in New Delhi have little time for America's experiments with transparency of governance; they ask only that it recognize India as the ‘natural’ leader of this part of the world—as, in fact, the United States of South Asia....At least in the short term, the prestige attached to the term ‘democracy’ in the post Cold War (and post September 11) world will make India even more insolent in its dealings with its neighbours. (40-41)

If Guha is correct about the fusion of American and Indian political and economic ideologies, then we can anticipate a more insistent, perhaps more “insolent” combination of U.S.-Indian efforts in Asia to further ensure the tandem globalization goals of democratization and free market capitalism in the wider region.

Perhaps the most gargantuan monument to or embodiment of this America-leaning shift in socio-economic attitude within India is the Mall of India, which is planned to be the largest mall in the world at 32 acres and 3.2 million square feet of floor space (exceeding even the famed Mall of America), scheduled to open in late 2007 in Gurgaon (which boasts a half dozen malls already), outside Delhi. Like other Gurgaon malls such as the popular City Centre Mall, it will be filled with many American products and U.S.-based retail outlets, and will provide parking for approximately 10,000 cars (“Mother of All Malls”). Similarly, if McDonald's—like Wal Mart and the grand-scale shopping mall—may be considered as much a concrete indicator as well as a metaphor of globalization, the continuing spread of the golden arches has not slowed in recent years. McDonald's operates in more than one

hundred countries on six continents, with a new restaurant opening every three hours—with two-thirds of those new franchises opening outside of the U.S. (“Fascinating McFacts”); there are at least eighteen McDonald’s in Mumbai alone (“Welcome to McDonald’s India”).

While the evidence of American-led efforts in exporting such enterprises is clear and abundant, along with the values that give rise to and support them, the pressing question remains: faced with almost institutionalized anti-Americanism abroad, particularly in the Middle East and central Asia, can the pace of globalization be sustained, particularly given the clear signs that India with its billion-plus population seems not only now a permeable, but even a willing “emerging market” and partner, as well as a standard-bearer for democracy in Asia? Is resistance to American business interests and American brands outside of India rising? And what would this suggest about the immediate and longer range future of American-fueled globalization? The material implications for India, as established here, are rich.

According to Interbrand’s “Best Global Brands 2006” (the international standard of brand value ranking, subsidized by *Business Week*), the top five global brands are all American (in order: Coca-Cola, Microsoft, IBM, GE, and Intel), as are seven of the top ten, and eleven of the leading fifteen (17 of the top 25; 52 of the leading 100). Some of these have seen some slight decline in profits over the preceding year (Intel, for example, saw a 9% decline), but most experienced modest growth (Disney, for example, at number 8 enjoyed a 5% increase, while McDonald’s at number 9 saw a 6% growth). Also, well over 70% of top-grossing films (world-wide) for the past decade are U.S.-made (but just imagine the possibilities of a closer alliance between Hollywood and Bollywood). Further, as mentioned previously, the world’s wealthiest corporations are also American, with Exxon-Mobil being first and Wal-Mart a close second (down from #1 the previous year).

In other words, there is virtually *no* evidence to suggest that expressions of anti-Americanism outside of India are manifesting themselves in any significant organized aggression (passive or active) versus American brands or corporate interests. Why is this? One reason is that some of the dominant brands or products (Coca-Cola, for example) have already become so ingrained in global culture that they are no longer perceived as American; another reason is that many American brands have been successfully imbued with qualities or values that remain attractive to overseas consumers. For example, Levi-Strauss CEO Philip Marineau, whose brand is no longer as successful at home as it had been over many years but is still highly sought after in a variety of overseas markets, says that “the core values

of Levi’s—democracy, freedom, independence—certainly are viewed as the best of America and its virtues” (Khermouch and Brady). Additionally, savvy marketers have made considerable efforts to adapt their brands to local culture. For example, McDonald’s sells *aloo tikka* in Bombay, *teriyaki* burgers in Tokyo, and *McArabia* flatbread in Amman. Many brands also contribute to local causes, such as Coca-Cola’s educational grants made through the Palestinian Authority (Khermouch and Brady). Efforts to integrate products or brands with local tastes and values tend to be appreciated by native populations, also, even if the effort itself is more than obvious (Monnier-McClure, et al.).

The U.S. and India both clearly stand to gain from global shifts toward democratization and the opening of markets—and there may be some evidence of the early stages of an international softening toward U.S. interests, at least in Europe, if the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as president of France is any indication—so the connection between international political policy and the goals of international business are of course solid and inextricable. Because of this, the effort to not only focus strategy on the international marketing of products and brands alone, but to *brand the nation itself* is institutionalized and regarded by U.S. leadership as central to the continuing success of globalization efforts in a largely anti-American world. The appointment of Karen Hughes as undersecretary of State to spread “a positive vision of America” in the Middle East (Ozernoy 32), following upon the earlier appointment and efforts of advertizing executive turned undersecretary of State Charlotte Beers, with her concerted PR efforts on behalf of the American image via the Shared Values Initiative,⁴ are pointed examples of the importance given to linking “brand America” to the larger goals of globalization. Again, Indian interests, becoming more closely identified with the broader goals of American-driven globalization, will play an increasingly important role in this effort throughout Asia, and to the extent that the effort succeeds India will hope to be co-beneficiary.

The links between advertising and politics (or advertising *as* politics and politics *as* advertising), between neo-liberalism and democratization, between attitudes and markets are now ideologically fused. The global push toward democratization and free markets, while primarily emanating from American sources, is gaining important, willing partners, most notably now India. The extent of the material successes realized will hinge at least in part on the successful branding of America itself—and ultimately, almost certainly, on the branding of the “free market democracy joint venture” of India and the U.S.—in the quest for further global mindshare.

This quest for the global dominance of an ideology and its promised material rewards is still not entirely a given, however, as the discussions of Amy Chua in *World on Fire* and Arjun Appadurai in *Fear of Small Numbers* (or Arundathi Roy or, for that matter, Noam Chomsky) make clear: the angry, dispossessed, exploited sectors of populations will not likely rest in their violent resistance to the progress of globalization, whether in India or elsewhere, and the range and future of their collective (if not well organized) impact remains a force to consider. However, for these resistant elements, the "enemy" is not always so tangible as it was during the age of high imperialism. Unlike the militant, direct appropriation of lands, peoples, and resources that Lenin had a century ago cited as his model of imperialist capitalism, the contemporary methods of capturing *mindshare* (followed by market share) are nonetheless as potent and persistent, and they point to similar ends.

Far from being a "flat world," the global landscape appears to be much more calculatedly manipulated by American interests, while a large number of "emerging markets" remains, many of them intensely anti-American in their politics. China, despite its own increasing international muscle, is still (because of its vast population and growing middle class) one such prized target-market, and India is certainly the other great global prize market. India stands ahead of China as a generally more willing partner, is opening more quickly to direct American interests, is emerging as a significant ally in the globalization enterprise (i.e., free market democracy), and may well emerge from its compliance with American-initiated globalization not at all as a "monopolist holding" (in Lenin's now archaic sense), but in the long run as a lucrative and influential partner and agent on the global stage.

Notes

1. See especially Amy Chua, *World on Fire*.
2. Efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control are the features of mechanization highlighted by George Ritzer in *The McDonaldization of Society*, which he links to the mass production theories and developments of Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford (31-5), and which he points to as the "blueprint" features underlying globalized export culture. In *Machines as the Measure of Men*, historian Michael Adas points similarly to eighteenth century French *philosophes* settling on "new attitudes toward time, work, and nature" (208) as central to the emerging Western sense of what it means to be "civilized," with tremendous implications for the ensuing "civilizing mission" involved in the Western imperialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

3. See also Geoffrey Kain, "From Gunboats to Transgenic Seed: The Western Quest for Tools of Enforced Global Dependency" for a detailed discussion of India's initially fierce resistance to admitting genetically modified cotton to its markets, followed by acceptance and proliferation of several varieties of GM cotton in India, nearly all engineered and marketed by U.S. corporations.

4. Secretary of State Colin Powell paved the way for the Shared Values Initiative and brought Charlotte Beers to Washington in order to develop the "Brand America" campaign. As he put it in March 2001, well before the assaults on New York and Washington, the State Department would be "bringing people into the public diplomacy function of the department who are going to change from just selling us in the old [US Information Agency] way to really branding foreign policy, branding the department, marketing the department, marketing American values to the world" (cited in Fullerton and Kendrick, 20).

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Alternate Visions of a Feminine Space in *Clear Light of Day* and *The God of Small Things*

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Clear Light of Day and *The God of Small Things* confront and explore the questions of feminine identity and space in postcolonial Indian society. Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy, however, differ significantly from each other in their approaches to the issue of feminine emancipation. The feminism of Desai's novel lies in the protagonist Bim's creation of her own identity and space within a patriarchal society, against its tyrannous demands of female subjugation, and not in any drastic challenge to the prevalent social structures. Roy, on the other hand, refuses to accept a social order that relegates women to a subaltern position. Unlike Bim, who is integrated into the patriarchal society on her own terms, Roy's Ammu asserts her feminine identity by transgressing the norms of a society that denies women a status equal to men.

The different approaches of the two authors articulate a premise that is central to discussions of gender identity in the Indian context. Those exploring the issue of women's emancipation in India often struggle with the question of how and by what means a woman in India, where patriarchal socio-cultural prescriptions and proscriptions have for centuries deprived her of agency, can transcend her subaltern status and viably register her voice. Discussing the suicide of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, Gayatri Spivak had declared that "the subaltern cannot speak."¹ Speech is symbolic of power in a patriarchal society, and, as Catherine Belsey observes in *Critical Practice*, "for women to speak is to threaten the system of differences which gives meaning to