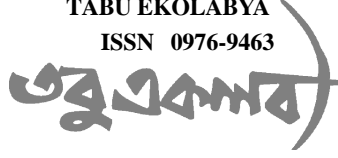




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ସମାଜ-ସଂସ୍କୃତି-ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଗବେଷଣାକେନ୍ଦ୍ର

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মধুসূদন সাহা ও সোমালি

চক্ৰৱৰ্তী

আহ্বায়ক

বিদিশা সিন্ধা, অঞ্জিতা

মুখাৰ্জী, ৰামকৃষ্ণ মণ্ডল

উপদেষ্টামণ্ডলী

পবিত্ৰ সরকার, বাসব চৌধুৰী, অপূৰ্ব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, সমীৰ
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চক্ৰৱৰ্তী, তপোধীৰ ভট্টাচাৰ্য, ৰবীন্দ্ৰনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়,
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শ্ৰুতিনাথ চক্ৰৱৰ্তী, বিশ্বজিৎ ঘোষ, শহীদ ইকবাল, দীপক
ৰায়, উদয়চাঁদ দাশ, সুখেন বিশ্বাস, শুবময় মণ্ডল

সম্পাদকমণ্ডলী

সুশীল সাহা, সোনালি মুখাৰ্জী, মুনমুন গজোপাধ্যায়,
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মণ্ডল, ৰাধেশ্যাম সাহা, সুব্ৰত ঘোষ, শকুন্তলা দাস, সুবীৰ
সেন, অনিমেঘ গোলদাৰ, প্ৰিয়ব্ৰত ঘোষাল, শুবঙ্কৰ
ৰায়, অৰ্ণব সাধুখাঁ, প্ৰসেনজিৎ বিশ্বাস

বিষয় বিশেষজ্ঞ অধ্যাপকমণ্ডলী

গোপা দত্ত ভৌমিক, অপৰ্ণা ৰায়, বেলা দাস, সনৎকুমার
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সুমনা দাস শূৰ, নন্দিনী ব্যানার্জী, সুজিতকুমার পাল

कार्यकारी कमीटी

पुष्पेन्दु मजुमदार, दिव्येन्दु पालधी, व्रतजि० नस्कर,
अस्मिता मित्र, दीपक कुमर घोष, अरुणोड
चक्रवर्ती, बाग्ला प्रामाणिक, ऐन्द्रीला चक्रवर्ती, सुदीप्टा
घोष, पियालि दाशगुप्त, मिलन सि०ह, मनसा
घाँटा, दीपु सरदार, सैकत माहात, अलोकदुति
नन्दी, सुस्मिता मण्डल, प्रियाञ्का मित्र

पत्रिका कमीटीर सम्मानीय सदस्यवृन्द

सोमदत्ता घोष, विप्लव साहा, सुशासुत मण्डल,
सुभाषचन्द्र दास, शम्पा सिन्हा वसु, सुव्रत
पुरकाहित, दीपञ्कर मण्डल, विपुलकुमार
मण्डल, सुव्रतकुमार मान्ना, बुम्पा दास, जय
दास, अर्पिता दास, सन्दीपकुमार राय,
मिहिरकुमार मण्डल, प्रसून माजी, गिरिधारी
मण्डल, तमसा दत्त, बोधिसद्वु भट्टाचार्य,
पायेल साहा, नवनीता वसु, सौरभ सामन्त,
मन्टु विश्वास, साविर मण्डल

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EDITOR'S NOTE

DR. RICHARD. BENKIN

The editors of *Tabu Ekalavya* have assembled an impressive group of scholars to analyze current and projected geo-political dynamics, centered primarily but not exclusively on India. India's new global role since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the most important developments in contemporary geopolitics but tends to be analyzed through ideological and political prisms. It's too important a subject for that, and this volume helps remedy that oversight.

Although I spend time all over India, because my major human rights issues are centered in Bengal, I know Northeast India best: West Bengal, in addition to the "Seven Sisters" that are covered in Dr. Debasish Nandy's article, "Development of North-East India through 'Act East Policy': An Enquiry for Policy Option." Those seven sister states are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. (I include West Bengal in my analyses because it is the gateway to the Seven Sisters, who otherwise would be non-contiguous with the rest of India. It also has more than double the population of all "sisters" combined and tends to reflect several hot button issues.) In part because of Communist governments that persisted in West Bengal until 2011 and in Tripura until 2013 (with breaks between Tripura regimes); development remained stagnant in these areas. In addition to massive corruption, ideologies both political and religio-political caused political and other leaders to put ideology above practical solutions to their myriad problems. As Dr. Nandy demonstrates, that is no longer the case. Despite the growth of a united India, northeast tribes have lagged behind others in developing an "Indian" identity. The Act East Policy gives tribal youth a stake in that non-tribal identity through employment that also furthers Indian economic interests farther east. This will become even more important if India addresses geopolitical conflicts in the region, especially with China.

In "China's Xinjiang Policy under Xi Jinping," Mahesh Ranjan Debata asks if Xinjiang is China's Achilles heel. In a detailed analysis, Debata

provides several bases for asking if the region could in the end be the undoing of the current path China wishes to take. Its area takes up one sixth of the entire nation, much of it unforgiving terrain, including desert. Xinjiang's population, however, is less than two percent. All of this makes the tightly controlled and highly rigid government that characterizes China since 1948 essentially impossible in the sprawling area; and thereby provides insurgents with countless places to hide and muster their resources. This is especially critical given China's extermination program against Uighur culture. Right now, countries that otherwise consider themselves part of the *Muslim Ummah* have not provided any effective push back against China's anti-Uighur policy. When I asked leaders in one Muslim country how they could cozy up with China given the ferocity of anti-Islam persecution that is directed through the Politburo, they dismissed any concern. If that changes, however, and the Muslim world unites to stop Chinese ethnic cleansing of Uighur Muslims, it will destroy the *realpolitik* that China counts on and make Xinjiang, truly China's Achilles heel.

The global COVID-19 pandemic is re-shaping our economies. To slow contagion, U.S. states and localities have had to transition from in-person education to virtual classrooms; and it became clear very early that this affected people differently based on their economic circumstances. Children from poorer homes often did not have internet access, while access was near universal in middle and upper middle class homes. That meant that unless the issue was addressed, this "new normal" would only deepen the gap between rich and poor in America. It also would suggest that being poor was the basis for denying a child a decent education; but of course, it was addressed. Through combined action by localities, internet service providers, and other private companies, all children who needed it were provided with internet access that enabled them to continue their studies during the pandemic. In today's world, internet access is one of the key fulcrums for equalizing people because it gives everyone access to the same information. That is the crux of Dr. Pavitra Bhardwaj's article, "Digitalisation for Building Rural Entrepreneurship: A Case study of India." Dr. Bhardwaj's piece demonstrates how countries can raise the rural poor, and at the same time, reduce the public dole and increase overall productivity.

Mahatma Gandhi began his freedom fight in South Africa, like India then a British colony. From that point forward, the two countries have had a long history of relations. During the years when the world saw Apartheid for the evil it was, that relationship strained. In "Post-Apartheid India-South Africa Relations: Strategic and Economic Cooperation," Dr. Rajesh Kumar looks at how the two countries began finding new common ground since Apartheid's abolition and the country's transformation to majority rule. The two nations

have cooperated in economic, security, and cultural areas; and in 2019, they celebrated “twenty years of strategic partnership.”

For years, I have been urging my own United States to recognize that our future lies not with Europe and the West, but with Asia and the East. It's only in recent years that US policy has questioned the action of our “traditional allies,” and often relegated them to a secondary position at best. Joyprokash Mondal's “India's Foreign Policy: an Expedition from Look East to Act East” traces that development for India, including infrastructure linkage between India and Southeast Asia. Especially as a resource for that infrastructure development, India gives Asian nations an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative without China's predatory lending practices.

Parthasarathi Banerjee's “Indo-Afghan Relations: A Study of Historical Perspective” traces the long and deep historical connections between India and Afghanistan. With the United States largely leaving the region, and with Pakistan tied to China through Belt & Road, it will be critical for India to utilize those historical connections to maintain a firewall against Chinese expansion in the region and to provide its people with an alternative to the autocracy of the People's Republic of China.

In “Globalization of Media and its implications for the Indian Foreign Policy,” R. Radhakrishnan reviews the intersection between media and propaganda and between media and their ownership by large corporate entities. I would add the blurring of lines, once clear, between news and entertainment, as well. What does this mean for a “multi-polar” world, as compared to the bi-polar context of the Cold War era? As is the case in many studies of this volume, India's challenge is to walk the fine lines that define our contemporary world's fault lines. It also might require a new look at what is and is not journalistic integrity and objective reporting.

“Contemporary Intolerance in South Asia: In Search of the Relevance of Swami Vivekananda,” by Kaushik Chakraborty resonates strongly with me because it tries to find root causes for the sort of religious intolerance I have been fighting in Bangladesh for almost two decades. His concept of Majoritarianism is a prime factor in the social ethic that has identified Bangladesh's Hindus as related to “enemy” India, even according to many in Bangladesh, incompatible as they practice a faith different from Bangladesh's official state religion, and which gives ideological support to their decades-long victimization.

Bimalendu Ghosh tackles a major problem in “The Status of Central Asian Women: A Study from the Socio-economic perspective.” After decades of state-mandated gender equality—that failed to go beyond the most superficial forms—and more than a quarter century since those Republics were liberated from Soviet control, women's status remains problematic. This is due in part

to the USSR's willingness to compromise what it claimed were essential principles and remain focused on form without helping to effect real change. It left that unfinished legacy for the Central Asian Republics to figure out as they simultaneously sought to balance the multiple dynamics battling for their hearts and minds.

Renu Mann writes "Russia-European Union Relations: Nord Stream 2" with a background mistrust between Russia and the West and wonders if economic interests, as manifested by Nord Stream 2 pipeline will create shared interests that overcome other relationships. As a westerner, I can attest to the hope of a world without the East-West divide of the Cold War; and it seems that whenever things are about to improve, events such as the murder of Russian dissidents in Europe reinforces the multi-faceted nature of the divide.

In another article about South Asia, "India's Central Asia Policy: Revisiting Economic, Political and Security Cooperation," Dr. Pravesh Kumar Gupta poses critical question that should inform how India engages with that region: What are India's strategic interests in Central Asia? How consistent high-level bilateral visits have helped in elevating India-Central Asia ties? How India's military cooperation with all the Central Asian republics addresses its security concern in the region? What has India achieved from SCO so far, and what are the prospects for the further association? What are the issues related to the bilateral trade between India and Central Asia? What are the prospects for the growth of bilateral trade between the two regions? Could South Asia become a center of Indian influence and interest as an alternative to traditional domination by Russia and current Chinese outreach there; both of which have had deleterious effects for the people of that area?

Debtanu Majee has tackled the gulf that separates the words of Bangladesh's constitution from the reality for Hindus and other religious minorities in "The Minority Communities in Bangladesh: Focus on Human Security." Bangladesh tends to be overlooked by other countries, especially compared with nuclear-armed India and Pakistan. This has allowed Bangladesh to perpetrate daily and brutal repression of Hindus and other minorities—religious, ethnic, and political—while its officials get away with calling Bangladesh a democracy and "land of communal harmony." Nothing could be further from the truth. Scholars like Mr. Majee expose this misconception encourage action to force Bangladesh to cease its repressive activities.

India has a long history of providing aid to its island neighbor, The Maldives. That does not mean, however, that India's largesse is mere charity to a weak sister. In "Neighbourhood first policy': Analyzing India-Maldives Relations, Alik Naha talks about the critical, strategic importance of the island

nation and of China's growing influence there. India must continue supporting The Maldives or face what many fear will be "Chinese encirclement."

Few westerners recognize how the legacy of colonialism has left significant land disputes among Asian nations: Indian Arunachal Pradesh, occupied by China; the Durand and Goldsmith lines that ripped apart Pashtun and Baloch homelands; and as Dr. Asis Mistry notes, "Indo-Nepal Border Dispute over Kalapani: A two-level game." When Britain, France, and a few other European nations divided up the world under their rule, the territorial inequities were enforced by their global power; that has not been the case for a long time, and the lingering disputes have serious geopolitical implications, not only for giants India and China; also for the nations sandwiched between them like Nepal.

DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH-EAST INDIA
THROUGH 'ACT EAST POLICY': AN EN-
QUIRY FOR POLICY OPTION

DR. DEBASISH NANDY

Abstract

As per India's 'Act East Policy' the Northeast Indian region has given utmost priority in making strong connectivity with Southeast Asian countries through Myanmar, which can enhance connectivity, transport system, business, investment, tourism, people to people contact, etc. Through engaging, youth tribal in activities social and political unrest can be stopped. 'Act East Policy' can take a significant role in this regard. I would use two research methodologies in this paper— (1) Content analysis method and (2) Observation method. The basic objectives of this paper are to explore an alternative avenue of employment for Northeast Indian tribal youths through 'India's Act East Policy'.

Keywords : Tribal, youth, unemployment, Act East, development, investment.

Introduction

India's northeast region has been considering as the pivot of India's Act East policy. This region claims uniqueness due to its ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and bio-diversity. This region comprises seven states which are known as 'seven sisters'. This region is geographically important for sharing a border with neighboring Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, and Myanmar. North East India occupies an area of 255,000 sq. km. This region is considered one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world, is a land inhabited by more than 145 tribal communities of which 78 are large. There is discontent among the tribal people due to underdevelopment and identity crisis. Several secessionist groups have formed in this region over the years based on regionalism. The rural-based economy is unable to create jobs for the educated tribal youths. The government of India has taken some constitutional

measures and developmental projects for uplifting the tribal youth. Those attempts are not enough for the requested desire. The physical and educational qualification of north-east Indian youth tribes can be used properly through making a connectivity with south-east Asian countries. Ethnically, religiously, culturally, and ritually there are commonalities between north-east Indian tribes and south-east Asian people.

The basic aims of the 'Mekong Ganga Cooperation' are to escalate India's multi-dimensional linkages through the North-east. The tribal youth can get more jobs through these projects. Guwahati airport is an international airport. It operates direct flights to several destinations in Southeast Asian countries. Agartala airport is to be developed into international to make connectivity and pull investment of South-east Asia. More new flights are to be introduced shortly for making further connectivity. There is a very good demand for the labour force in South-east Asian countries. The English knowing educated tribal youths of Northeast India have a very good opportunity to be absorbed in job sectors in South-east Asian states. In, agriculture, food processing, tourism, infrastructure, education, and medical science investment can be done by the government of India and as well as Southeast Asian countries. Mizoram has been positioned as the epicenter of the union government's Act East Policy, which aims to harness shared cultural and border ties shared between India's northeast and south-east Asian countries, such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, and other ASEAN nations, some of which are the world's fastest-growing economies., especially, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. Manipur is strategically located in India's northeast. In line with the strategy for achieving inclusive growth, the Bank intends to focus on improving agricultural productivity, natural resources management, and rural livelihoods as well as keeping account of the region's socio-economic culture.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the different factors involved in the development of socio-economic infrastructures.
2. To evaluate the impacts of Act East Policy towards North-East India.
3. To offer some constructive suggestions from the study.

Methodology and Sources of Data

I have used the content analysis method and observation method in this research. The whole study was strictly depending only on the secondary data collected from different sources like magazines, journals, and government annual reports.

Major Challenges of North-East India

In north-east India, the majority of the people live in rural areas where agriculture is their main source of employment and livelihood. However, agriculture is highly dependent upon monsoon and most areas are not irrigated. This region is not able to meet the local demand for food grains. Similarly, manufacturing activities are also almost negligible (Singh, 2019). The major challenges of north-east India are as follows—

- The industrialization process has not yet been progressed due to communication and transport problems, shortage of raw materials, less interest in investitures, and a small market. Manufacturing activities are negligible due to the lack of industrialization. The tertiary sector, which has grown slightly is mainly due to the expansion of public administration with the state governments being the main employers.
- The generation of electricity is negligible in this region.
- Due to the economic changes and underdevelopment issues along with identity issues several insurgencies and secessionist movements took place in north-east India after independence. The regional sentiment led the regionalism and resulted in various rebel groups in north-east India. Most of the rebel groups are led by tribal youths on the question of identity and economic deprivation.
- Most of the states have high literacy rates and low infant mortality rates. Despite these good indicators the hush reality is high literacy creates high unemployment. There are no significant scopes of jobs for educated tribal people in north-east India.
- The region is rich in terms of natural resources but still lags behind the other parts of India due to its remote location.
- Another problem of this region is the tribal people have not been able to accustom to mainstream culture flow; that is why they feel alienated and demand self-determination.
- The sentiment of 'son of the soil' is very much active in the mind of tribal people. Educated tribal youths are very frustrated with the existing system. Cultural distinctiveness is one of the major concerns of north-east Indian challenges. The conflict in north-east India has created a politically volatile situation and unstable economic condition (Singh, 2019).
- China and Myanmar political propagation toward the north-eastern region on the other hand make major realization in Indian economic policy.

Trafficking, Drugs and Arms Trade in North-east

North East India has been one of the transit points of illegal drugs and unauthentic arms. Tribal youths have been attached to illegal drug trafficking and arms trade. Acute poverty, unemployment, and identity crises collectively pushed them to be attached to the drug mafias. Look East Policy or Act East Policy is suggested as an alternative to creating jobs and businesses in north-east India through increasing connectivity with Myanmar and Thailand accessing the open border. At the same time, Act East Policy is very sensitive for North-East in enhancing connectivity. India is linked by two of the world's three largest narcotics producing-exporting countries namely Thailand, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. This is known as the 'golden triangle'. Through the Myanmar border, illegal drug trafficking is going on in north-east India. The tendency of drug addiction among the youths of north-east India is very high. India's porous border security and existing intelligence are to be changed to prevent drug trafficking.

India's Act East Policy

After the end of the Cold War, India started to emphasize making a comprehensive relationship with south-east and Far east Asian states through 'Look East Policy'. This policy was introduced by Prime Minister Narashima Rao. To promote economic, scientific, strategic, and cultural relations with Indo-Pacific Region India introduced the 'Look East Policy'. By this policy, bilateral and multilateral engagements are established through several forums like ASEAN, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, BIMSTEC, IOR, etc. In 2014, 'Look East Policy' has been re-named as 'Act East Policy' which emphasizes the North-Eastern region as pivotal. The Act East policy gives importance to India's north-eastern region for its geographical location and potentiality. The North-Eastern region is to be well connected with south east Asia through a network of pipelines, roads, and rail and air connectivity.

This region constitutes a 3.8 % population of India having diverse tribal groups. The underdevelopment and unemployment have jointly made this region a backward region. The government of India has emphasized this region in implementing its 'Act East'. In July 2008, Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister of India released the "North Eastern Region Vision 2020" which identified various challenges and strategies for the development of north-east India by 2020. To make the vision a successful north-east region is to be incorporated as the pivotal. The vision 2020 is based on some objectives—(1) Empowerment of people, (2) Creation of development opportunities, (3) Capacity development of the people and institutions, (4) Creating a hospitable investment climate, (5) Significant investment in both public and private sectors, (6) India's 'Act East Policy' trajectory towards north-east region is shifted (Brahma, 2018).

Three Dimensional Engagement with South-East Asia through North-East

‘Three C’ (culture, connectivity, and commerce) can promote India’s relationship with South-East Asia through its north-eastern region. (1) **Culture** is the most effective tool for connecting one country. The socio-cultural linkages between India and South-East Asia. Geographically, India cannot be part of South-East Asia but, culturally and religiously it is very much connected. Buddhism and Ramayana connect us with the region. Indonesia, which is the biggest Muslim nation in terms of population, has the most famous Ramayana. The southeast Asian countries have so much in common with the north-eastern part of India. (2) **Connectivity** is the pre-condition of strengthening bilateral or multilateral relations. Strengthening Connectivity, including land, air, and sea connectivity, with ASEAN is one of the objectives of India and ASEAN member states. Regular exchanges take place between ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and India on Connectivity. Through ‘Act East’ policy the people of the ‘seven sisters’ can be immensely benefited due to sharing international border Connectivity is to be enhanced through enhancing people to people contacts, trade, tourism, exchange of pilgrims, and culture. The socio-cultural and ethnoreligious affinity between the north-eastern region and the south-east Asian States can play the role of catalyst in this regard. India has started a survey about the feasibility of the establishment of rail connectivity with the south-east Asian region and also trying to establish the missing link between Jiribam in Manipur and Mandalay in Myanmar (Sikri, 2009: 116-117). A Delhi –Hanoi rail project is in consideration, which will pass through Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia. Once it materialized so many avenues will be opened up for north-eastern Tribal youths. The Kaladan multi-modal project will also provide access to the Sittwe seaport of Myanmar and make trade with Malaysia easy. The Mongla and Chittagong ports in Bangladesh will allow the north-east to access the south-east Asian market (The Telegraph, 2019).

(3) **Commerce** is the key instrument to establish regional cooperation. India’s growing synergies with the south-east Asian countries can be more effective by enhancing commercial relations. ASEAN, BIMSTEC, BCIM-EC (Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar-Economic Corridor) are very important for commercial linkages. If commercial linkages work properly, then trade and investment will be automatically increased in north-east India through which employability can be hiked. India’s growing trade and business with ASEAN countries make an opportunity to set up a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with the rest of East Asian and Oceanic countries to counter China’s ‘One Belt One Road Initiative’.

Justification of Implementing ‘Act East Policy’ for Employability of Tribal Youths

Northeast India represents a genetic continuity between the populations of South and Southeast Asia, thereby advocating that northeast India could have been a major corridor for the movement of populations from India to East and Southeast Asia (Reddy, et al,2007). North-eastern India as a region is landlocked, sharing most of its boundary with neighboring countries of South and Southeast Asia. The development of North-East India can be done through multilateral forums like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM), and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) – that could potentially strengthen the cooperation between Northeast India and neighboring regions in the social, cultural and economic spheres (Sarma and Chowdhury,2018).

- If South-east Asian countries start to invest in North-east and Northeastern youths use to go to the Southeastern states, then development can happen through remittance. At the same time approach of tribal youths towards the central government be changed. There is no doubt most of the discontent and dissatisfaction generate from economic deprivation.
- The growing discontent and grievances among the unemployed tribal youths can be reduced through developmental projects.
- Inward outward trade and business can be enhanced by the successful implementation of the ‘Act East Policy. The local business and products run by tribal people can be connected with South-East Asian countries. As this region is industrially backward and local investors are not playing a significant role, that is why pulling of FDI from the Far East and South-East Asian states are essentially required. The government of India is trying to make more connectivity with this region for more investment.
- Since independence, several regional and separatist movements are going on the ground of economic deprivation in the North-Eastern region. These movements can be stopped for glaring economic development and adoption of ‘inclusive policy.’ ‘Act East’ is a tool for economic development.
- Due to socio-cultural and ethno-religious affinity between Northeastern people and South-East Asian people common bonding will be created automatically.
- The natural beauty and bio-diversity of North-East India have been a very attractive zone for Japanese, Korean, Malaysian, and

Singaporean tourists. Tourism and 'soft power' can be utilized in the development of the North-Eastern region.

- Some South-east Asian countries have already invested in the Northeastern region. Through investment, infrastructure, tourism, and border trade are yet to gain momentum. Through tourism, medical tourism, food processing, medium scale industries can enhance the scope of jobs for tribal youths.

Development of North-east through 'Act East' Policy

During the first few months of his regime, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj have visited countries like Myanmar, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam, Fiji and for signaling a more proactive action-oriented policy towards the South-East for pulling investment and increase trade (Abhinandan, 2015:64). Through the pronouncement of Act East policy, the Modi government decided to focus more on improving its relation with ASEAN and the East Asian countries especially, Japan and South Korea. Both Look East and Act East policies have had military, political, and economic components. Northeast region is instrumental for looking toward the east of India because the regions became a frontier for eastward thrust. As a result, there has been an emphasis on developing the infrastructure of the region by widening the roads, expanding air connectivity, extending railway networks, opening new and reactivating dormant trade routes, as well as facilitating border trade and a couple of transit points. The strategy set up by the Indian government which promised to usher prosperity to Northeast India through positive neighborly relations has yet to see the fruits, and thus needs a review. The policy has hardly made any fruitful impact on the region's development through economic and trade revival(Chiru,2017:16085).

Some economists opined that by promoting trade between India and Myanmar the development of the North-Eastern region can be ensured. This process can be succeeding by introducing liberal trade and business policy, easy banking, and insurance services, developing transport, and communication system. Border trade can also create external economies that could be reaped by the state. Improvement in the physical connectivity between the Northeast and Myanmar is a must for better realization of India's Look East Policy. Easy accessibility to this country shall immensely benefit the Indian unemployed youths especially in the educational industry that may pave the way as the flagship of the Indian business community in ASEAN through Myanmar (Chiru, 2017:16087). The 'Act East Policy' along with several initiatives launched by New Delhi for the rapid economic development of the country. Through 'Act East Policy' India is enhancing its trade with

ASEAN countries and creating an opportunity for the North-Eastern region (Brahma, 2018).

Indo-Myanmar Connectivity and Border Trade in Employing Tribal Youths

The success of India's 'Act East Policy' is immensely dependent upon establishing good connectivity with Myanmar and fostering trade. Myanmar is the threshold for India in connecting to South-East Asia by road. As Myanmar shares a common border with North-East India and land-trade is permissible that is why India should emphasize Myanmar. Apart from the trade and services tourism and farming sector can be developed in collaboration with Myanmar. The North-East Indian unemployed tribal youths can be engaged in border trade, tourism, farming as well as Adjoining border-side poor youths of Myanmar can be benefited which can help eliminate crimes and militancy. The trade between the countries could not reach the minimum point of expectation despite having huge potentiality. The manpower of North-East can be diversified in many sectors in India's projected 'Act East Policy'. There are some obstacles to India-Myanmar in India-Myanmar border trade, which are as follows—

1. Poor connectivity between India and Myanmar made constraints on India-Myanmar trade and investment. In 2001, India- Myanmar Friendship Road was built by Indian financial assistance known as Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa or TKK. The proposed trilateral highway between India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) had been planned to build in 2002. By this road, Imphal will be connected with Bangkok via Mandalay of Myanmar. Myanmar could not able to develop its roads and bridges. Chinese influence is also responsible for lingering this project. Both countries have decided to introduce a bus service between Moreh-Tamu, and Zokhawthar-Rhi. But, check posts and other infrastructures at the border are not at par with international standards. Apart from this, the visa problem is also another issue. (Taneja, Nisha, Naing, Tin Htoo, Joshi, Sanjana, Bharat Singh, Thiyam, Bimal, Samridhi, Garg, Sakshi, Roy, Riya and Sharma, Manali, 2019).
2. Non-Tariff Barriers between India and Myanmar is another problem.
3. Limited trade financing instruments are highly responsible for unimpressive bilateral trade.
4. Due to the informal payment system, bilateral trade could not be reached at the expected level. The practice of making informal payments to personnel from various government departments and agencies is widely prevalent on both sides of the border.

East Asian and South-East Asian Investment in North-East India

Rajib Sikri Said—

an important domestic dimension emerged in India's 'Look East Policy', namely how to help the Northeast Region get over the handicap of its geographical location. India's strategy envisages the development of the Northeast Region's communication and economic links with Myanmar and other Southeast Asian economic links with Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries, thereby reducing Region's overwhelming dependence on an unhelpful and uncooperative Bangladesh (Sikri, 2009: 114-115).

Rajib's statement is partly true and partly wrong considering the recent situation. The role of Bangladesh is not non-cooperative. During Sheikh Hasina's regime, Bangladesh helped India in many ways, especially, handing over the North-Eastern militants. The Chittagong port is a deep-seaport with huge capacity goods caring facility. Through Agartala land border Indian goods can be reached to Chittagong port for exporting to South-East Asian countries. Agro-based products like vegetables, bamboo, timber, fruits, processed foods, rubber, and handlooms products made by the Tribal people can be exported to Indo-Pacific countries.

The important trade routes between North-East India and Bangladesh include (1) Goalpara-Mancachar-Bengunbari-Dhaka, (2) Karimganj-Sutarkandi-Sylhet, (3) Karimganj-Silua-Sylhet, (4) Mahendraganj-Sherpur-Kamalpur-Dhaka, (5) Ghasuapara-Koraitalai-Hahiaghat, (6) Ghasuapara-Gobragona, (7) Ranikor-Borsora-Cherragaon-Sherpur, (8) Shellabazar-Chatak-Sylhet, (9) Lunglei-Demagiri-The kaduar-Rangamatti Kaptai-Dam- Chittagong, (10) Aizawl- Marpara-Mamit-Rangamati Chittagong, (11) Dhalai ghat Halhall-Kamalpur-Kamalgarj-Maulvi bazaar, (12) Manu-Kailashar-Kumargaht- Shamsheernagar-Maulvi bazaar, (13) Agartala-Akhoura-Comilla-Narayanganj-Dacca, and (14) Udaipur-Sremantapur- Comilla. The Trans-Asian Railways (TAR) would connect India with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China through North East India. TAR would pass through Mandalay-Imphal-Jiribam-Silchar-Agartala-Dhaka (Banerjee,2017). This can create an explant opportunity for North-East India. Through these routes, Indian can export and import with Bangladesh and also with the South-east Asian region. Bangladesh has some big business houses and companies that have keen interests to invest in northeast India.

India is trying to pull the FDI from Far East Asian countries like Japan and South Korea also negotiating with Some South-East Asian countries to pull capital. India's 'Act East Policy' and universally-agreed principles of international law and market economy. Meghalaya government is trying to make a cooperate with the Republic of Korea in the fields of mines and restoration of forest, environment, and water bodies affected by coal mining.

The Korea Trade Promotion-Investment Agency in India is exploring the possibilities of economic cooperation and bilateral trade and investments in the state. The Garo, Khasi and Jaintia tribal youths of Meghalaya might be benefited from these futuristic projects. In September 2017, the Government of Singapore has set-up a Skill Centre at Guwahati which will cater to the entire North-Eastern region. This initiative was started by the Minister of Development of the North Eastern Region in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office. The Singapore government has shown its interests to invest in North-East India in Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy, and Space Department of Space (<https://www.connectedtoindia.com/after-japan-singapore>).

Malaysia has been a potential investor for the North-Eastern region. Northeast India can be the "food basket for Malaysia" as it imports varieties of food items from the region. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Malaysia India Business Council (MIBC) was signed at Guwahati on 11th November 2019 in presence of the Malaysian Consular General. Both sides have agreed to explore further prosperity of trade and business, industrialization, education, tourism, education, etc. Through operating, regular flights between Guwahati and Kuala Lumpur will not only increase bilateral trade and investment but will also foster the people to people contacts through cultural engagements. The tribal youths of North-East have indignity and potentiality by enhancing connectivity new business can be started by these youths with Malaysia.

Both sides agreed to arrange regular seminars, conferences, symposiums, exhibitions, and technical fairs to explore new avenues in bilateral relations with engaging the unemployed youths.

ODA loan is supporting Phase I of the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project with a special focus on National Highways 51 and 54 in Meghalaya and Mizoram (CA, 2019, 31-35). Developing inter-connectivity and infrastructure Indo-Japan projects are going to be introduced shortly in North-East India. In a report, published in *Economic Times* on June 12, 2019, it has been mentioned that Japan going to invest a handsome amount in the North-East region. The Japanese government has shown its interest to invest INR 13,000 in various projects in North-east India. Japan also agreed to collaborate in the Guwahati water supply project and also promised to assist in the sewage project in Assam. Looking at North-Eastern bio-diversity and ecological system. Japan will invest in some important projects. Some projects are collaborative. Japan will collaborate in some important projects of North-East India, such as the Guwahati Water Supply Project and Guwahati Sewage Project in Assam, North-east Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project spread over Assam and Meghalaya,

Northeast Network Connectivity Improvement Project in Meghalaya, Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Forest Management Project in Tripura, Technical Cooperation Project for Sustainable Agriculture & Irrigation in Mizoram (Singh, 2019). These Japanese projects have created hope in increasing the employability of regional youths.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed an agreement with the Government of India to provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan amounting to 38,666 million Japanese Yen (JICA,2018). There are other priority sectors which are: (1) skill and vocational initiatives, including knowledge of the Japanese language for caregivers in the North East who are bound for Japan for further training, and (2) Secondly, this example of cooperation between India and Japan comes in direct response to China's increasing focus on connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In terms of area coverage though, Japan has excluded Arunachal Pradesh from its purview because of China's insistence about it being a disputed area (Bhatia, 2019).

The Japanese government as well as other Japanese organizations are not only collaborating with Indian governmental projects but also doing some grassroots projects with some local NGOs of North-East India. In June 2019, Japan decided to invest a sum of 205.784 billion Yen (\$1.8 billion) on new development projects in different parts of the North-East (Bhatia, 2019).

Apart from Development, soft power is being increasingly deployed to coop-up the youths and other segments of communities in building the bridges of friendship. Japanese tourists are coming to the North East for its natural beauties and also for religious roots. Buddhist sites are being given priority by the Japanese. Meghalaya can be a catalyst to enhance cultural linkages between north-east India and Japan. By pulling Japanese tourists, pilgrims, and nature lovers Tribal youths can earn money by arranging home-stay facilities and small resorts with the help of local administration. Energy security has emerged as an important component of India's foreign policy towards South-East Asia, as energy-deficient India is seeking energy sources globally to fulfill its requirement. India is exploring the option of importing Burmese natural gas via a pipeline through Bangladesh into India. However, for political and financial reasons the project is still under negotiations (Lall, 2006: 424-46). Myanmar has a huge potentiality of hydro-electric power sources. India can import electricity from Myanmar for North-Eastern power-shortage states that can boost-up the process of industrialization. India has also become an investor in Vietnam's offshore gas fields(Yahya,2003:92).

Steps Taken for the North-East

Some steps and projects have been taken for the North-east Indian development through which tribal youths can be benefited—

- The central government and provincial governments have undertaken different developmental activities. To enhance connectivity, some projects have been taken such as Kaladan Multi-Model Transit Transport Project, Rih Tedisu Road Project, India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway, Trans Asian Highway. The central government of India has taken a policy on the development of national highways in north-east India. Some projects have been taken to enhance air and rail connectivity. India already concluded few agreements on land and border crossing and road /land-based transportation with adjacent countries such as Dhaka-Agartala –Guwahati-Shilong.
- To increase cross-border trade including the opening of border hats. The government of India has decided to open land customs stations for free movement of goods. To ensure the smooth functioning of import and export, the government of India constructed check-posts at various places such as Moreh (Manipur).
- To develop of border town government of India has planned to establish some towns such as Moreh in Manipur through which direct and indirect employment and business and trade can be facilitated for tribal youths.
- One of the important aspects of ‘Act East Policy’ is connectivity through trade, business, culture, tourism, academic events, and enhancement of people to people contacts. The government of India has organized trade and industrial fairs, business shows, cultural programs, seminars, and conferences to spread more awareness among the tribal youths.
- The Trilateral Highway will connect India to the Asian Highway Network. Through this project, trade between India and ASEAN will receive a further boost.
- In recent decades Thailand is markedly seen to be making attempts towards becoming a modern democracy away from military rule by emphasizing democratization and popular participation in the development process. Road connectivity as the part of the ‘Mekong-Ganga Cooperation’ project government of India can ensure a long-term sustainable economic development for the north-east Indian tribes.

Conclusion

Many insurgents in north-eastern India such as Naga rebel groups use sanctuaries in the Northern parts of Burma, which are outside of the writ of Burmese state, to launch attacks on Indian military and parliamentary forces operating in India’s North-East (Pardesi, 2011:122). The recognition

of India's Northeast region is India's prominent geo-strategy which is placed at the heart of India's eastward engagement (Lama, 2019: 196). The strategy of the government of India to engage the rebels in developmental activities with their capital or FDI. To counter Chinese influence on North-Eastern insurgent groups India is taking counter strategy through building infrastructure in this landlocked region. North-eastern tribal youths can be employed through making a connectivity with South-east Asian nations. Investment can be pulled-down through which educated youths can be absorbed. The government of India has started initiatives to make more air connectivity with South-east Asian countries to foster economic development. The government of India wants to develop Guwahati as a major trading hub with South East Asia. It is also planned that too boost the frequency of daily flights to and from Guwahati to the South East Asian cities. To make the Act East Policy a reality NEC based study groups visualized for expansion of air services as mentioned below for easy travel between the NE region and some of the South and South-east Asian countries.

Policy Recommendations

Some policies can be recommended to the government of India to engage the North-east Indian tribal youths through 'Act East Policy' which are as follows—

The Act East Policy evolved as the tool for greater economic engagement with the eastern neighbors and to forge strategic partnerships and security cooperation with the countries of Southeast Asian nations. Taking the idea of Look East Policy in forwarding, the Modi

- The government announced the 'Act East policy' soon after coming to power. Subsequently, the government of India has also initiated some bilateral projects and also has become a party to some multilateral projects, aimed at enhancing connectivity between North-East and Southeast Asia.
- To promote economic cooperation and cultural ties, develop strategic relations with the countries in Asia Pacific Regions is to be enhanced.
- Through the development, and FDI, alternative employment can be generated for unhappy and unemployed tribal youths of the northeast.
- The South-east Asian countries along with Far eastern countries like Japan and South Korea can be lucrative destinations for educated tribal youths for employment. Through remittance economic

development can be ensured that may reduce the secessionist movement, identity movement, and regional insurgencies.

- Educated tribal youths are to be trained for capacity-building as they can be absorbed in various sectors.
- Air and road connectivity and border trade are to be enhanced to pull the investment and flourishing of tourism. North-east India has the potentiality of tourism through thousands of youths that can be absorbed in a different capacity.
- The interface between North East India Arunachal Pradesh and ASEAN Countries Plans at Bilateral and Regional Levels Develop and Strengthen Connectivity of North-east with Asian Region Through Trade, Culture, People-to-People contacts, and physical infrastructure (Road, Airport, Telecommunication, and Power).

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CHINA'S XINJIANG POLICY UNDER XI JINPING

DR. MAHESH RANJAN DEBATA

Introduction

Amidst the international concern for the situation of Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), President Xi Jinping, at the third Central Symposium on Work related to Xinjiang (26-27 September 2020) in Beijing, articulated the Chinese Central government's policy on Xinjiang as "perfectly right and must be adhered to on a long-term basis." While hailing his government's policies on governing Xinjiang, Xi Jinping highlighted the following:

- a. Law-based governance and long-term efforts must develop Xinjiang into a region that is united, harmonious, prosperous, and culturally advanced, with healthy ecosystems and people living and working in contentment so that lasting social stability in the region can be maintained;
- b. Ensuring stability on six fronts: employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign investment, domestic investment, and expectations;
- c. A series of key indicators from 2014 to 2019, such as i) sound economic momentum with an average annual GDP growth rate of 7.2 per cent; ii) significantly improved living standards of people with an average annual 9.1 per cent growth in residential per capita disposable income; and iii) lifting more than 2.92 million (out of 3.09 million) people out of poverty, has laid a solid foundation for long-term peace and stability in Xinjiang.
- d. Maintaining security in six areas: job security, basic living needs, operations of market entities, food and energy, stable industrial and supply chains, and the normal functioning of primary-level governments;
- e. Consolidating the foundation and increase the efficiency of the industrial sector in Xinjiang, advance industrial transformation and upgrading, and boost urbanization in an all-round way while protecting the environment;

- f. Development is an important foundation for lasting peace and stability in Xinjiang and to make Xinjiang a core area of the Silk Road Economic Belt and a hub of opening-up in the inland and border areas;
- g. heightening a sense of identity of the “Chinese nation” to constantly strengthen ethnic unity and incorporating this identity into the education of officials and the younger generation in Xinjiang as well as its social education, helping the officials and the general public of all ethnic groups develop an accurate understanding of country, history, ethnicity, culture and religion, to let the sense of Chinese identity take root in people; and
- h. Fostering a contingent of high-caliber officials from ethnic-minority groups in Xinjiang who are loyal to the Party and have both integrity and ability.¹

A week earlier, China’s State Council Information Office issued a White Paper on 17 September 2020 describing that the government’s policy has laid “a solid foundation for ensuring that the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have the opportunity to enjoy moderate prosperity in all respects and achieve long-term social stability together with their fellow countrymen and countrywomen in other parts of China.” The major highlights are— a. employment in Xinjiang; b. proactive employment policies; c. full respect for workers’ job preferences; d. labour rights protection; e. better jobs for better lives; and f. application of international labour and human rights standards.²

It is understood well from the aforesaid discussion that the XUAR matters most for the People’s Republic of China (PRC) because of its geostrategic importance as well as it being the fulcrum of China’s new age military-economic strategy, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China not only believes, but also lets the world community believe that its policy in Xinjiang in the past seven decades has been apt, timely and suited most to its national strategic and security interests. Since as a nation state, its primary duty and utmost responsibility is to ensure national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Chinese logic behind its policy in Xinjiang seems ineluctable. It is a well-known fact that the security situation across the globe in the post-Soviet period has been jeopardized because of the rise and growth of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, religious extremism, transnational drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and military technologies, epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and ecological disaster. Xinjiang is too tormented by these intimidating forces. China has made efforts at the domestic front and has also mobilized international opinion against any anti-national and anti-Chinese activities on its soil and is hell-bent on continuing its efforts more rigorously and vigorously. Against this backdrop, this paper gives a brief

overview of Chinese policy in Xinjiang since its establishment in 1949 till Xi Jinping came to power in March 2013. Further, it describes how terrorist activities in Xinjiang in the 1990s and later on in the post-9/11 period have changed the contours of China's present policy in this troubled north-west. This paper critically analyses Chinese Central government's policy in Xinjiang under Xi Jinping, who took over country's leadership in March 2013 and still continuing as the President of the country. This paper attempts to answer a couple of questions a) why has Xinjiang been so important for China and how has Chinese government kept a tab on Xinjiang through a series of policy measures; and b) how the present leadership under Xi Jinping responded to the internal crisis in Xinjiang and the criticism of Chinese policies in Xinjiang by the world community. This research work has followed a historical-analytical approach to the entire gamut of issues involved with the Xinjiang problem and has made extensive use of primary (white papers, government documents by Chinese government and publications by Uyghur diaspora organisation) and secondary source materials such as books, journals, newspapers etc. in addition to using materials collected during field work in Xinjiang in 2015.

Xinjiang Policy during Mao and post-Mao Period

After the 'peaceful liberation of Xinjiang' by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949, the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung announced its policy in 1950 for the ethnic minorities (minority nationalities as Chinese call them) of the country that aimed at consolidation of Chinese rule amidst internal subversion and external influence. Mao's policy was a faithful reflection and reorientation of the Qing (19th century) policy³ that comprised military-civilian administration with PLA as the fountainhead, state/party sponsored population (Han) transfer under the slogan "Go West Young Han", and assimilationist cultural, religious and language policies that resulted in strong Chinese Han presence in Xinjiang, which critics dub as "Hanification."⁴ At Mao's insistence, the state-sponsored strong tactics and stringent measures were used during the "Hundred Flowers Bloom" and continued brazenly during the "Great Leap Forward" and even during the "Cultural Revolution."

Post-Mao period saw a major shift in China's domestic policy with reform, reorientation and reconstruction as the major efforts. The CCP made renewed efforts under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping to win the hearts and minds of the minorities by mending the wrong-doings of the previous regime. Two major happenings i.e. one internal and another external, can be highlighted here: a) Deng understood well the need for unflinching support of the minority groups for China's liberalization programme in 1979, which necessitated

the abundant natural resources of the western region of China, where more than 90 per cent of the country's ethnic population lives in; and b) the critical situation in the neighbourhood the same year (1979) because of Great Islamic Revolution in Iran and Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Under a "broader, deeper and more variegated"⁵ pro-minority policy, Deng brought about a number of socio-economic and political measures. However, the disintegration of former Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent creation of five Central Asian Republics on China's immediate neighbourhood posed new challenges for the Chinese policy makers. China believed that Xinjiang's proximity and susceptibility to these external influences would indubitably be a potential threat to the authority, unity and territorial integrity of China, and this apprehension came true when Xinjiang witnessed a spate of violent separatist and terrorist attacks in the 1990s onwards, which led the Central government to change the contours of its Xinjiang policy.

Evil Forces in Xinjiang Shaping Chinese Policy

China initially considered separatist activities of the Uyghurs as domestic ethnic dissent, as one scholar points out, which eventually snowballed into a larger jihadist movement against China, receiving international jihadist support and attention.⁶The situation was so gory in the 1990s and onwards, scholars went on describing "waves of terrorism"⁷ and "stages of terrorism" in this troubled north-west. However, Chinese government resorted to more "hard and harsh" policy to stave off the evil forces—separatists, splittists, anti-national and anti-Chinese elements. The new military strategy in the mid-1990s was "Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure Campaign," through which Chinese security forces launched crackdown on criminals, unofficial anti-government political organizations and the separatists in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. The statement of the Bureau of Public Safety confirmed this when it demanded that "the crackdown should mainly focus on the violent and terrorist cases organized and manipulated by national separatist forces."⁸ This military campaign against the Uyghur separatists was launched a) in 1996 after the violent attacks in the 1990s, b) further after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in USA, c) Urumqi riots (5 July 2009) and d) after the attacks in 2014. China was among the first few nations which wholeheartedly supported the US "War against Terror," a massive military crackdown against the terrorists after the deadly attack on World Trade Centre and Pentagon in the US on 11 September 2001. Just a day after the 9/11 attacks, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, on 12 September 2001, called President Bush over phone to express his condolences and to offer China's cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Chinese Central government has vigorously optimizing its counterterrorism efforts that predate 9/11 attacks, which have become an

integral part of Beijing's new security diplomacy revolving around the transnational threats to Chinese interests,⁹ besides being a campaign against the "three evil forces" (terrorism, separatism, and extremism).¹⁰

Xinjiang Policy under President Xi Jinping

Within six months of taking up the mantle of presidency of China, Xi Jinping rolled out Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan on 7 September 2013. This signature strategy based on "Chinese model of development", has been the stepping stone to his proverbial "Chinese Dream." In addition, it also concerns the overall situation of reform, development, and stability in the country, reunification of China, ethnic solidarity and security.¹¹ In sync with the "Asian Century", the BRI looked at the Eurasian region (Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia) as its first major focus. The resource rich Central Asia and the Middle East regions have got special mentions under China's "neighborhood first" policy, notwithstanding the focus shifting toward, South Asia, especially Pakistan, in the next couple of years. In this context, Xinjiang has often been dubbed as China's gateway to Central Asia, because of its border with three Central Asian Republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as ethno-cultural similarities with Central Asians. Since Xinjiang's importance for BRI was well understood by Chinese leadership, the Central government did not want this volatile region falling prey to the anti-Chinese designs. Thus the major tasks before Xi Jinping were to secure Xinjiang politically, socially and economically by any means or at any cost. He visited Xinjiang in April 2014 for the first time after taking over power in the country and underlined the importance of this restive region for China.

Showcasing Xinjiang as China's "Core Interest"

China considers Xinjiang as one of her "core interests."¹² China's Information State Council has published as many as nine White Papers in the last half a dozen years with direct reference to Xinjiang, which vindicate Chinese Central government's position on Xinjiang and policy towards the Uyghurs, besides describing Xinjiang as its "integral part." A White Paper published last year (2019) has reiterated the Chinese stance on Xinjiang stating that a) Xinjiang is an "inalienable part" of China; b) Xinjiang has never been "East Turkistan" (as claimed by the Uyghurs), c) all nationalities living in the country (including those in Xinjiang) are part of the Chinese nation; d) the Uyghur ethnic group was formed through a long process of migration and integration; e) Xinjiang's ethnic culture is part of the Chinese culture; f) Multiple religions have long coexisted in Xinjiang; and g) Islam is neither an indigenous nor the sole belief system of the Uyghurs.¹³

Promoting XPCC as a Pioneer of Socio-Economic Stability

Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), “a hybrid of military, bureaucracy and enterprise”,¹⁴ became the flagbearer of Xi Jinping’s Xinjiang policy. Since its creation in 1954, the XPCC is entrusted with the task of maximizing sway over the socio-economic life of minorities in Xinjiang, especially Uyghurs. The XPCC Information Office describes it as a “special social organization with economic planning directly supervised by the State to perform duties of cultivating and guarding the frontier areas entrusted to it by the Central Government.”¹⁵ The importance of XPCC has been summed up justifiably in a White Paper issued by China’s Information State Council in 2014.¹⁶ However, Uyghurs accuse the XPCC of playing the role of a “Chinese paramilitary force colonizing East Turkestan,”¹⁷ which is mostly subscribed by Western scholars. The XPCC is dubbed as “a Han organization in a non-Han region”, being evolved as a “fascinating blend of Maoist ideals (self-reliance, self-sufficiency, human struggle and self-sacrifice under arduous conditions) and as well as moderate and pragmatic notions (technological expertise, scientific management and development)” and became “an important symbol and vehicle of CCP’s efforts to control and integrate the strategic and traditionally non-Han borderlands.”¹⁸

Military Crackdown against Anti-National Forces

Terrorist and extremist activities in Xinjiang are perhaps the single largest cause for a hardline approach towards Xinjiang by Xi Jinping, which is often criticized as a policy of “preventive repression” in the context of counterterrorism context that took a threat which was like at a very low level to begin with and sought to ensure that it would never materialize into anything more significant.¹⁹ However, few terror-related incidents compelled Chinese leadership to adopt stringent measures against terrorists. On 28 October 2013, a Uyghur drove a jeep packed with explosives and carrying his wife and mother into a crowd in Tiananmen Square and killed two civilians. Abdullah Mansour, the leader of Uyghur militant organization, Turkestan Islamic Party, praised this attack through a propaganda video and warned more attacks in future. The attack carried enormous symbolic significance as it took place near the Great Hall of the People, where a meeting of the plenary session of the Chinese Communist Party was planned.²⁰ Following the Kunming attack in 2014, crackdown under “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism”²¹ continued coupled with “absolutely no mercy policy”²² or “show no mercy”²³ against the militants and terrorists. A mass sentencing of 55 terrorist suspects in a Xinjiang sports stadium attended by thousands of citizens showcased Beijing’s resolve to combat terrorism with an iron hand.²⁴ Under the campaign, Chinese security forces have destroyed 1,588

violent and terrorist gangs, arrested 12,995 terrorists, seized 2,052 explosive devices, punished 30,645 people for 4,858 illegal religious activities, and confiscated 345,229 copies of illegal religious materials.²⁵

Taking a legal recourse, China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee adopted the country's first counter-terrorism law on 26 December 2015, which came into force in January 2016, with the primary purpose of addressing terrorism at home and help maintain security and stability, provides legal support to China's counter-terrorism activities as well as collaboration with the international community. The Chinese central government will provide necessary financial support for key regions listed in the country's counter-terrorist plan, whereas the identity and details of professional anti-terrorist forces will be established by public security, national security authorities as well as armed forces. A National Intelligence Center (NIC) was established to coordinate inter-departmental and trans-regional efforts on counter-terrorism intelligence and information. In addition, two important wings of its counterterrorism efforts, National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Group (NATCG) and Anti-Terrorism Bureau, were established to carry out China's anti-terror agenda.²⁶

Chen Quanguo: Xi Jinping's Pointsman in Xinjiang

Chen Quanguo, who became the CCP Secretary in XUAR in mid-2016, after a successful stint in establishing and consolidating Chinese stronghold in Tibet, executed President Xi Jinping's clarion call to build "great wall of iron" to safeguard national unity, ethnic solidarity and social stability in Xinjiang, an important "security barrier" in northwest China.²⁷ Under his leadership, counter-terrorism efforts in Xinjiang included "grid-style social management, a technology-intensive approach to urban governance and intelligence-led policing (as has been seen in cities in China's eastern part since the mid-to-late 2000s)",²⁸ and establishment of some 7,500 "convenience police stations" in early 2017 and recruitment of a huge number of police personnel. This process of stabilizing the important national frontier, which is often criticized as a systematic process of "securitization",²⁹ drew largely on a) surveillance network using facial recognition, b) the collection of citizens' biometric data, c) GPS tracking of private vehicles, and d) spyware in smart phones of the Uyghurs,³⁰ has further spruced up China's massive "four-in-one defence" against any anti-Chinese endeavour in Xinjiang. And to carry out this agenda, an estimated 50,000 to 1,00,000 PLA and People's Armed Police (PAP) personnel, 9-10 million Han residents and immigrants,³¹ and 2.68 million XPCC cadres³² have been working tirelessly. The tactics and measures of Chen Quanguo were so repressive that the US imposed sanctions on Chen and other top Chinese officials under Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.³³

De-radicalisation and De-extremification in Xinjiang

One major component of the Xi Jinping's policy has been the "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulations on De-extremification" (containing as many as 50 articles) that came into being on 1 April 2017, when the Chinese authorities became aware of two grim facts: a) the religion (Islam) or ideology driven efforts as the crux of anti-Chinese and anti-state activities of the Uyghurs; and b) the report of thousands of Uyghurs joining ISIS in Syria.³⁴ The Xinjiang authorities, as clarified in a White Paper released by the Information State Council of China on 17 August 2017, established "vocational education and training centers in accordance with the law to prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism and religious extremism, effectively curbing the frequent terrorist incidents and protecting the rights to life, health, and development of the people of all ethnic groups."³⁵ Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, defends the efforts by the Chinese government in Xinjiang, which according to him, have not only provided security for local residents, but also protected religious freedom, thus making active and important contributions to global anti-terror cause and de-radicalization efforts. The freedom of religious belief, including Islam, is fully ensured in Xinjiang, where there are over 24,000 mosques, or one for every 530 Muslims, which is a higher ratio than many Islamic countries, Wang noted.³⁶ Whereas supporters of the Chinese policy described these centres as "hospitals treating Islam like mental illness"³⁷ or "free boarding schools, where trainees enjoy free food and accommodations, learn languages, study laws and acquire skills"³⁸, the Uyghur diaspora dubbed the Chinese regulations as "very strict restrictions on Uyghur religious beliefs and practices."³⁹

Reactions Worldwide

The Western actors, for example, committees and commissions, government officials of USA, the Western media like the *New York Times*⁴⁰ and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), human rights organizations (the Human Rights Watch), global think tanks like Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and independent scholars have subscribed to the claim that nearly 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims were "extra-judicially interned in political re-education camps" in XUAR as of December 2018,⁴¹ and accused Chinese government of "mass arbitrary detention, torture, and mistreatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and systemic and increasingly pervasive controls on daily life there, violating fundamental rights to freedom of expression, religion, and privacy, and protections from torture and unfair trials."⁴² While hearing the statements of a Uyghur delegation on "non-discriminatory enjoyment of freedoms and rights in XUAR", the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 30 August 2018 made an eight-

point recommendation to China,⁴³ to refrain from putting such hardships on Uyghurs.

Amongst the Western countries, the USA led from the front to lambast China on the issue of re-education camps. Firstly, in three congressional hearings⁴⁴ in 2018 and 2019, US legislators expressed concern about the situation in Xinjiang. Secondly, President Donald Trump in October 2019 imposed visa restriction on PRC officials and blacklisted 28 companies and public security bureaus. Besides, top US officials like Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in September 2019 labeled China's campaign against the Uyghurs an "attempt to erase its own citizens' Muslim faith and culture," while China-baiter US Assistant Secretary of Defence, Randall Schriver, went one step further, dubbing the re-education camps as "concentration camps."⁴⁵ Thirdly, in the US House of the Representatives, the "Uighur Intervention and Global Humanitarian Unified Response Act of 2019" or the "UIGHUR Act of 2019" was enacted, despite being criticized by the *Global Times* as a "paper tiger" with no special leverage to affect Xinjiang,⁴⁶ in order "to condemn gross human rights violations of ethnic Turkic Muslims of Xinjiang, and calling for an end to arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment of these communities inside and outside China."⁴⁷ Further, the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is passed by the US Congress that imposes various restrictions related to Xinjiang, including by prohibiting certain imports from Xinjiang and imposing sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations there. The Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force and the Department of State shall report to Congress strategies to address forced labor in Xinjiang.⁴⁸ Amongst others, Britain has launched a new parliamentary enquiry into detention camps in Xinjiang. French President Emmanuel Macron, while speaking at the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2020, called for an official investigation into the concerns with regard to Uyghurs of Xinjiang.⁴⁹

Chinese Response to International Concern on Xinjiang

However, China prepared a great wall of defence against these claims and accusations in a couple of ways: a) briefings by top Chinese leaders such as Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi and Chairman of Xinjiang Regional Government, Shohrat Zakir; and b) Mobilisation of international community. According to Wang Yi, "these centers aimed at saving those who were infected by extremist thoughts through education and professional training to uproot extremism and terrorism at the source." Wang added that China's anti-terror campaign in Xinjiang has drawn on the experiences of United States, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Describing the Chinese measures as "totally legal, as they are widely recognized as preventive counter-terrorism steps," Wang stated that because of counter-

terrorism efforts in Xinjiang, for three years in a row (2017 to 2019), Xinjiang has not witnessed a single terrorist incident.⁵⁰ Earlier in March 2019, Shohrat Zakir, on the sidelines of annual National Legislative Session, while deploring the claims by external forces stated that “Xinjiang is a victim of terrorism and extremism, and the education and training centers aim to fundamentally eliminate the environment for terrorism and extremism.” Zakir emphasized that Xinjiang in its counter-terrorism and de-extremization effort is not targeting any specific ethnic groups or religions, rather the three evil forces. To him, “the centres protect the students’ dignity, prohibit any form of insult against them, and protect their personal freedom.”⁵¹ Further, in response to a bid by 22 countries (20 European countries, New Zealand and Japan) on 10 July 2019 issued a Joint Statement urging the UN Human Rights Council to prevent China from arbitrary mass detention, surveillance, and restriction on freedom of movement in Xinjiang, China mobilized a total of 51 countries, including 28 Islamic nations, signed and sent a joint letter immediately to the United Nations expressing support to China’s policies in Xinjiang. Chinese authorities facilitated the visit more than 70 foreign delegations from 91 countries and regions, or some 1,000 people to Xinjiang, who described China’s counter-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts as a role-model for others.”⁵²

Conclusion

Like his predecessors, President Xi Jinping understands the strategic significance of Xinjiang for China and thus has a policy which suits best to China’s national interest. Xinjiang is no doubt key to Xi Jinping’s 21st century vision for a Chinese nation and the lynch-pin of China’s global strategy Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia and beyond. In this context, social stability, ethnic solidarity and security of the region is highly important and President Xi and his team in Xinjiang have been making constant efforts to keep this volatile region under the Chinese orbit. To ensure its business and strategic overtures in the entire Eurasia region, China has gone and can go to any extent to safeguard Xinjiang. Describing Xinjiang matter as out and out internal, Chinese central government sends the message to the world that no outside or external intervention or influence in Xinjiang will be brooked. China does not at all care what others think about Chinese policy towards Uyghur and has braved all criticism by some vested interests with a stronger zeal. However, it is apprehended that the repressive measures taken up by Chinese government in Xinjiang may create a serious problem in this troubled borderland in the coming times. As has been seen, the excesses meted out to minorities in Xinjiang during Mao Tse Tung’s rule from 1949 to 1976 under Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution may have many

similarities with the hardline approach undertaken by Xi Jinping in the last half a dozen years or so. There is every possibility President Xi Jinping or his successor will have to resort to a similar kind of policy the Chinese Central government under Deng Xiaoping had initiated in the reformist period to rectify the wrongs committed during Mao rule. Or else, Xinjiang could be China's Achilles Hill amidst regional concerns and intense international pressure.

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INDO-NEPAL BORDER DISPUTE OVER KALAPANI: A TWO-LEVEL GAME

DR. ASIS MISTRY

Abstract

The battle over the historical accurateness of a geographical territory is one that has been fermenting between India and Nepal for the past several decades. The bone of contention between India, Nepal and China (Tibet) is the Kalapani-Limpiadhura-Lipulekh trijunction located on the banks of the river Kali at an altitude of 3600m. The Kalapani terrain lies at the eastern border of Uttarakhand in India and Nepal's far-western province in the West. India claims the area is part of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district while Nepal considers it to be part of its Dharchula district. Troubles arose to a spot earlier this year, when India opened an 80-km road connecting Uttarakhand with Lipulekh across the disputed slice of land. In response, the House of Representatives in Nepal on 13 June passed a divisive bill that introduced a new map that embraces Indian territories. India immediately termed this move "artificial enlargement of claims, not based on historical facts". As Nepal revealed the new map of its territories, the country's land management minister Padma Aryal called it "historically pleasant" occasion. However, the move drew sharp criticism from India affirming that the Territory. On such backdrop, this article attempts to envisage Indo-Nepal border dispute over the Kalapani issue through the prism of a "two level game".

Key Words : Nepal, India, Border-dispute, Kalapani

Introduction

The world is changing rapidly, very rapidly; perhaps nothing is inevitable. As Hans Morgenthau used to say, nations have interests, not friendship. Sovereignty and borders, which are inherently political, have been key concerns across humanity and social sciences need a set of legal evidence to have better chances of success. And so, at the root of the border dispute is a 338 square km strip located at the tri-junction between India, Nepal, and

China and the three areas of interest in this tri-junction are Limpiyadhura pass, Lipulekh, and Kalapani. A closer re-examination of disputes related to Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani boundaries between India and Nepal require tracing back to the first attempts of delineation by signing the Sugauli Treaty in the early nineteenth century, which is extensively recorded and widely remembered for a comprehensive and conclusive clarification.

Statement of the Problem

Nepal is geopolitically sandwiched having boundaries with India on three sides i.e. west, south and east, and with China in the north. Nepal-China boundary is as old as the history of the two countries whereas Nepal-India boundary has a comparatively recent origin and its present boundary demarcation and delimitation took place only after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16. Sino-Nepal boundary had been a problem in the past, because more than 90 percent of the frontiers run through high altitudes with rocks and snow, glaciers and ice fields which are entirely uninhabited. However, China and Nepal have continued to respect their existing traditional and customary boundary beside minor exceptions. On the other hand, Nepal-India border is unique in the world in the sense that people of both the countries can cross it from any point, despite the existence of border check posts at several locations.

The dispute around Kalapani, that lies on the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, between Nepal and India was revived in November 2019 when India published a revised political map showing the newly created Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Both India and Nepal lay claim to Kalapani. The map revealed Kalapani as part of Pithoragarh district. Nepal protested instantly and elicited attention to the lingering issue. On May 8, India inaugurated the Darchula- Lipulekh pass link road, cutting across the disputed Kalapani area which is used to be utilized by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar. Nepal responded by summoning the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, to express an official dissent. Further, Nepal has published an amended official map integrating the territory from the Limpiyadhura source of the Kali to Kalapani and Lipulekh pass in the northeast of the triangular region as its territory (Bhattacharya 2020). On May 22, the Cabinet led by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli registered a constitution amendment motion to grant constitutional status to the map. This move, however, makes any future solution on the Kalapani issue nearly impossible since a constitutional guarantee will make Kathmandu's position inflexible (Bhattacharya 2020). Nepal has contended that the new official map is based on historic documents dating back to the early 19th century and cannot be termed artificial. Rajan

Bhattacharai, Foreign Policy Adviser to Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is of the opinion that the border dispute at Kalapani region had received attention during the Vajpayee years when a series of meetings was held between top officials of both sides. He has stated that—

Our map is not artificial. We are willing to sit across the table and discuss it with our Indian counterparts ... We are willing to look at the versions of both sides. Our position is based on the historical documents dating back to the Treaty of Sugauli of 1816, which demarcated the shape of present-day Nepal". (Bhattacharya 2020)

“Such artificial enlargement of territorial claims will not be accepted by India” (Bhattacharya 2020). Nepal Prime Minister stepped up with an aggressive posture on the issue, especially over the inauguration of a road to the Lipulekh pass which is used by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar. The Lipulekh pass has always been part of the road to Tibet for India. It was also mentioned as one of the border passes for trade in a 1954 agreement with China. When China re-opened the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route for Indians in 1981, they have also used this pass to walk into Tibet (Bhattacharya 2020). The road in -construction would certainly cut down their travel time by three days each way. Consequently, the government of India has been even infuriated by Nepal’s strong protests and follow up events including fiery speeches by Mr. Oli and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali. The Nepali cabinet’s decision to embrace the new political map claiming not only Lipulekh but other areas which are in Indian territory, was described by India’s In reply, India’s External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava had hit out at Nepal’s claims, saying, Ministry of External Affairs as “artificial”, “unilateral” and “unacceptable” (Bhattacharya 2020). Anxieties have also been intensified by Mr. Oli’s mock the “Indian virus looks more lethal than the one from China”.

Research Gap and Objective

The existing academic literatures with reference to the Indo-Nepal Border Dispute over Kalapani, in general, may be divided into three subgroups, namely, papers projecting Nepal’s national concern, works upholding India’s interest and studies considering global perception. What’s really a lacuna in these literatures is a multi-layered theoretical analysis of the dispute. Therefore, the pivotal objective of this paper has been to envisage the border dispute between India and Nepal over the Kalapani issue by designating it a “two level game”.

Methodology

This article has been a bi-product of an analytical study based on empirical evidences/facts. Both primary as well as secondary data from

different sources have been manipulated to structure focal arguments of the paper. In addition to archival data, primary data has also been generated through email questionnaire and online interviews of eminent scholars in this field. The secondary data has been collected from books, monographs, Journals, Magazines, Web-sources, etc. As far as the question of data interpretation is concerned, the Content Analysis method has been used to analyze historical facts and evidences.

Conceptualization of the Problem

Utopian literature in all of its forms is full with imaginative construction of alternative worlds. Whether these are possible or impossible worlds is to a large extent the underlying tension in all the utopian constructions which go further than a satire or an avowedly escapist fantasy. Political utopias according to some scholars are distinguished from other utopian literature in that they are created to describe a future social arrangement which reflects the basic changes in the social structure often through the application of a limited number of key alternations in the distribution of power and resources. Territorial disputes constitute one of the main sources of nagging but evitable tensions in South Asia. Escalation in such conflicts often stems from a widely shared public perception that the territory in question has the utmost importance to the nation. While that is frequently not true in economic, military, or even political terms, citizens' groups and other domestic actors throughout the region relish in mounting sustained campaigns to protect or recover the disputed territory; such campaigns seldom miss wide-ranging domestic and international consequences. Yet, there is no dearth of rulers or purported rulers to whom the stalemate of the situation is merely a part of the politics of their belonging that lies at the heart of the dispute affecting the entire neighborhood.

It is futile to debate whether domestic politics really determine international relations or the *vice versa*. The more interesting questions are "When?" and "How?" James Roseau was one of the first scholars to call attention to this area, but his elaborate nomenclature of "linkage politics" caused little cumulative research except for a flurry of work associating domestic and international "conflict behavior" (Rosenau 1969). The state-centric literature is an uncertain foundation for theorizing how domestic and international politics interact. Richard E. Walton and Robert B. McKersie have tendered a "behavioral theory" of social negotiations that is astonishingly applicable to international conflict and cooperation. Therefore, the politics of many international negotiations can useably be devised as a two-level game. While at the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by

constructing coalitions among those groups, at the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments (Putnam 1988, 430). The central decision makers cannot ignore the two games if their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign (Putnam 1988). Nevertheless, this 'two-table' metaphor captures the dynamics of the Indo-Nepal negotiations better than any other model based on unitary national actors. Whilst the territory is of strategic importance to India and Nepal, the issue is further complicated by the contest over the historicity of cartographic evidence that both sides claim to be most accurate (PTI 2020). The issue in itself goes back to the early 19th century, when the British ruled India and Nepal was a conglomeration of small kingdoms under the reign of Shah-Rana Monarchs.

Historical Antecedents

Historian John Whelpton opines, "The single image most strongly associated with the history of modern Nepal is surely that of Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha, girded for battle, a look of determination in his eyes and his right hand pointed skywards" (Whelpton 2005). Shah was the most ambitious ruler among the Gorkhas, under whose rule in the late 18th century, Nepal was unified, its domains stretching out as far as Sikkim in the East and the Garhwal and Kumaon region of Uttarakhand in the West. By the second decade of the 18th century, the English East India Company too had acquired a formidable presence in the subcontinent, and had strengthened its main bases in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay (Roychowdhury 2020). By the early 19th century, as the EIC began expanding its territories northwards in Awadh, it came into close proximity with Palpa, an independent town within the Nepalese heartlands. Soon after, a border dispute arose between the two powers (Roychowdhury 2020). The Nepalese were also showing to be a deterrent in allowing the British to comprehend their trade ambitions with Tibet. Finally, on November 1, 1814, the British Nepal and by the next declared war on two years, the British general, Sir David Ochterlony, managed to evict the Nepalese from Garhwal and Kumaon. The war came to an end with the signing of the Sugauli treaty that delimited the boundaries of Nepal. The treaty "required Nepal to give up all territories west and east of its present-day borders, to surrender the entire Tarai and to accept a permanent British representative (or 'resident') in Kathmandu" (Whelpton 2005). The fifth article of the treaty stated—

The Rajah of Nepal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors all claim to or connection with the countries lying to the west of the river Kali and engages never to have any concern with those countries or inhabitants thereof." (Bhattacharya 2020)

Although the river Kali marked the western border of Nepal, there is no clear consensus on what the precise location of the river Kali is, giving rise to the dispute over whether the land consisting Kalapani-Limpiadhura-Lipulekh is part of present day India or Nepal. However some scholars suggest that the lack of consensus is due to the shift in the course of the river over time, there are others who are of the opinion that the British cartographers in the subsequent years kept on shifting the line delineating the river eastwards for strategic reasons (Bhattacharya 2020).

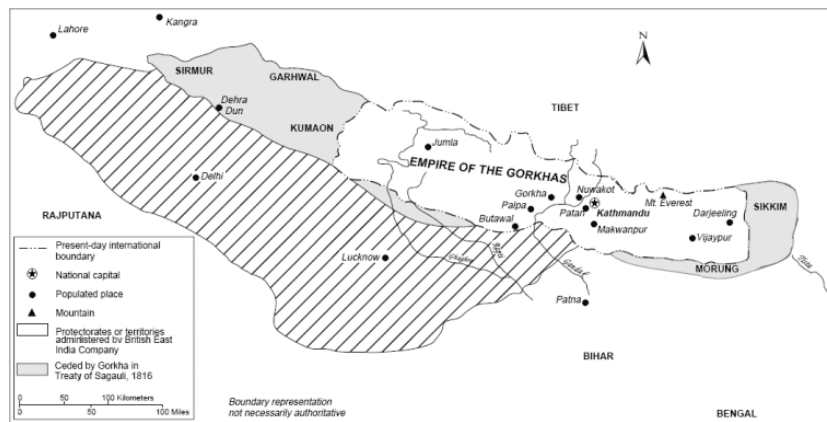


Figure- International Boundary of Nepal

Source: http://nepology.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Sugauli_Treaty2.png, Retrieved on 12. 12.

Manandhar and Koirala claim that :

Since no map attached with the Sugauli Treaty counter signed by both the agreeing parties has come to light, the only way to ascertain the correct location of Kali is to examine the existing maps of the period.” (Manandhar and Koirala 2001)

He maintains that the cartographic move on the part of the British was ‘unauthorized’, ‘unilateral’, and ‘without any agreement with the government of Nepal’. The dispute over the location of the river, and consequently that of the territoriality of Kalapani, was first raised by the Nepalese government only in 1998. Even when Indian military units occupied the Kalapani area during the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Nepal did not raise an objection. “Nepal virtually ignored the Kalapani issue from 1961 to 1997, but for domestic political reasons it became a convenient India-Nepal controversy in 1998” (Rose 1999). Accordingly, the Nepalese government contended that the western border of the country be shifted 5.5 km westward to coincide with

the borders as decided in the treaty of Sugauli. Officials in India, on the other hand, claim revenue records dating back to the 1830s show that Kalapani area has traditionally been administered as part of the Pithoragarh district. British India had conducted the first regular surveys of the upper ranges of the river Kali in the 1870s. Accordingly, a vintage map of the 1879 shows Kalapani as part of India. The Indian government has held that the 1879 map is what should be considered in deciding the borders between the two countries rather than the maps before the period which are held up by Nepal. These metamorphoses amount in reality to differences in the maps that each country possesses, which is further worsened by the kaleidoscopic course of the Mahakali River in the area that was earlier accepted as the boundary (Gupta 2000).

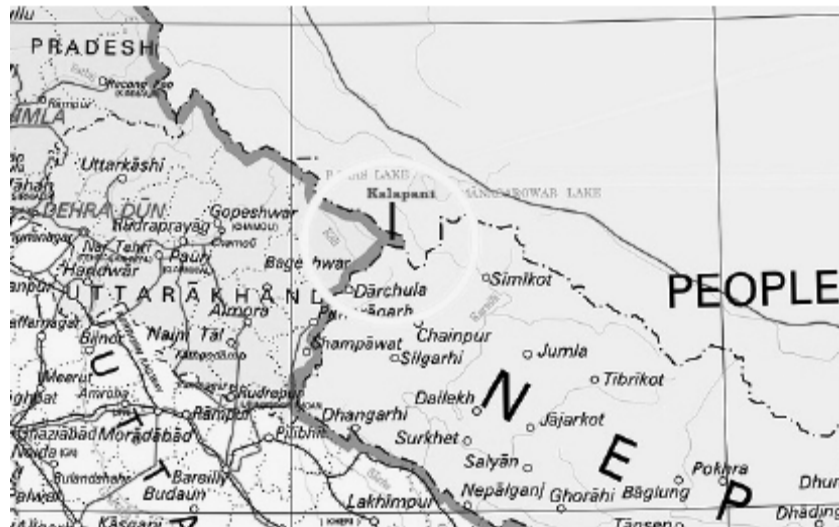


Figure : Kalapani- the conflict point

Source : Gupta, A. K. (2000, 10 17). *Kalapani : A Bone of Contention Between India and Nepal*. Retrieved from Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies: http://www.ipcs.org/comm_select.php?articleNo=422, Accessed on 31-07-2020

Strategic Importance of the Lipulekh

The region juts into the Himalayas and is connected to the other side of the mountain range through the Lipulekh pass, which has been used for centuries by Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims and tourists on their way to Kailash Mansarovar (Bhattacharya 2020). The adjacent markets have been used by many mountain communities. The Himalayas have several passes that

connect the Gangetic region with the Tibetan plateau but Lipulekh is strategically located as it is nearest to the heart of the Indian state or the National Capital Region and can be of particular concern in case of an armed conflict with China. The importance of Himalayan passes with the Tibetan plateau was amply highlighted in the 1962 war. During that war, Chinese forces used the pass of Se La in Tawang and reached the Brahmaputra plains in the east. The military defeat in the east clearly demonstrated that weakly guarded passes were a major vulnerability of Indian military preparedness against China (Bhattacharya 2020). In contrast to See La that was fortified, Lipulekh was susceptible.

Nepalese King Mahendra was concerned about the fact that India would take military steps to forcefully take the region of Kalapani to secure the mountain pass (Bhattacharya 2020). Shah reached an agreement with India and handed over the region for security purposes. India, in fact, worried over an aggressive China in the 1950s, got the King of Nepal to agree to a proposal to station 18 military outposts along Nepal's northern frontier. As a result, in 1969, under bilateral negotiations, all the posts were removed excluding Kalapani. When pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar paused with the takeover of Tibet by Chinese forces in the mid-1950s, India deployed troops at the Lipulekh pass in 1959 (Bhattacharya 2020).

Where have Nepal and India stumbled ?

India and China were in contravention of Nepal's anxieties during the 2015 Lipulekh agreement between them which meanwhile renewed India's Mansarovar pilgrimage link. Nepal was in complete darkness prior to that agreement which boosted pilgrimage and trade to Tibet. Sushil Koirala, then Prime Minister of Nepal, apparently cancelled a visit to Delhi at the back of this agreement. It may be argued that India should have resolved the issue with Nepal when the late Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala raised it with India during the 2006 India visit when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh received him at the airport in Delhi (Bhattacharya 2020). So, the South Block should have acted promptly on Koirala's suggestion. Nevertheless, Nepal has been resolute in citing the Sugauli treaty as the foundation of its territorial claims. Nepal's erstwhile Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal had indicated frustration with the Treaty of Sugauli after his Prime Ministerial stint in 2009 stating that the same had become irrelevant and had championed the cause of a Greater Nepal going into the region west of the Kali (Bhattacharya 2020). This demonstrates that the Nepal's claim based on the Sugauli treaty is inconsistent.



Map: Political map of Nepal released by the country on May 20, 2020.

(<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/new-nepal-map-is-based-on-historical-documents-says-top-kathmandu-official/article31649152.ece>)
Accessed on 23-07-2020 at 12:52 A.M.

Appraisal

Dankwart Rustow, a distinguished political scientist, had once observed that a fundamental and necessary prerequisite for the development of democratic institutions is the preceding accord on the boundaries of the state, and on membership in the political community. There is no democratic procedure by which those could be determined. However, force cannot serve as a means of territorial disputes. Military force cannot succeed in preventing every conflict. Politics is not only about grabbing a station of power, but it's about engrossing obligation to service. This requires a strong and genuine aptitude. Nepal and India can agree to put aside their legal arguments and settle the issue politically, but it is extremely important that both countries should secure their legal arguments until a final settlement is achieved. Whatever the strategies Nepal adopts in order to make itself overheard by India, its success depends very much on the institutional framework in which it operates. Yet again, credibility is perhaps the most critical aspect of a successful strategy to influence the actions of the opponent.

It is true and is imperative that if one has no sovereign states one would have no wars, as Rousseau rightly pointed out—but, as Hobbes similarly and quite correctly cited, we would probably have no peace either. Foreign policy behaviour of states can be affected by the psychological processes involved in individual judgement and decision-making as well as by the

content of their beliefs systems however it is essential that the argument should be justly supported by logic and evidence to the subject of the debate. Yet, India and Nepal have reached a flashpoint over the Kalapani issue that threatens the basis of their special relationship, which has nurtured open borders and the free movement of people.

There is a general feeling in Nepal that the Indian leaders and diplomatic personnel have a tendency to look upon Nepal with suspicion and distrust, particularly regarding Nepal's relations with China and Pakistan (Kansakar 2001). This attitude reminds one of the British colonial legacy. During the exile of King Rana Bahadur Shah to Banaras, the British East India Company became successful in exploiting the situation by entering into a treaty with the Nepalese King in 1801. One of the clauses of the treaty states, "The principals and officers of both Governments will cordially consider the friends and enemies of either State to be the friends and enemies of the other; and this consideration must ever remain permanent and in force, from generation to generation" (Aitchison 1863, 196). Though the treaty was abrogated by the treaty of 1804, most of the Indian leaders and diplomatic personnel as well as news media have not given up this colonial legacy from their mind. Regarding the purchase of arms and ammunitions by Nepal from other countries, Nepal was required to have permission to import them via Indian territories from the Government of India. This precondition envisaged by the British was followed by the independent Government of India as it was incorporated in the letter of exchange of 1950 treaty. Furthermore, in Nepal-India Agreement on Arms Assistance (1965), Nepal's response was rather half-hearted since it was having arms assistance and purchase from other countries.

Conclusion

The politics of Indo-Nepal conciliation over settlement of boundary issues in general and Kalapani negotiation in particular can usefully be conceived as a two-level game. At the national level, domestic groups like Maoists in Nepal pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies. And at the international level, national governments of India and Nepal seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as both the countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign. Nevertheless, this 'two-table' metaphor captures the dynamics of the Indo-Nepal negotiations better than any other model based on unitary national actors.

However, the so called 'open border' between Nepal and India has fostered the social, economic and cultural exchanges amongst the people living at the *Simanchalor* the adjacent areas of either side of the Indo-Nepal International Border. They share a socio-cultural inheritance and people-to-

people associations for generations which is somehow tough to apprehend from within the Realist Paradigm. Therefore, Indo-Nepal bilateralism should be assumed more in the light of 'door-to-door' acquaintances instead of sheer traditional geo-strategic 'window-to-window' negotiation. Only effective way in this scenario is to look for evidence in international law and convention in regards to the resolution of disputed territories. The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States would be a good starting point. The governments are saying that COVID-19 is a hurdle to initiate dialogue soon but this time could be utilized to gather legal documents (historical treaties, maps, evidence of tax revenue, stamp duties if any procured from that area) to resolve the issue. Case studies of territorial disputes and their resolutions in other countries could provide some useful insights as well. Moreover, being the land locked buffer between two Asian giants i. e. India and China, Nepal has a significant diplomatic role to play in terms of maintaining the geo-political balance of power in this region.

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DIGITALISATION FOR BUILDING RURAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
A CASE STUDY OF INDIA
DR. PAVITRA BHARDWAJ

Abstract

The success of ICT-enabled development (or e-Development) is measured not only by the diffusion of technology, but also by advancement in development itself. IT education, the IT Industry and IT sectoral developments are essential components of Digitalisation Process

This article discusses the process of digitalisation adopted by India through its flagship Digital India Programme. The crucial issues and challenges faced in digitalisation of rural India and the ways to meet this digital divide have been investigated. An important aspect of this study is to look at the ways through which digitalisation can be harnessed in enhancing rural entrepreneurship. Also it may be a key take away to study the Indian experience for other emerging economies of the world which are trying to ride high on this tide of digitalisation by capitalising on their demographic dividend and human capital.

Background

Centrality of knowledge in fulfillment of all societal goals has been a long recognised idea. Post-industrial society was envisioned to be driven by technology, knowledge and bureaucrats¹. The term '*knowledge class*'² as coined by Daniel Bell referred to a new class of people who will arise in the information age following the post-industrial society, the nature of the economies have also witnessed a shift from goods to services where workers had to attain redefined roles and responsibilities.

In the present time when one looks back at the predictions made by Bell, it is not surprising to note that the world economy has transformed to even a higher degree than perceived by him. Today Information Technology provides a ubiquitous and versatile solution to cater all aspects of human

life. Business and Governance are two major areas that have witnessed a complete restructuring owing to information technology.

In the present context, even though it is challenging for any business to become a digital enterprise, it has become imperative. Five technologies are being mentioned as a breakthrough, hyper-connectivity, supercomputing, cloud computing, a smarter world, and cyber security. These allow business to restructure and reorganise their operational models. A transformation and innovation framework which may be helpful for those facing pressing questions of digitalising their business models needs to be developed³.

In the emerging economies, one witnesses that digitalisation has reshaped the businesses, created new paradigms and narrated a handful of unique entrepreneurial success stories. However, there have been pertinent questions about the impact of these developments in the world of labour.⁴

In fact, Knowledge economy has had an intense impact in integration of services and industries. '*Optimised Governance*'⁵ is a paradigm which is mostly looked at in light of the knowledge economy. It also brings to focus new opportunities for job roles, new ways of collaboration and distribution of productivity gains. However the threats of mass destruction of medium killed jobs, labour demand and supply mismatch, exacerbation of inequality, rise of 'Digital Taylorism' and emergence of a class of digital galley workers (crowd sourcing) are looming.

The issue of unequal adoption and use of information technologies has remained a inexorable concern for all stakeholders. A number of social indicators remain closely associated with the leverages provided by the tools of digital revolution and innovative uses of Information technology offer.

Further, it is stated that income, age and education are more closely associated with the use of technology than merely geographical distribution of the users.⁶ A composite index which draws from six parameters, affordability, infrastructure investment, network access, capacity, usage, and human capital may be useful in comprehending the reasons for digital divide in the society. The approach to digitalization should consider the diversity of the people, location and socio economic constraints of the consumers⁷. Content development and demand promotion are still two vital areas in need of attention.

This article discusses the process of digitalisation adopted by India, the factors which are decisive in ascertaining the success of this endeavour, especially in providing novel entrepreneurial capabilities to the rural populations. Also it may be a key take away to study the Indian experience for other emerging economies of the world which are trying to ride high on this tide of digitalisation by capitalising on their demographic dividend and human capital.

India's IT Industry : A Growth Catalyst

In this era of information, human activities are driven by data. Data translates to knowledge, and knowledge drives decisions. With deeper penetration of technology into all segments of social and economic domains, the world is witnessing a shift in the way. The mid-2000s witnessed the start of *digital disruption* underpinned by the enormous computing power and shift towards open architectures. The introduction of smart mobile phones, cheap data and practically infinite storage space blurred time and space barriers enabling ubiquitous access to powerful information management systems.

India has played a major role in world's Information and Communication technology footprint for more than two decades. Today India ranks second in the number of internet users in the world after China. There have been multiple studies that have analysed the cause and effect of this tremendous growth. Some of these suggest that the Indian IT sector primarily thrives on its export, while domestic demand for IT based solutions has been comparatively limited. In India, '*diffusion*' of IT services and products in the domestic segment has historically been slow, but has picked up recently owing to the 'Digital India Programme' that was launched in 2015.

India's Information Technology (IT) sector has been an engine of growth for the economy since the era of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Relatively low-cost english-speaking engineering and technically qualified workforce, fairly developed infrastructure in a number of urban parts of the country and specific impetus given by the government led to this spectacular performance of the sector⁸.

The IT industry is primarily export driven and a major source of foreign reserve for the economy. It has been a significant contributor to the tertiary sector, especially in the last two decades and has become one of the most momentous growth catalysts for the Indian economy. In fact, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in India is increasingly being recognised as an essential tool of development – a tool that can empower the poor by enhancing skills, increasing productivity and improving governance. The success of ICT-enabled development (or e-Development) is measured not only by the diffusion of technology, but also by advancement in development itself⁹. IT education, the IT Industry and IT sectoral developments are essential components of Digitalisation Process.

With the advent of the sector, the population has witnessed a drastic transformation in the socio-economic and cultural lives of the people both directly and indirectly. It is playing a very constructive role in employability, employment opportunities, diversification and enhancing the overall standard

of living of the people. Most notably, it has gradually attempted to shift the nature of Indian economy from an agriculture-based to a knowledge-based economy full of innovative enterprises and world-class technology solutions.

A key paradox of this situation lies in the analysis of data regarding sectorial composition of GDP and sectoral distribution of employment. Data from the past decade suggests that there has been a constant growth in service sector, particularly IT Industry contribution to the GDP whereas agriculture has remained the primary source of employment. This infers that even though there has been a steady shift in the sectoral composition of the Indian economy, from an agro-based economy of the 1950s; it has evolved in to a service-centred economy since the 1990s¹⁰.

The service sector has been a major contributor to the growth of the GDP but its performance with regards to employment generation has not been as remarkable. The share of services sector in the GDP become 53 (employment 31.45 per cent) per cent in 2018 whereas the share of agriculture sector remained less than 16 per cent (employment 43 per cent)¹¹ (NSSO, 2018). Post liberalisation period, the growth in employment in the service sector has been 3.6 per cent compared to national average of 1.5 per cent¹²

A major aspect related to economic growth is *employment intensity of growth* i.e., whether the process of economic growth is creating number of quality jobs or it is jobless growth causing problems of unemployment. The concept of employment intensity of growth is mainly used in analyzing how economic growth and employment growth develop together and the extent of labour market sensitivity to changes in overall economic conditions¹³ (represented by GDP growth) . It is well known that the structure of the Indian economy has changed since independence and it has evolved from agriculture-driven economy to industrial economy to the service-centric economy of today. The service sector has pioneered both in terms of growth rate and its contribution to the GDP, with a growth rate of more than seven per cent since the 1990s¹⁴

It is quite evident that the service sector has led to the growth of the economy but not towards the generation of employment, there has been a rise in the petty jobs in the service sector for people who left agriculture and were not taken up by the industry. There is a large number of jobs in the non-corporate and un-organised sector that offer low job security and poor work conditions. Only a small number of highly paid, high end jobs have been created in few areas like real estate, IT, business services etc. Thus, a clear hierarchy can be seen in this sector in the context of employment growth and output growth.

Thus, this widespread digitisation has also given rise to uneven distribution and access to technology among different areas of the country. This disparity in digital opportunities has been experienced across countries and regions. It has been pointed out by the World Bank as 'while broadband use in the capital cities of India, the Kyrgyz Republic and Moldova and are at the same level as some Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members, usage in these three countries' rural areas is among the lowest in the world.¹⁵ These disparities will certainly impede the process of benefit of these technologies will transfer to the lowest strata and limit them from coming out of the circle of poverty.

There have been a number of studies by national and international agencies and individual researchers that point out that there is certainly unequal access to information and communication technology in the Indian context. Indian government has made concerted efforts to bridge this gap and build a seamless information society because those who are isolated in this era of digital convergence are on the edge of being 'non-existent'.

Further, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set the target to 'significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the internet in least developed countries by 2020' (SDG target 9.c). More generally, the ambition of many SDGs such as target 5.c will require innovative, inclusive, technology-based solutions¹⁶. Numerous initiatives led by civil society and the private sector call for a better use of digital technologies to achieve a breakthrough on some of the most persistent development challenges.

Digitalisation: Bridging the digital divide

Digitalisation has been recognised as a key enabler and agent for sustainable development by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹⁷. ICT has been mentioned in SDGs 4,5,9 and 17, where the role of digitalisation is highlighted in enhancing the quality of education, gender equality, women's empowerment and accelerating innovation, industry and infrastructure.

Digitalisation has remained a key agenda of the Government of India. The government has been focusing on harnessing information and communication technologies for building a digitally empowered knowledge society. Furthermore, the technology assets created through this programme address several key issues of governance and provide responsive service delivery models to the common citizens. The programme is aimed at providing a comprehensive framework where all ministries and state departments will work in an interoperable and integrated environment to facilitate service delivery. The digital India programme encapsulates a number of schemes targeted specifically at rural economies.¹⁸

The World Bank points out that though India has been developing steadily, there are significant demographic and geographical disparities which exist¹⁹. With more than two thirds of the Indian population resides in its villages, digital empowerment of rural India is critical in catalysing all state initiatives towards realising the goal of becoming a five trillion dollar economy²⁰.

India is considered to be a 'Young Country' owing to its demographic dividend and the vast population within the working age brackets. Digitalisation can therefore contribute significantly in increasing access to information amongst the rural youth, therefore providing them with the tools to learn, up-skill and setup businesses²¹. This will not only help in self-employment and sustainability, but also in the creation of more jobs in rural and semi-rural sectors.

With this motive, the Government of India has launched a number of schemes with villages as their focal point, including DDU Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, Grameen Rozgar Yojana, Jan dhan Yojana, Make in India, Skill India to name a few²². A closer look at the scope of all these programmes indicates that digitalisation is a key contributor in enhancing the access and success of these schemes.

While there has been great emphasis on innovation in the digitisation programme, several reports from ministries and independent bodies cite serious challenges in implementing the schemes under the Digital India Programme. Some of these include low literacy levels in rural areas, insufficient training infrastructure, internet connectivity issues, localization and availability of e-content in native languages etc. Even today the internet penetration rate in India is 40.1 percent which is much below the world average of 58.8 percent²³. All these issues are creating an ever growing digital divide which could exacerbate inequalities, resulting in the creation of a new class of "*digital poor*."²⁴

The Digital India Programme attempts to address the need of connecting Indian villages through high speed Internet networks and infrastructure, delivering content in regional languages and providing universal digital literacy. The digital India Programme is a leapfrog step to enhance the technical literacy amongst the common man and also revolutionising the idea of good governance as perceived. Therefore one finds it imperative to note the various dimensions through which the programme aims at enhancing the quality of life of the rural population per say.

It is commonly considered that the urban populations are more privileged in terms of usage and adoption of Information technology. There is a positive association between technology use and status indicators and contrary to the idea of universal benefits from the usage of technology and digital

revolution, innovative usage of the same remains constraints by number of other socio-economic factors.(Hindman 2000)

Building Rural Entrepreneurship through Digitalisation

Digitalisation not only defines the locus of entrepreneurial activities within the economy but also lays down the best practices to realise entrepreneurial goals. If these two functions are executed, an *entrepreneurial ecosystem* comprising of stakeholders and resources to start new business ventures can be built. Digitisation not only supports new ventures but can also be an instrument for transformation of existing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Thus a policy framework to build these entrepreneurial ecosystems based on the foundation of digitalisation is required

In recent years, the Government of India has heavily pushed forward the 'Digital India' scheme which aims to make the country digitally empowered in technology. The vision of the scheme is to increase the level of development in the field of electronic services, manufacturing, products, and job-oriented schemes etc. The scheme is a dream scheme of the government with the objective of providing government services to the population digitally and connecting the rural India with internet to utilise the benefits of all government services and improve their digital literacy²⁵.

The question thus arises that India is digital but is it digital enough, qualitatively and quantitatively? Are the positive economic effects of digitalisation reaching the lower strata of the society? It is evident enough that the urban communities have been positively and deeply affected by the adoption of Information Technology but at the same time there are apprehensions about the rural communities being at a considerable disadvantage posed by geographic, educational or economic isolation referred to as 'rural penalty'.

The 'knowledge gap hypothesis'²⁶ that states that the pace of gaining knowledge from mass media coverage by higher socioeconomic status is higher than those at lower status, thus if we advance the "digital divide hypothesis"²⁷, it will also suggest that information technology would also have a similar function and it may also be reinforcing and widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

The Digital India programme assures to renovate India into a digitally empowered country by emphasizing digital literacy, providing digital resources and combining digital platforms. One of the main objectives of the iconic schemes of the programme is to bridge this urban -rural divide.

The concept of the programme also indicates that it should have a significant impact in the promotion of entrepreneurship within the youth. Entrepreneurship may be defined as a set of practices involving the creation

or discovery of opportunities, evaluation, exploitation and their enactment²⁸. It is an emerging paradigm in the socio-economic studies, and has generated tremendous interest among the academic, industrial and political groups worldwide. It is the top agenda for many countries including India.²⁹ India has tremendous human resource potential attributed to the number of people in the working age groups but at the same time this poses a threat of rising unemployment and incidence of underemployment. Thus, generating mechanisms for self-employment is a survival strategy for the future³⁰.

However, developing entrepreneurship in the rural sectors poses several critical and unique challenges, like modest transport and connectivity facilities, lack of marketing initiatives, small and limited markets and limited or no access to information and communication technologies among others³¹. Thus, it is imperative for the state to formulate means for mobilizing the endogenous entrepreneurial potential of the rural economies in which entrepreneurship has been quantified as “place dependent and local factor” which impacts the economies.³²

The underlying relationship between the digital India programme and rural entrepreneurship is a very interesting one to critically analyse and understand the limited success, and the challenges that have curtailed the digital India scheme from creating a thriving entrepreneurial sector in rural India and the ways to overcome them.

The most crucial question to be answered is how to leverage the Digital India Programme for building rural entrepreneurship. The idea of rural entrepreneurship is gaining momentum owing to underemployment or unemployment in Indian villages. A few NGOs are committed to the cause of betterment of rural lives through entrepreneurship and employment generation, but these are not sufficient. Numerous challenges glare at rural entrepreneurs like poor infrastructure, finance, unawareness, capacity utilization, opportunities for skilling and up skilling, marketing and middlemen issues, lack of technical know how etc.³³

Entrepreneurship is a new socio-economic paradigm, which boosts income, jobs, nurtures R&D and innovations. The overarching benefits of entrepreneurship are often not limited to the economic leverages to the entrepreneur himself but have a cascading impact at large. A number of analytical and empirical studies exist which link entrepreneurship to education, training, mindset and behavior.

Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)³⁴ is influenced by demographic, psychological and behavioural factors. It is imperative to gain a deeper understanding regarding what factors encourage a student to choose entrepreneurial roles and vice versa. In countries like India, social and economic challenges are also an important determiner in developing Entrepreneurial Intention. It has

been said that entrepreneurial education does not have any significant impact on formation of EI among students.

India has been a frontrunner in the digitalization campaign. India Government has always been pioneering in transferring the benefits of digitalization to those at the perils of the society. There have been several theoretical as well as empirical researches in the domain. The specificity of the studies ranges from digitization of education, to health care etc. The socio economic impact of digitization in the developed world has been analysed through a rich collection of literature. In the Indian context there is moderate paucity of more generic discussions on digitisation.

Digitalisation has illustrated tangible outcomes for business and urban lives but at the same time the extent to which rural lives have been influenced by the ICT wave it is yet to be established. Agriculture provides employment to more than half of India's workforce³⁵ and covers almost 43 per cent of India's total geographical area. Digitalisation can be a key player in the success of this sector, for instance technical solutions for amalgamation of the vast agricultural science databases with the traditional knowledge of the farmers can revolutionise the agricultural productivity. There are initiatives being taken in the area of Agricultural Knowledge Management but a need for an integrated policy framework is realized.³⁶

India's demographic dividend poses a constant challenge of generating sustainable employment opportunities. Digitization has been a key enabler in the emerging economies by enhancing opportunities in e-commerce, e-governance and other Internet enabled services. Internet usage increases business revenues by ten per cent worldwide and contribute 3.2 per cent towards India's GDP. SMEs will be a major accelerator to Internet based businesses and employment generation. Thus digitization would help India seize global business opportunities, provide stable employment and restructure the socio-economic strata.³⁷

Since India has been recognized for its IT sector, the penetration of technology into its villages will be a learning experience for other emerging economies. Factors like caste, income, faith and gender have also been actors and factors in the success of the digitalization schemes since long. Studies suggest that an equitable access should guarantee veracity of technological out reach in Indian villages.³⁸

Conclusion : Lessons for Other Economies

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provide a blueprint for a prosperous and peaceful world order. Elimination of poverty is a key pursuit of the world leaders that has been echoed as a primary target to be achieved by 2030. About 21.2 per cent of India's population being under the poverty

line till 2018. Keeping in mind India's population size of 1.3 billion, this is a massive figure. Thus, innovative methods must be employed to provide opportunities to the people at the last mile so that they can be brought out of extreme poverty.

Entrepreneurship has been seen as one of the most important tools for elevating poverty by giving people the means to gain economic freedom and become self-reliant. Governments across the world are aiming to reduce the divide between the rich and the poor and Digital India is a step towards the same endeavour. It is more for the poor and underprivileged than the 'haves' of the society. The aim is to bridge the gap between the digital haves and have-nots and connecting people across demographic and socio-economic sectors. The digitization initiative of the Indian economy is not only relevant at the nation scale, rather it provides a path to make the policy a significant success by suggesting various improvements which will make it capable to be emulated internationally.

It is important to highlight that besides mitigating the gross factors hindering entrepreneurship, funding programmes like micro finance schemes, training, education etc. will increase the prospects of entrepreneurship

Quality and nature of education is intrinsically related to building entrepreneurship³⁹. However it is concluded from various studies that public education systems is not supportive rather it tends to suppress the entrepreneurial potential among youth, particularly in developing countries. There is a need for reorienting the schools to inculcate an entrepreneurial culture⁴⁰.

Entrepreneurship building among youth populations has a close link with education but at the same the nature of traditional school curricula, especially in developing countries seem to be an impediment for building entrepreneurial aptitudes among the students. Rural entrepreneurship is further challenged by numerous intrinsic factors specific to these geographic units. Thus the locus then shifts to specific pedagogical techniques approaches with programmes geared towards creativity; transdisciplinarity, awareness building and behavioural simulation based practical applications

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INDIA'S CENTRAL ASIA POLICY: REVISITING ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION

DR. PRAVESH KUMAR GUPTA

Introduction

According to Sir Halford John Mackinder's Heartland Theory, the nation that controlled the 'pivot of influence' would control the world. He postulated the following :

- Who rules Eastern Europe commands the Heartland
- Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island?
- Who rules the World Island commands the world¹

The pivot included the core of Eurasia, while all of Asia and Europe as the World Island. In the context of the current system, the pivot includes much of Central Asia. The theory, along with Central Asia's geographic location, has played a significant role in the formation of its history. The region includes five countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has only increased Central Asia's strategic importance in world politics.² Central Asia has become a strategic bridge between Asia and Europe. The region has been called the 'global chessboard' because of the constant struggle for domination between imperialist powers, including Russia, the United States of America and China. From the 19th century 'Great Game'³ between Britain and the Soviet Union to gain control over the region to the making of independent states, Central Asia has always been strategically important and coveted for the most powerful countries of the world.

India shares a very long history with Central Asia. The Indian subcontinent was connected to the region through the legendary Silk route for about two millennia in trade, commerce, and people-to-people contact. Ancient Kingdoms like the Kushana Empire had territories in the parts of both India and Central Asia.⁴ Religions like Buddhism found inroads in cities of Merv, Tirmiz, Bokhara in the form of Stupas and monasteries. These historical and civilizational linkages consolidated more with the advent of the Mughal Rule

in India, as many medieval rulers had origins in Central Asia.⁵ However, with the decline of the Silk Road, these cultural and historical exchanges were minimized between the two regions. India had friendly relations with the Soviet Union and also had diplomatic ties with the region which has helped maintain relations after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁶ During the Soviet period, Bollywood and different art forms such as music, dance, movies, and literature continued to bind Soviet republics confidently with India.⁷ Still, India-Central Asia ties remained below the potential.

India's Connect Central Asia Policy is a step by the Indian government to build better political, economic, security and cultural connections with the region. The policy was unveiled by E. Ahmed, India's former Minister of State for External Affairs, at the 1st meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 2012.⁸ The issues covered in the policy include cooperation on various fronts, including political, economic, strategic, regional connectivity, information technology, and so much more. Economic cooperation plays a significant role in geopolitics and in strengthening defence and strategic ties, which include researching joint military and defence issues, coordinated counter-terrorism measures. Afghanistan plays a significant role in the security cooperation between the two regions as it is a crucial country for both India and Central Asia.⁹ The threat of terrorism continues to be a major challenge for India and Central Asia. Developments in Afghanistan affect both parties negatively.

At present, Central Asia is considered as India's extended neighbourhood. In the absence of direct land connectivity, India-Central Asia relations have been marginalized in the post-Soviet period. India and Central Asian Republics (CARs) share common interests in eradicating extremism, terrorism, illicit trade and search for better markets and economic opportunities. Despite the convergence of interests, India's insignificant trade and economic relations with the region for more than 25 years impeded by the physical aspects have decreased India's footprint in the region. However, a gradual Indian involvement in the region has provided more opportunities for India to play a more active role in Central Asia. India's soft power diplomacy in the region has the potential to supplant the trade and economic relations in the long term. For more than two decades of negligible relationship, India-Central Asia relations got momentum in the recent past due to the landmark visit of PM Modi to all five of the Central Asian countries in 2015.¹⁰ Another significant achievement was India's permanent membership to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2017. During Prime Minister Modi's, several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements were signed. India is also contributing to the annual SCO Summits by suggesting several concrete ideas.¹¹

The first-ever India-Central Asia Dialogue at the foreign minister's level was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in January 2019.¹² Afghanistan also participated in this dialogue. Former External Affairs Minister (EAM) of India Smt. Sushma Swaraj led the Indian delegation to the summit. She underscored the need for building a new and comprehensive partnership between the two regions. During the Samarkand Dialogue, several initiatives were taken to enhance G2G cooperation. The setting up of an 'India-Central Asia Developmental Group' was announced.¹³ This group is expected to come up with concrete proposals. It was also decided to develop an India-Central Asia Business Council to enhance trade and commerce between the two regions. On 6 February 2020, the India-Central Asia Business Council was launched in New Delhi with the participation of the respective apex financial institutions of India and CARs. The first India-Central Asia Dialogue also focused on exploring ways to stabilize war-torn Afghanistan. The fear that terrorism or instability may leak into their countries has led to this solution. India will host the Second India-Central Asia Dialogue.¹⁴

In terms of bilateral relations, India has a cordial relationship with the five Central Asian nations. Defence cooperation between Kazakhstan and India has witnessed various new developments in the recent past, including military education, training, bilateral exchange of cadet youth programs, etc. The initiatives taken by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev have helped increase regional cooperation among the Central Asian states. It has increased opportunities for India's multilateral engagement in the region. The bilateral relations between India and Turkmenistan work through mechanisms like the political consultations across the ministries of both nations and suggestions from inter-governmental commissions to enhance relations. Recent developments in cooperation between India and Uzbekistan have been notable. Since the visit of former Uzbek Defence Minister Major General Abdusalam Azizoy in 2018, New Delhi has increased military cooperation with Tashkent. In November 2019, both countries held first-ever joint military exercise - Dustlik-2019 at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent.¹⁵

Strategically, India-Central Asia relationship has been challenged by various powerful nations that seek to control the region. China and its belt and road initiative and Russia's attempts to retain influence in the region increase both risks and opportunities for India. Thus, India's attempts to rebuild its relationship with Central Asia are often viewed as an endeavour to counter China's presence in the region. Moreover, as the competition between India and China intensifies, India could also push to gain the support of the Central Asian nations to attain a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This could also help to build a more constructive India-Russia partnership in Central Asia to balance Chinese

influence.¹⁶ Cooperation between India and Central Asia may also be seen as a tool to prevent the formation of an 'Islamic Belt', which could become an ally of Pakistan.¹⁷

India's role in the development of Afghanistan has also helped build a better relationship with the other countries in the region. By playing a significant role in the development and stability of the region, India can help CARs to attain the level of socio-economic and political advancement without having to become a chessboard for the regional power play.

The relations between India and the Central Asian countries have developed gradually despite having many challenges. Although, as expected, India's role in the region is not considered that of a regional leader but is a strong example of bilateral cooperation in all aspects with Post-Soviet states. The strengthening of mutual understanding among the countries of the region themselves will help promote peace and stability. India will also be benefitted from the positive developments while dealing with the region as a whole, along with having cordial bilateral relations with each nation. This will lead to a win-win situation for both sides and will also ensure the development and stability for everyone, including Afghanistan.

Research Questions

1. What are India's strategic interests in Central Asia?
2. How do consistent high-level bilateral visits have helped in elevating India-Central Asia ties?
3. How India's military cooperation with all the Central Asian republics addresses its security concern in the region?
4. What has India achieved from SCO so far, and what are the prospects for the further association?
5. What are the issues related to the bilateral trade between India and Central Asia?
6. What are the prospects for the growth of bilateral trade between the two regions?

Research Methodology

This research work is focused on many factors and dimensions, such as historical, economic, social, political, geographical, cultural, and religious. The research methodology used, is qualitative in nature using primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the documents and reports of the government and related agencies along with data available with the regional and international organizations, such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB, SCO, etc. The secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, reports, concerned government websites, online resources as well as newspaper and magazine articles. A deductive methodology is also used in this research.

Political and Security Cooperation

After the Soviet disintegration, newly independent CARs had considered India as one of the genuine stakeholders to counterbalance the conflicting forces in the region. And this had proved to be true when the leaders of Post-Soviet Central Asian states chose India to be the first country outside the former Soviet bloc for their State visit in 1992.¹⁸ The opening of Indian missions in all the five capitals was a good initiative at India's part to win the confidence of these republics. Prime Ministers Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Dr. Manmohan Singh visited the region in 1993, 2002, and 2006 respectively.¹⁹ India has also signed a 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' with four out of five CARs.

Table 1. India-CA Strategic Partnership Agreement

S.N	CARs	Year
1	Kazakhstan	2009
2	Uzbekistan	2011
3	Tajikistan	2012
4	Kyrgyzstan	2019

Consistent bilateral visits of high level from both the sides have helped sustained the bilateral ties. It has also created goodwill amongst the political elites and local populations of the both India and Central Asia.²⁰ There are multiple bilateral consultative mechanisms through which cooperation between India and Central Asia is reviewed and discussed. Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs), Intergovernmental Commissions (IGCs), Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on Counter-Terrorism, Trade and Economic Cooperation, Defence and Military-Technical Cooperation and Space Cooperation etc.

Table 2. High-Level official Visits between India-Central Asia and MOUs Agreements signed subsequently

Year	Who Visited	Country of Visit	MOUs and Agreements signed
2015	Prime Minister of India	Kazakhstan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defense and military technology ● Railways ● Uranium supply to India ● Sports ● Transfer of sentenced prisoners

2015	Prime Minister of India	Kyrgyz Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreement on Defense Cooperation ● MoU and cooperation in the field of Elections ● Culture
2015	Prime Minister of India	Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exchange of Note Vertsale (NV) on setting up of Computer Labs in 37 Schools in Tajikistan
2015	Prime Minister of India	Turkmenistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoU on Supply of Chemical Products ● Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology ● MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Tourism ● Defence agreement
2015	Prime Minister of India	Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism ● Uranium supply to India ● Uzbekistan-India Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism
2018	President of India	Tajikistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoU on Cooperation on Peaceful Use of Space Technology ● for development ● MoU for Renewable Energy cooperation
2016	President of Tajikistan	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoU between Financial Intelligence Unit of India and the Financial Monitoring Department under the National bank of Tajikistan concerning cooperation in the exchange of financial intelligence related to money laundering, related crimes and financing of terrorism
2016	President of Kyrgyzstan	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoU for youth exchange programmes ● MoU on agriculture and food security

2018	President of Uzbekistan	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MoUs on Tourism, Agriculture & Allied Sectors, Health & Medical Sciences, Pharmaceutical industry, Science & Technology and Innovation, Military Education
2019	President of Uzbekistan	India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreement on importing uranium from Uzbekistan. MoU on cooperation between Gujarat and the Andijan region of Uzbekistan

Source : MEA, Government of India, Data compiled by Author

India's growing relations with the region came to the forefront when Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, became the Chief Guest during the 2009 Republic Day parade in New Delhi. Prime Minister Modi's July 2015 visit to Tajikistan led to the decision of stepping up on cooperation in the areas of connectivity, defence and counter-terrorism. On bilateral and multilateral fora, India has promoted a comprehensive approach to strengthen international cooperation to curb this menace.²¹ The cybercrime and narcotics are critical to the collective security of India and Central Asia. India and Central Asia, being stakeholders, need to have regular exchanges and common approaches to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a fountainhead of international terrorism.²²

SCO as a factor in India-Central Asia Strategic Relations

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which succeeded Shanghai Five (1996) was established in 2001 by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia and China as the founder members. India and Pakistan were observer states from 2005 until becoming full members simultaneously in 2017. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia are observer states. The SCO provides an opportunity for India to expand its cooperation with the members, especially with the Central Asian region, in the energy, developmental, economic, connectivity and security areas.²³ Strategically, India's SCO membership is expected to balance the power dynamic within the organization where Russia and China are mighty. This could also be used as an opportunity to rebuild ties with China and Russia to build a stronger Eurasian partnership. Though there is a lot of scope of India leveraging its presence in SCO, nothing significant has achieved so far.

The membership of the SCO has enhanced India's presence in the Central Asian region. India has put forth various persuasive proposals for cooperation among the nations. However, India needs to be more proactive and use its position to build on a stronger relationship with the member states of SCO to promote India-centric initiatives. Connectivity and cultural and educational cooperation are two main issues on which India needs to garner the support of the SCO members.

Terrorism is a major focus point of the SCO. Along with Russia and CARs, China and India also have similar concerns about their internal security arising from Afghanistan. SCO- Afghanistan Contact Group was established in 2005. SCO is also committed to help Afghanistan fight terrorism and to establish peace. At the Shangri La Dialogue in 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Asia of rivalry will hold us all back. Asia of cooperation will shape this century." On the contrary, Pakistan's presence in this regional grouping and its support to the radical elements within its borders questions SCO's pledge to curb terrorism and extremism. China's support of Pakistan on raising the Kashmir issue at the UNSC using its veto power pushes India down.²⁴ It also has the potential to dilute the leading cause of the SCO as a regional organization. India will host the annual SCO summit for the first time in 2020.

Defence and Military Cooperation

India's military cooperation with Central Asia has grown over the years as the relationships between the countries became of strategic importance. India has signed various agreements on the exchange and training of military personnel along with refurbishing hardware, sharing of information, and purchase of various aircraft. India's defence cooperation with Central Asia includes the bilateral exchange of visits, military-technical cooperation, education and training along with joint military exercises, and cadet youth exchange programs.²⁵ More than 200 Kazakh defence forces personnel have undergone military training in India to date. In 2019, India and Kazakhstan successfully conducted joint annual military exercise 'KAZIND-2019' in southern Kazakhstan.²⁶ India also held joint military drills with other Central Asian countries such as 'Khanjar' with Kyrgyzstan and the latest being the 'Dustlik 2019' with Uzbekistan.

Both regions are stakeholders and must ensure that terrorism does not seep into their countries through their neighbours. Radical Islam also plays a significant role in the increase of military cooperation in the region. Pakistan has often attempted to use the Kashmir issue to portray the Indian state as an oppressor to Muslims. The dream to build on Islamic solidarity by bringing up religious sentiments is a tool used by Pakistan to curb India's

influence in Central Asia. Thus, India must continue to build more solid relationships with the Central Asian countries that go beyond religion and other factors dismantling regional peace.

Economic Relations

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the growing need for energy has compelled India to look for newer markets. The CARs are abundant in energy, raw materials, oil and gas, minerals, uranium, and hydroelectric power, providing a lucrative market for Indian imports and exports. In recent years, India's trade with CARs has reached about two billion USD, which has comparatively risen in contrast to previous years. Lack of direct land connectivity has been a constant challenge to India's access to the Central Asian markets and vice versa. To overcome this challenge, India invested in the renovation of Chabahar Port in Iran. The Chabahar seaport is a pivotal link which connects India via Iran to Afghanistan and the Eurasian region.²⁷

Furthermore, the port serves as a pivotal link to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multi-channel network of ships, rail and road routes to transport between India to Russia via Iran. In 2018, India signed the Ashgabat Agreement, intending to establish a multi-channel transport and transit corridor. This agreement came into force in 2016 to enhance connectivity within the Eurasian region. India also proposed dialogue on air-corridor and setting up of India-Central Asia Development Group to take forward their partnership and expand its footprints all over the landlocked region.²⁸ In Turkmenistan, India works to renew the plea to develop the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI). This 1,800 km, long pipeline project is estimated to supply 30 billion square meters of gas to India every year. In return, it can bring enormous benefits to the country itself. However, little progress has been made due to the never-ending animosity amongst rebel groups in parts of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

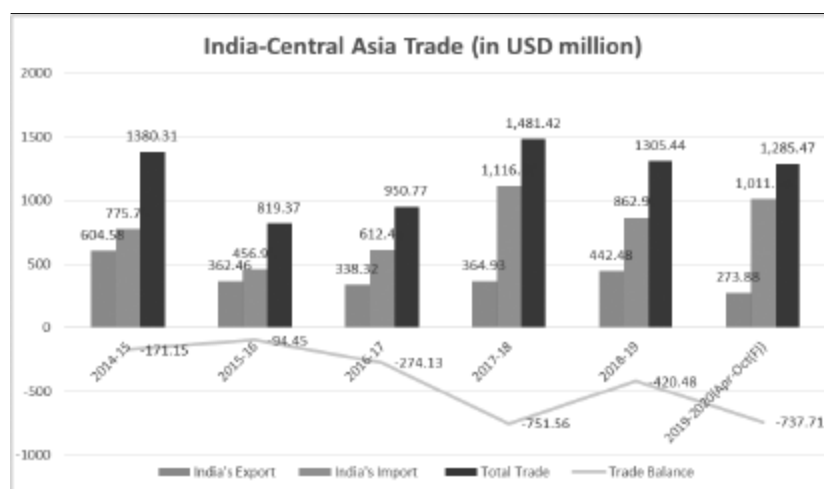
Over the past few decades, the Central Asian region has become a site of power struggles for energy resources. With China entering into the picture, the political landscape of the country has changed tremendously. China acts as a major player in the region by providing funds for infrastructure projects, investments in infrastructure projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and One Belt and One Road Initiative (OBOR), the East-West trade relation is flourishing further. Kazakhstan, a new potential power in Central Asia Region, is now looking to increase its presence by fostering ties with India to facilitate a North-South trade corridor.²⁹ Thus, it is also vital for India to look at Kazakhstan as a stepping stone into the markets of Central Asia and develop an outreach strategy to connect to Central Asia to compete with the growing presence of China in that region.³⁰ Kazakhstan

already enjoys harmonious relations with both Europe and China as a thriving financial hub within the region; however, the rest of the Central Asian region has not reached the same level of development. Therefore, there is a yearning to fund infrastructure and connectivity projects in the region. India can use these opportunities to expand its economic footprints in the region.

Bilateral Trade

India's relations with Central Asia are much below evident potential. Trade between India and Central Asia is minuscule. In 2018-19, total trade between India and Kazakhstan was 851.91 US million dollars, which represented 0.10 percent of India's total trade. For a similar period, trade with Kyrgyzstan was just 32.60 US million dollars, trade with Tajikistan was at 26.52 US million dollars, and India-Turkmenistan trade constituted 66.27 US million dollars, which was 0.01 percent of India's total trade. Ultimately, trade with Uzbekistan was 328.14 US million dollars, which represented 0.04 percent of India's total trade.³¹

Figure 1. India-Central Asia Trade, 2014-20



Source: <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/VIF-Roundtable-on-India-Central-Asia-Relations.pdf>

India needs to expand its export basket concerning Central Asia. IT and communications, Pharmaceuticals are the most promising sectors to look upon for increased trade relations. To increase this limited trade and business, India also needs to leverage its economic and technical capacities with Central Asian countries. This way, it will not only give strategic value to

the India- Central Asia policy but also augment goodwill between the two regions.³²

The first meeting of the Uzbek-India Business Council was held at the Vibrant Gujarat Summit, aiming to facilitate the supply of energy resources, like uranium, to India. India is also in the process of signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of this organization, and Uzbekistan will soon join it. If this materializes, it will give a boost to India's economic engagement with Central Asia.³³

On 6 February 2020, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) along with the apex industrial bodies of the five Central Asian countries, launched the India-Central Asia Business Council. The council will serve as an institutional platform to strengthen trade and investment initiatives between India and Central Asia. It will facilitate more in-depth cooperation between their small, medium, and big enterprises to boost the inter-regional trade and economic exchanges.³⁴

Conclusion

Regardless of all dialogues and agreements, bilateral relations remained at a standstill between the two regions. India's absence from its northern neighbourhood despite their celebrated historical ties has not been utilized to its full potential. India's lack of visibility in the region is mostly due to geographical barriers. Again, due to the landlocked nature of the Central Asian countries, there is no direct sea link between them, which has a significant impact on their regional connectivity.³⁵ Since Central Asia is not India's immediate neighbour, regional connectivity is of paramount importance for both regions. For India to reach CARs, the shortest route is via Pakistan and Afghanistan. Due to its hostility with Pakistan over dozens of issues, overland connectivity remains vexed. The safety and security of goods and transport of energy resources are crucial as it involves both government and private players. And because of this, to-date progress in important projects like the TAPI Pipeline is at a limbo; not a single drop of oil has reached India from Central Asia. However, P.M Modi's refreshed diplomacy towards its extended neighbour is presented as a stepping stone for India to nurture its long-lost relations. Besides, it might be an excellent opportunity to improve trade and commerce. Increased economic relations will give the required strategic substance to India. India must use its soft power in its favour to attract countries.

India's cultural products were trendy since the time of the USSR. However, currently, India needs to utilize it in its favour. Sometimes, soft power achieves what hard power cannot. India should make efforts to organize multilateral engagements with the Central Asian Partners using the existing cooperating forums like the SCO, EAEU. Not only India but CARs are also keen on exploring to expand their horizon of opportunities. Policies like 'Connect Central Asia' should not be just a dream but a reality. Central Asia provides the right platform for India to demonstrate its power as a leading player in the Eurasian region.

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Mandatory Certificate

The author certifies that :

- a. The article is original in content, unpublished elsewhere and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere.
- b. Facts and figures quoted in the article/paper are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct.

POST-APARTHEID INDIA-SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS: STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

DR. RAJESH KUMAR

Abstract

The relationship between India and South Africa is very long and historic. During the apartheid period, India broke all diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with the South African racist regime. The bilateral relations between both countries got restored since 1993 when several bilateral agreements were signed and a new era of India-South Africa relationship began. This research paper examines Post-Apartheid India-South Africa bilateral, strategic and economic cooperation and partnership at regional and multilateral fora like IOR-ARC, IBSA and BRICS.

Key words : India-South Africa, bilateral, strategic, economic, regional, cooperation

Introduction

Geographically, India and South Africa are neighbours separated by the Indian Ocean and historically, the relationship between India and South Africa is very intense and long. During the colonial period, a large number of Indian indentured labourers were transported to South Africa and were racially discriminated and exploited by the colonial masters. When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893 and saw the plight and racially discriminatory life of the Indian bonded laborers living there, he decided to stay there and fought against racial discrimination during two decades (till 1914) of his stay in South Africa. He created a consciousness in Africans and Indians and started Satyagraha (Nonviolent Civil Disobedience and Passive Resistance) movement against the unjust laws of racist government in South Africa.

After independence, the basic principle of Indian Foreign policy was against colonialism, imperialism, racism, and apartheid policy and committed for Afro-Asian Solidarity, Non-Alignment and Decolonisation of Afro-Asian countries. India was the first country who raised the voice in the United Nations against racial discrimination and unjust laws with non-whites (Africans, Indians and coloured). India severed trade relations with the apartheid Government of South Africa in 1946 and broke all diplomatic, economic, cultural, and sports relations and completely boycotted till the end of apartheid in 1994. Many times, India raised the Apartheid issue at the UN, Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), Commonwealth and other multilateral fora and demanded the imposition of comprehensive international sanctions and expulsion from the UN and Commonwealth against South Africa racist regime. India made every effort to end racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa.

After a long struggle, racial discrimination and apartheid laws of South African racist government had to withdraw. All political prisoners were released and the ban on political parties and other organisations was lifted. In 1994, for first time, multi-racial and multi-party elections were held in South Africa and Nelson Mandela became first non-white President of 'Republic of South Africa' and apartheid laws were abolished. After end of Apartheid and the establishment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the relations between India and South Africa became stronger. In 1990, Nelson Mandela first visited India after released from prison after 27 years. The Indian government gave him a warm welcome as a Head of State and Nelson Mandela was conferred, the highest Indian civilian honour, *Bharat Ratna* in this year.

Strategic Partnership between India and South Africa

The relations with South Africa were restored after a gap of over four decades with the opening of a Cultural Centre in Johannesburg in May 1993. The economic sanctions were lifted in 1992 and diplomatic and consular relations were restored during the India visit of South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha in November 1993. After the reinstatement of Embassy and Consulate General in both countries in 1994, started a new era of India-South Africa partnership (India South Africa Relations, <https://www.hcipretoria.gov.in/page/india-sa/>). After the formation of democratic government in South Africa, Indo-South Africa friendly relations have been enriched and strengthened through high-level visits from both sides. Indian Vice-president K.R. Narayanan visited South Africa in May 1994 as a representative of Government of India at the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first president of the Republic of South Africa (Chhabra, 1997: 156). President Nelson Mandela visited India

in January 1995 and India and South Africa signed three agreements to promote political and economic relations, including a treaty on the principles of interstate relations and an agreement on Foreign Office Consultations (Chhabra, 1997: 158).

The term 'strategic partnership' to define Indo-South African relationship was floated for the first time by the South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki during his official visit to India in December 1996. Speaking at Jawaharlal Nehru University in December 1996, Mbeki said: "Our common hope of success, in defining the new world order, will depend on our ability to act together. We are reassured that we can count on India as our strategic partner in this historic endeavour" (Beri, 1998: 287). Mbeki said to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that our relationship is very long. So, the relationship between India and South Africa should be a 'strategic relationship' not just an ordinary relationship, as revealed by other leaders also.¹ On 4 December, 1996, four major agreements were signed between India and South Africa for promotion and protection of investments, avoidance of double taxation, cooperation in defence and cultural sector.

The concept of 'strategic partnership' between two countries was outlined during the second visit of Nelson Mandela in March 1997 and historic "Red Fort Declaration" was signed by President Mandela and the Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. The declaration says that both India and South Africa agreed on regional and global issues and will be closer in trade, investment, peace and security (Chhabra, 1997: 158). Both countries agreed to cooperate as strategic partners at multilateral fora such as the NAM, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the United Nations. As a part of the strategic partnership, both countries want the UN should be restructured and comprehensive reform and expansion of the Security Council and the abolition of the veto system. Both countries are interested in the permanent membership of the UN Security Council (Chhabra, 1997: 159).

During the visit to South Africa in October 1997, Prime Minister I. K. Gujral repeatedly referred to the 'Strategic Partnership' between the two nations. "Both our countries have declared ourselves to be strategic partners. (Chengappa, 1997). That South Africa is the only country with which India has sanctioned such a communion is the testimony to the uniqueness of our ties" (*The Pioneer*, 8 October 1997). India's strategic partnership with South Africa as remarked by President Pranab Mukherjee in 2013 at Pretoria—

Relations between two countries South Africa and India are unique, based on shared ideas, ideals and icons. The common fight by the two countries against apartheid forged a deep bond between leaders of India and South Africa. The challenge for the two countries has always been how to leverage

the excellent political understanding between the leadership into concrete and beneficial outcomes for the 'strategic partnership' between the two countries. (Mukherjee, 2008).

The India-Africa Forum Summit (held in 2008, 2011, 2015), have succeeded in lifting bilateral trade and investment flows to new height (Mishra, 2019b). During India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) Delhi in October 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said—

This is a relationship that is beyond strategic considerations. It is a relationship with a strong emotional link. It has been forged by our intersecting history; our centuries-old ties of kinship, commerce and culture; our common struggle against colonialism; our quest for equality, dignity and justice among all people; and, our shared aspirations for our progress and a voice in the world (*The Wire*, 24 October 2015).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in July 2016 that “South Africa is an important strategic partner, with whom our ties are historical and deep-rooted” (Press Trust of India 2016, <https://www.india.com>). India and South Africa celebrated twenty years of the “strategic partnership” in the year 2017 and 2018 marked 25 years since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with South Africa.

Bilateral Agreements and Exchange of Visits

After the establishment of diplomatic relations in November 1993, South Africa and India have signed around 15 agreements on various spheres including economic and commercial cooperation, defence, culture, health, education, human settlements, public administration, and science and technology.² Since then bilateral agreements and exchange of visits continued. In October 2003, President Thabo Mbeki visited India and signed five important documents and a joint declaration reaffirming the commitment of two countries “towards a strategic partnership, based on their shared values: democracy, economic development with social justice and equitable global order” (South Africa’s foreign policy towards India, <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>). A new dimension was added to the India-South Africa relationship when the foreign ministers of India, South Africa and Brazil met in Brasilia for the launch of India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum in June 2003 (Biswas, 2007:152). In September 2004, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited South Africa and announced at the Pan African Parliament that Indian Government offered to create a \$50 million-worth integrated satellite and fibre-optic wireless network for improved communication connectivity among the 53 African countries (Kalam, 2004).

The 7th session of the India-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) was held in Pretoria in February 2008, and three Agreements on

Customs Cooperation, Science & Technology and visa-free travel for diplomatic and official passport holders were signed (India-South Africa Relations, <https://www.mea.gov.in>). In June 2010, President Zuma visited India and three agreements were signed on (i) Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and Allied Sectors; (ii) Air Services Agreement; and (iii) Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute of India and the Diplomatic Academy of South Africa (The Presidency 2010, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za>). The visit also resulted in the resuscitation of negotiations on a preferential trade area between India and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which had been on the agenda since 2003 (Lucey & Makokera, 2015: 2). In 2010, India and South Africa celebrated the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers in South Africa (Indian South Africans, <http://www.sahistory.org>), which shows a strong heritage and cultural link between the two countries.

During the 8th session of the India-South Africa JMC in March 2011 held in New Delhi, both countries expressed satisfaction that the bilateral trade target of US\$ 10 billion set up for 2012 to be achieved in 2010-2011 and agreed for an early finalisation of SACU-India Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) (India-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission, <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases>). The 9th session of India-South Africa JMC meeting was held in Durban on May 19, 2015, and India's External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and South African International Relations & Cooperation Minister Ms MaiteNkoana Mashabane agreed to cooperate in the area of defence, demining, science & technology, agriculture & food processing and insurance. Minister Mashabane also assured that South Africa would support India's membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) (The 9th Session of the India-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission, <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases>). Both ministers emphasised the need for urgent reform of the UN Security Council and both countries agreed to address obstacles under existing mechanisms and to promote trade and investment (Lucey & Makokera 2015:1).

In January 2015, India celebrated 100 years of Mahatma Gandhi's return to India from South Africa. On this occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released two postage stamps during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebration at Gandhinagar (<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease>). In July 2016, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to South Africa, both the countries signed agreements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Programme of Cooperation in Arts & Culture, Tourism, Grassroots Innovation in Science & Technology, and eight Business-to-Business (B2B) agreements (India-South Africa Relations, <http://www.hcisouthafrica.in/hc.php?id=India-SA>). In July 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially visited South Africa to

participate in the 10th BRICS³ Summit. During this visit, to address the shortage of skills among South Africans, an agreement on the setting up of the “Gandhi-Mandela Centre of Specialisation for Artisan Skills” in South Africa was signed by Prime Minister Modi (India-South Africa Relations, <https://www.hciproretoria.gov.in/page/india-sa/>). In 2018, both countries celebrated the significance of the 100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela and the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as an invaluable legacy of peace, non-violence and compassion.

The President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa was invited as a Chief Guest at India’s 70th Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 2019. President Ramaphosa, on his first State visit to India, and Prime Minister Modi jointly addressed the India-South Africa Business Forum on January 25, 2019, with a focus to grow business ties between the two countries. During this visit, a Three-Year Strategic Programme of Cooperation (2019-2021) was signed by the two sides, aimed at further enhancing the strategic partnership between the two countries (India-South Africa Joint Statement during State Visit of President of South Africa, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateraldocuments>).

Economic Cooperation between India and South Africa

India is currently Africa’s fourth largest trading partner and Africa’s third largest export destination (Pant, in Pant & Taneja, 2019: 54). Currently, India is South Africa’s fifth largest export destination, fourth largest import origin, and the second largest trading partner in Asia (India-South Africa relations: In need of a booster dose, <https://indiaincgroup.com/india-south-africa-relations-in-need-of-a-booster-dose-india-global-business/>). South Africa is India’s most important trading partner, accounting for over 22 per cent of India’s exports (Wagner, 2019: 16). Bilateral trade between the two nations currently stands at \$10.65 billion in 2017-18; both countries set a target of doubling bilateral trade and investment to \$20 billion by 2021 (India-South Africa relations: In need of a booster dose, op. cit.).

India and South Africa are the fastest growing emerging economic powers under the South-South cooperation. India has emerged as one of the largest trading partners of South Africa in Africa. Both countries have increasingly adopted an aggressive stance on economic diplomacy as a means of promoting growth and reducing poverty. India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed the importance of economic diplomacy as a central tenet of its foreign policy. In the future, bilateral cooperation is set to expand in several areas, including the diversification and multiplication of trade and economic relations between India and South Africa (Lucey & Makokera, 2015:1).

In 1946, when India severed economic relations with South Africa, India's trade with South Africa was approximately 5 per cent (3 per cent exports and 1 per cent imports) and the trade has completely stopped in 1954 till the lifting the economic sanctions in September 1993 and establishment of democratic government in 1994. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has signed an agreement for future cooperation with the South African Chamber of Business (SACOB) in 1994. During the visit of Prime Minister I. K. Gujral to South Africa in October 1997, important agreements were signed for the establishment of 'India-South Africa Commercial Alliance' (ISCA) (Beri, 2001: 4). A CEO Forum was held during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 8 July 2016 and eight B2B MoUs were signed between South African and Indian business companies during the Forum to bolster trade cooperation between the two countries (India-South Africa Relations, <http://www.hcisouthafrica.in/hc.php?id=India-SA>).

Bilateral trade between India and South Africa in 1993 was 80 million US\$; it rose to 225 million US\$ in 1994, 600 million US\$ in 1995 (Chhabra, 1997: 161), 1 billion US\$ in 2001, 4 billion US\$ in 2005-2006 and approximately 7.5 billion US\$ in 2008-2009 (South-South Cooperation: The Indo-South African Relationship, <http://www.polity.org.za/article/south-south-cooperation-the-indo-south-african-relationship-2010-07-13>), and 13 billion US\$ in 2013 (Madaan, 2015: 110). India's exports and imports increased by 9.7 and 14.2 times respectively and South Africa's exports and imports increased by 4.2 and 5.4 times respectively in terms of US\$ during 1995-2012 (IMF 2014, <http://www.itac.org.za/upload/SA>). During this period India's trade was higher than that of South Africa (Madaan, 2015: 108-109). India has emerged as the fourth largest exporter to South Africa, trailing to the European Union, China and the US respectively in 2011 (Lucey & Makokera, 2015: 3). India-South Africa trade has grown by nearly 32% annually between 2005 and 2011. For closer economic and trade relations between India and South Africa, both nations signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in February 2007 to boost mutual trade. In 2013, South Africa has promoted cross-border trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) and signed an FTA with India and SACU (Wani & Rehman, 2016).

During the visit of President Zuma to India, both sides agreed to work towards a target of 10 billion US\$ in bilateral trade by 2012. The trade target was revised to 15 billion US\$ by 2014 during the visit of the then Commerce and Industry Minister in January 2011 to South Africa as the bilateral trade target was almost achieved in 2011-12. India's imports from South Africa in 2012-13 and 2013-14 declined mainly due to restrictions on gold imports by

the Government of India, and hence the target of 15 billion US\$ could not be achieved (India-South Africa Relations, <http://www.hcisouthafrica.in/hc.php?id=India-SA>). In the annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas held in 2015, South African Minister MaiteNkoana-Mashabane said: “The bilateral trade stands at 15 billion US\$ and we are targeting to reach more than 20 billion US\$ by 2018.” Minister Nkoana-Mashabane hoped both countries would draw on their long-standing ties as well as increased cooperation in new forums like BRICS for achieving all economic and social goals set by them (Indian Trade Portal, <http://www.indiantradeportal.in>).

Table 1: India’s Trade with South Africa during 2007-2019
Value in million US dollars

Year	India’s Exports	India’s Imports	Total Trade
2007-2008	2,660.7	3,605.3	6,266.0
2008-2009	1,980.3	5,513.6	7,493.9
2009-2010	2,058.5	5,674.5	7,733.0
2010-2011	3,985.02	7,140.55	11,125.57
2011-2012	4,731.17	9,973.11	14,704.29
2012-2013	5,106.93	8,887.89	13,994.82
2013-2014	5,074.29	6,075.26	11,149.55
2014-2015	5,301.99	6,496.52	11,798.51
2015-2016	3,588.74	5,948.42	9,537.16
2016-2017	3,554.43	5,813.22	9,367.65
2017-2018	3,825.21	6,834.70	10,659.9
2018-2019	4,067.20	6,517.33	10,584.5
Average	3,827.87	6,540.03	10,367.9

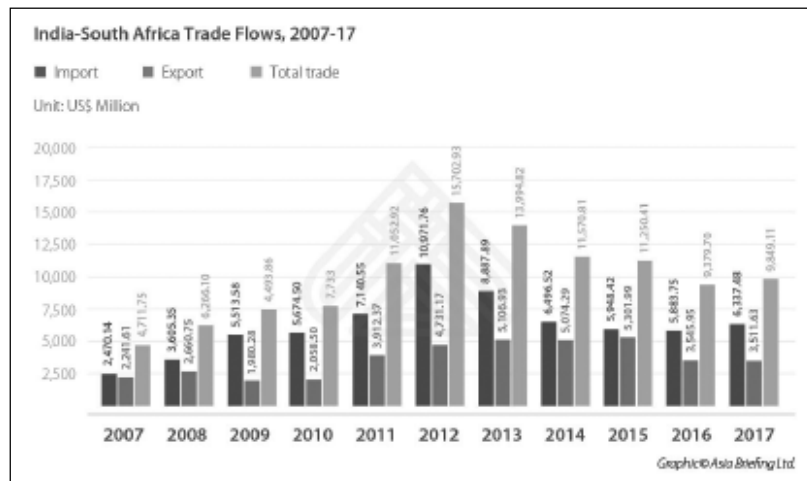
Sources : Ministry of Commerce; Ministry of External Affairs; High Commission of India, (Pretoria), Government of India.

Table-1 shows that the volume of mutual trade between India and South Africa has increased from 0.6 billion US\$ in 1995 to 15 billion US\$ by 2011-2012. This target was achieved before 2014. In 2007-2008 India’s export was

2,660.7 million US\$ and import 3,605.3 million US\$ and total trade was 6,266.0 million US\$. During 2011-2012 total trade between India and South Africa was high as 14704.29 million US\$, but then after started a decrease. During 2015-2016 India's export was 3588.74 million US\$ and import 5948.42 million US\$ and total trade was 9537.16 million US\$. During 2018-19 India's export was 4067.20 million US\$ and import 6517.33 million US\$ and total trade was 10584.5million US\$. The average annual trade between India and South Africa was 10367.90 million US\$ during 2007-2019, of which India's exports were 3827.87million US\$ and imports were 6540.03million US\$.

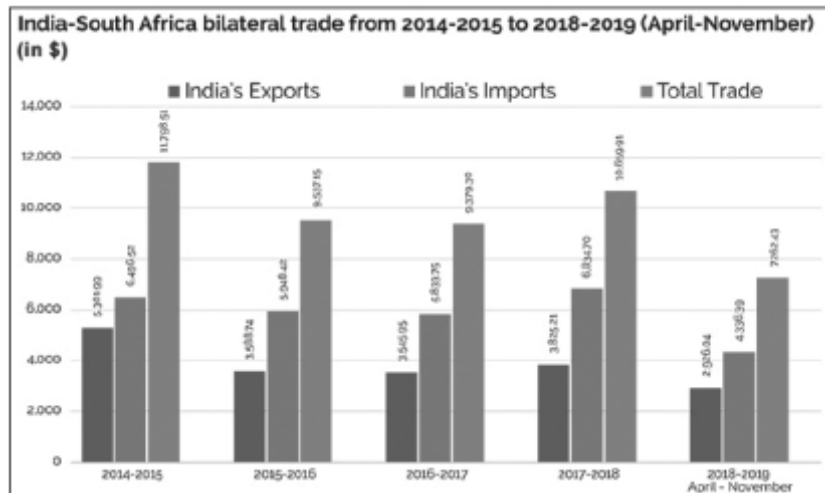
Figure-1: India's bilateral trade with South Africa from 2007 to 2017 (in US\$ million)

Source: <https://www.indiabriefing.com/news/wpcontent/uploads/2018/06/IB-India-South-Africa-Trade-Flows-200717.jpg>.



In Figure-1, India's exports to South Africa grew rapidly from 2,241.6 million US\$ in 2007 to 5,106.9 million US\$ in 2013. Meanwhile, India's imports from South Africa also grew, from 2,470 million US\$ in 2007 to 10,971.7 million US\$ in 2012. Total trade between India and South Africa was 4711.75 million US\$ in 2007, while it grew hugely to 15,702.9 million US\$ in 2012. But after 2012, there was a dramatic decline in India's gold imports from South Africa as India shifted much of its gold imports to Switzerland which has the best quality gold refiners (Chakrabarty, 2017: 7-8).

Figure-2: India-South Africa bilateral trade from 2014 to 2019 (in US\$ million)



Source : Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India, New Delhi. Accessed on 21 January, <http://commerce-app.gov.in/eidb/>

In Figure 2, India's exports to South Africa decline from 5301.9 million US\$ in 2014-2015 to 2926 million US\$ in 2018-2019. Similarly, India's imports to South Africa decline from 6496.5 million US\$ in 2014-2015 to 4336 million US\$ in 2018-2019. Total trade between India and South Africa was 11,798 million US\$ in 2014-2015 that showed a huge decline of 7262 million US\$ in 2018-2019.

Overall investment stock of Indian companies in South Africa amounted to 6 billion US\$ in 2010 and South African investment in India was estimated at about 500 million US\$ (*The Star*, 31 August 2010; Sidiropoulos, 2011). Major Indian investors in South Africa include Tata (automobiles, IT, hospitality and ferrochrome plant), UB Group (breweries, hospitality), Mahindra (automobiles) and a number of pharmaceutical companies, including Ranbaxy and Cipla, as well as IT companies and some in the mining sector. Some of South Africa's key companies have a presence in India including SAB Miller (breweries), ACSA (upgradation of Mumbai airport), SANLAM and Old Mutual (insurance), ALTECH (TV set-top boxes), Adcock Ingram (pharmaceuticals), and First National Bank and Rand Merchant Bank (banking) (India-South Africa relations, <https://www.mea.gov.in>). In 2015, over 100 Indian companies had a physical presence in South Africa. These were mainly

engaged in mining, general manufacturing, information technology (IT) and financial services. South Africa is the third largest African investor country in India, with FDI stock of 112 million US\$ and around 50 South African companies currently operating in India. So, trade and investment between India and South Africa are therefore productive and there remain a number of investment opportunities for both countries (Lucey & Makokera, 2015: 3-4).

A recent joint study by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) and Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) published in May 2018, suggested that around 140 Indian companies have invested close to 4 billion US\$ in South Africa, thereby creating direct employment for over 18,000 people. The leading Indian companies are Wipro, Coal India, Cipla, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies, Mahindra and Mahindra, Vedanta, Zomato and MotherSumi. South African companies which have invested in India are SASOL, FirstRand, Old Mutual, ACSA, Shoprite and Nando's (Mishra, 2019).

Regional Cooperation

India and South Africa have bilateral strategic and economic partnership at different regional and multilateral fora like the UN, G20,⁴ NAM, WTO, IBSA, BRICS, IORARC, BASIC (Brazil-South Africa-India-China) and others. India has attended the Southern African Development Community (SADC) consultative conference in 1995, 1996 and 1997. India has offered wide-ranging cooperation to SADC countries in the areas of the human resources development, trade and joint ventures. In October 1997, the Indian government signed the agreement on economic cooperation with SADC. The first India SADC forum meeting was held in Windhoek on April 2006 and the forum agreed to cooperate in the areas of trade, finance, industry and investment, agriculture and food, water resources management, information and communication technology (Southern African Development Community (SADC), <https://www.mea.gov.in>).

As early as 2002, India's state-owned Export-Import Bank (EXIM) launched the Focus Africa Programme to expand economic relations with Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana. Since 2006 there has been cooperation between the Indian state and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Indian EXIM Bank also supports the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) through loans and credits to encourage the participating states to buy more Indian goods and products (Wagner, 2019: 16).

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)⁵, an initiative of the Indian Ocean Rim countries, was established in Mauritius in March 1997 with the aim of promoting economic cooperation, expansion

of trade and investment, human resource development and technical cooperation across the region (Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, IOR-ARC; <https://www.mea.gov.in>). In 1995, President Nelson Mandela stated: “The natural urge of the facts of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours” (Vines & Oruitemeka, 2008: 2-3). During the visit to Mauritius on 12 March 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi remarked—

Our Indian Ocean Rim Association can be an important instrument for pursuing our vision for a sustainable and prosperous future in the region... We often define regional groupings around landmass. The time has come for a strong grouping around the Indian Ocean. We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR—Security and Growth for All in the Region. (Vines & Oruitemeka, 2008: 2-3).

In July 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Zuma released a joint statement on IORARC. Both leaders noted the importance of the Ocean Economy, growing interest by other countries to join the organization as dialogue partners, and the strategic nature the Indian Ocean can play in developing the Region (Vines & Oruitemeka, 2008: 2-3). The Indian Ocean is a geopolitically vibrant region and both India and South Africa have been working together to build a safe and economically viable blue economy (Ahmed, 2019).

India and South Africa are the fastest growing emerging powers under IBSA and BRICS. Both developing countries have a golden opportunity to cooperate as trading partners. Both IBSA and BRICS are the groupings that have different multilateral values (Ray, 2015). IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), a Trilateral Dialogue Forum, was established in June 2003 to promote the South-South Cooperation in different areas. From the very beginning, the IBSA Summits largely focused on augmenting trade and connectivity among the three countries. One of the most significant commitments of the IBSA towards enhancing economic ties was the initiative to establish the Mercosur-SACU-India Trilateral Free Trade Agreement (T-FTA) that can strongly contribute to international trade as well promote their respective development goals (Sharma, 2017). A Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between India and SACU began after a meeting between the Indian and South African trade ministers in 2000 in New Delhi. Mercosur (Southern Common Market)⁶ and SACU, on the other hand, finalized a PTA in late 2004, a little more than a year after the creation of IBSA. As of early 2014, the SACU-Mercosur PTA is still awaiting ratification by several member states (Why is there still no IBSA free trade agreement? <http://www.postwesternworld.com/2014/02/23/still-trade-agreement/>). The combined intra-trade of the IBSA grew

from 2.5 billion US\$ in 2003 to 21 billion US\$ in 2012 and by 2015 it was expected to cross the 25 billion US\$ target fixed by the group (Soule-Kohndou, 2012).

In 2008, four emerging economic powers Brazil, Russia, India and China, came together to form the BRIC group of countries. In the 2011 Sanya (China) Summit of BRIC, South Africa joined and the group is renamed BRICS. BRICS's main role seems to be a counterbalance of the power axis on the world scene with broader economic and political goals (Ray, 2015). In BRICS, China is most powerful economic power and over the past few years, IBSA has been overshadowed by BRICS. After South Africa joined BRICS, China has been successfully influencing South Africa to ignore IBSA and give more attention to BRICS (Ray, 2015). The China has not only pushed BRICS ahead but also tried to take a lead in BRICS by establishing closer relations with Brazil and South Africa (Panda, 2013: 299). Matching the Chinese notion, South African President Jacob Zuma stated—

We believe that the IBSA will get a better balance and become even stronger with South Africa now as a member of the BRICS, more especially since the mandates of BRICS and IBSA complement each other” (Panda, 2013: 301)

The New Development Bank (NDB) of BRICS was set up in 2014 as an alternative to the American and European-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The NDB headquarters was officially opened in Shanghai in February 2016 and the first regional centre of NDB launched in Johannesburg in August 2017.

There are two new platforms: New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) and Brazil-South Africa-India-China (BASIC) addressing ongoing climate change talks. Wherein South Africa is Africa's proxy within BASIC, a sort of agree to disagree arrangement has evolved wherein the African agenda has tended to contradict the strategies of China and especially India, which has taken the toughest line on issues having to do with the legally non-binding nature of climate talk outcomes. There may also be room for South Africa and AU (African Union) to coordinate synergies in climate diplomacy between NAASP and BASIC in the manner that complements the Africa-India Forum agenda on such issue (Kornegay Jr., 2016: 13-14).

Conclusion

The relationship between India and South Africa is very long and historic. India played a significant role in the Anti-Apartheid struggle. Post-Apartheid began a new era of relationship between both countries. After the Red Fort Declaration of 1997, South Africa is an important strategic partner of India and in 2019 both countries celebrated twenty years of the “strategic

partnership”. During twenty years of “strategic partnership”, many India-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) sessions and bilateral agreements between both countries to cooperate in the economic and political areas, education, culture, agriculture, health, and science & technology. India and South Africa are fastest growing economic powers among the developing countries. India under the new government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized the importance of economic diplomacy as India’s central foreign policy. Bilateral trade between both countries was 10 billion US\$ in 2012 and 20 billion US\$ is targeted to achieve by 2021. Both countries have a common approach and goal on many global issues such as South-South Cooperation, multilateral trade negotiations, WTO negotiations, the UN Security Council reforms and permanent membership in it, and strategic partnership at various regional and multilateral organizations like IOR-ARC, IBSA, BRICS and other forums.

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Endnote

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3. Acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
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6. South American trade bloc.

GLOBALIZATION OF MEDIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

R. RADHAKRISHNAN

Introduction

The Second World War left two mutually incompatible victors – America and Western Europe on the one hand and Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the other. This resulted in the bipolar world of US and Soviet spheres of influence caught in the epic conflict of capitalism vs communism, an era known as the Cold War. There was a fundamental shift in the US foreign policy as many significant personalities and members of the national elite called for the propagation of ‘American values’, liberal agenda and the free market economy in order to check the expansion of the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and address the rise of Marxist ideology across the globe.¹

According to Emily Rosenberg, the US establishment had realized that if the US had to promote its core values and beliefs in the international arena, mere propaganda war would not suffice and a more sustainable strategy would be the proliferation of its ‘capital and products’. The success of Western culture, would aid the success of Western values and worldview. In other words of the propagandists of US believed that their liberal values and culture juxtaposed with free market capitalistic order, would create an inbuilt mechanism that would sustain itself in new environs.²

During the Vietnam War era the propaganda war heated up because of US public and media dissent against the war. The perspective on the war differed, significantly, depending upon the location from which it was being viewed – Washington, Berkeley, Hanoi or Saigon. In other words, there was a qualitative difference of opinion depending upon whether it was viewed through the eyes of an American or a Vietnamese, but also American public vs. the American state. Even given unlimited resources, information, print space, and airtime, the press could not present the Vietnam experience accurately.³

The US engagement in Vietnam was not yielding the desired results in the form of an American victory and the media whipped up an anti-war campaign, by pointing to the casualties and the stalemate. Lyndon Johnson the then US President, found this unacceptable. His administration felt that the need for garnering public support necessitated counter-persuasion of the media and the common masses. To convince them that USA is winning the war in Vietnam, the administration initiated a communication campaign termed the 'Optimism Campaign.'⁴

Delli Carpini states that the Reagan and Bush administrations had mastered the art of manipulation, clearly knowing when to approach the US public to co-opt it on certain issues like tax reforms, the Grenada invasion etc., while resorting to covert strategies such as dilution of many environmental and social regulations, the secret war against Nicaragua and secret arms sales to Iran.⁵

The power of media as a non-state actor that could shape national and international opinion could be gauged by the role it had played in rattling one of the powerful presidents of the US, Richard Nixon, who had successfully won a second term before the committed investigative journalism into the Watergate scandal brought his term to an ignominious exit. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's investigative journalism had resulted in the renewed public interest and respect for media.⁶

What the Watergate scandal illustrates is the extent to which media can shape public opinion and policy. In this context the role of media as a soft power faces a complex scenario where it may or may not always be in control. Many of the changes are neither controlled by any regime nor by the media nor by technology. In other words, there is no linear scale of the usage of the soft power. So the end results of the US soft power are often an offshoot of the US society, polity, economy, and technology rather than a direct US state intervention.⁷

During the two US led interventions in Iraq, first on the plea to liberate Kuwait and the second time on the allegation that Iraq was stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMD), sections of media and public intellectuals in US had invoked the fear of another Vietnam War but the regime successfully managed public discourse at home and abroad. There has been numerous studies which have tried to study the role and influence of the news content in interpreting and constructing international news to endorse their respective nation's foreign policy.

This also highlights that the content of mass media plays a critical role in the individual preference towards foreign policy and that media is most plausible link between the common masses and the law makers. Media also remains the most important source through which most of the masses receive

information. Law makers/public representatives follow media reports on public perception, while masses gather information about the political stand of their representatives on foreign policy through the same media.⁸

The entire process of modernization is one of systemic integration of the world and acceleration of social and technological changes. In this respect the development of the past three decades represent a new phase of acceleration, some of whose contours are traceable to the developments of the 1970s and 1980s in the more developed countries of Western Europe and North America. The following are the key developments which have transformed the cultural landscape in the last three decades:

1. The rise of the digital revolution—1970s
2. The globalization of media—1990s
3. The breakdown of the bipolar order and the rise of the multipolar world—1991

The rise of the digital revolution—the rise of information and communication technology (ICT).

One of the most sweeping changes affecting every aspect of our lifestyle in the past three decades has been the rise of the digital revolution or information and communication technology. The idea of intelligent machines is very old. The calculating machines of Blaise Pascal⁹ and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz¹⁰ were mechanical devices with very limited possibilities. In twentieth century the idea of a computer received its theoretical form through the writings of the mathematician Alan Turing's idea of the computing machine (known as Turing machine).¹¹ There were many attempts to build calculating and computing machines but the ENIAC was the first modern computer¹². However many of the earlier computers were mainframe computers requiring elaborate management. It was with the development of PC and Macintosh beginning in the 1970s and the subsequent development of graphical user interface (GUI) along with increase in microprocessor speeds which finally brought the digital revolution home. Parallel to these there has been several attempts to link computers together giving rise to the idea of internet, which became a big time reality in the 1990s. Around the same time protected national markets were opening their floodgates to welcome global finance and media. The rise of the internet also facilitated the dotcom and content revolution necessitating search engines. It is in this scenario that Yahoo and later Google started indexing the World Wide Web. The internet also facilitated community of net users to collaborate in various ways towards various objectives thereby leading to media content getting decentralized and deterritorialized. This has resulted in the control over news and information slipping away from the nation states to individual users.

The globalization of media

The 1990s witnessed the phenomenal global rise of large media corporations as non-state actors challenging and diluting the sovereign control of states over the flow of news and information. Moreover the bipolar order was on decline, paving way to the western onslaught in the global public sphere. Globalization opened world markets for the spread of western corporations including western finance and media corporations. Among its many manifestations was what eminent sociologist George Ritzer called the McDonalidization of the world.¹³ This was witnessed in the manner Barack Obama won the Presidential polls, in which Web 2.0 technologies were utilized and the electoral victory of President Trump use of Twitter, which reinforced McDonalidized version of emphasis on quantity rather than quality¹⁴.

Daya Kishan Thussu, has tried to identify and highlight similar phenomenon in the media sphere, which he has termed as Murdochization¹⁵. According to Thussu, Murdochization is characterized by following features:

- a. Convergence of global media technologies.
- b. Tendency towards market-driven journalism and media content.
- c. Transnationalization of western media formats, products and discourses.
- d. Emphasis on infotainment to the point of undermining socially relevant public news and information.

This is a clear departure from the earlier media format which had prevailed in the Indian media sphere, which can be characterized as state-guided public discourse about India. The opening of the media market to foreign players as well as international finance undermines the state's ability to engineer discourses from the vantage point of national sovereignty and the objective of nation building. Transnational media has the power to engineer discourses to the advantage of their owners' interests including the interests of the country of their origin. A noticeable example is the open declaration of the US-based billionaire investor, George Soros, at the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos, in January 2020. Soros spoke about the actions of Indian government, under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Soros was critical about the NDA's policy with reference to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of article 370, which he asserted runs counter to the values of open societies around the world¹⁶. He announced a billion dollar fund to build a global network of higher educational institutions for various awareness and outreach initiatives to counter the 'resurgent nationalism' around the world.

According to George Soros, nationalism and jingoism were making further strides around the world with the 'biggest and most frightening setback' in India. Soros considered it his moral responsibility to counter the resurgence

of nationalisms. The most striking aspect about the phenomena is the power wielded by a businessman to dictate geopolitics according to his business interests and personal partisan views. Soros had earlier tried to set the agenda by flexing his financial muscle. One of his earlier attempts was to dislodge George W. Bush Jr. in 2004 by funding the presidential electoral campaign of Hillary Clinton. Since 2003 he has spent more than \$48 million, aiding or financing over 30 major news and news infrastructure organizations including journalism schools, investigative journalism ventures and other industry organizations.¹⁷

The power of media has increased manifold since the last three decades since the end of the *cold war*, to the extent of wielding enormous pressure on the foreign policy to seeking to exerting influence over the nation's sociopolitical landscape, economic policies and cultural politics. Prof Thomas has sought to highlight the cultural and material power particularly of the spurt in conformist forms of Christianity within the Protestant denominations in India and their ability to use the media as an apparatus for furthering the agendas of Christian fundamentalism, within the wider ambit of religious extremism in India. He argues that there is dearth of adequate scholarship to study the impact of globalization of religion on India's minority religious nationalism and the unwillingness among the media scholars to study the impact in terms of the reach of media on culture and politics.¹⁸

The debate on Media imperialism continues, in Asian countries and it has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in the media and its message. Countries like India and China have by and large exercised. A range of gate-keeping policies which range from making the foreign channels conform to national censorship in order to restrict the inflow of foreign cultural products and content. It has led to an acceleration of production of native/indigenous products apart from forcing the foreign media firms to localize their content to cater to the preference of the audience.¹⁹

The breakdown of the bipolar order and the rise of the multipolar world.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and fall of communism in Eastern Europe led to the cries of a New World Order (NWO). Articulated by George W. Bush Sr. and his administration, the NWO assumed that the breakdown of the bipolar order would pave way to a unipolar world dominated by Western capitalism and Western-style of democracies. Fukuyama states that the collapse of communism makes the triumph of Western liberal democracy and free market economy as universal models inevitable, bringing history to an end.²⁰

The dream of new world order was short-lived as the present world has witnessed many tumultuous changes from the bipolar world order to a

unipolar order, following the crumbling down of the Soviet Union in 1991. However what resulted was the quick collapse of the new world order following the emergence of multipolar trends and nationalistic resurgence around the globe. This had been anticipated by Samuel Huntington who stated that the new world order might not be as we expect it to be because deep rooted conflicts between civilizations will supplant the ideological conflicts.²¹ Huntington's guarded analysis has proved more accurate than Fukuyama's triumphalism. The international system remains a complex labyrinth of systems involving economic, political, social, scientific, technological and military sub-systems. Analyzing the system and predicting the changes is herculean task but navigating foreign policy in this complexity is even a bigger challenge.

The coverage of the events like 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan by the international media showcased the role of the media in the choice of information which was considered to be newsworthy. It was found that the range of sources, their variety of origin (foreign rather than national) and identity played a major role in ascertaining the scope and variety of the news coverage. It was also found that media persons and editors played a major role in the selection of news guided by national interest, national journalistic culture, and editorial policy.²²

Media as an actor in India's Foreign policy

Media in India until 1990s was divided between print media, which was privately owned and could voice an independent opinion and could confront the Indian state and shape public opinion. The broadcast media was however centralized and represented the will of the regime in power. This changed with globalization and the arrival of satellite and cable television around the time of the gulf war (liberation of Kuwait) and it was accelerated following the introduction of sweeping economic reforms during the regime of Prime Minister Mr Narasimha Rao in 1991.

Major international media corporations like STAR group, Sony, CNN, BBC and MTV made inroads into the drawing rooms of the average Indian middle class, bringing in a sudden transformative experience towards global culture. Leela Fernandes argues that the prevailing public discourses, differentiate and safeguard the lifestyle of new globalised aspirational Indian middle class from the traditional Indian middle class, whose social mores were determined by culture of austerity. She states that, "This heightened visibility has transformed the new middle class into an object for the projection of political, cultural, and ideological assumptions from a range of actors."²³

In this context the power of media over masses to the response of the media to the rising power of the middle class has seen an interesting

convergence and site of contestation and interactions. The pressure mounted by the relatives of the passengers of the high jacked plane flight IC-814, is a case which indicates the pressure mounted on the government to partially concede to the demands of the terrorist outfit. The Indian government's official response has been that it established contact with the then Taliban regime in spite of its official policy of not extending any kind of recognition of the Taliban, due to our strong reservations about its dogmas in order to seek the release of the Indian passengers who were held as hostages for more than week.²⁴

In the current scenario, media has emerged as a powerfully independent non-state actor. It exercises considerable influence through its ability to project, represent, reinforce and confront existing discourses shaping Indian foreign policy. A study conducted by Devesh Kapur on public opinion in India, found interesting aspects of the media's role in shaping foreign policy. Kapur observes that there has been a transformation of media's role from that of an agency focused on disseminating information about the views of the law and policy makers to a campaigner for civic action and public policy. The rise of 24/7 news channels and other electronic platform is held as a factor that have played a decisive role in ensuring that media emerges as an independent actor in the domain of foreign policy.²⁵ In other words there has been a qualitative shift in news coming from the elite to the elites and establishment forced to respond to the news on foreign policy. The present trend of the social media playing the role of a catalyst wherein the news can go viral shaping the minds of the populace, even before the government of the day, seeks to respond to it. This is all the more challenging in cases where decision making has to be swift, lest negative coverage blur the issue with emotional overtures.

One of the criticism is the alleged anti Political class bias stoked by the media, especially during the critical circumstances like terrorist strikes. It remains unresolved in terms of identifying the source of such assumption, while the fact cannot be denied that anti political class, sentiments has a long history in the Indian political landscape. The problem gets accentuated during the reporting of terror strikes much to the detriment of national interests and the sovereign role of the state in responding to such crises.²⁶

Some of the examples are the various social movements that have taken place like the Anna Hazare movement across the country and the media coverage of the attacks on the Indian students in Australia, that was framed by the media as a race related agenda rather than a mere criminal or an act of violence. The vociferous NRIs were able to highlight their plight, forcing the government of India to contextualize the issue through the prism of race related attack in its deliberations with the Australian government.

The frequent coverage on the incidents had contributed to a slump in the number of students heading to Australia for higher studies from India. The city of Melbourne was specifically reported to be unsafe of people of Indian origin and hub of racist attacks to the extent that Indian Government issued a travel warning for Indian students who were planning to pursue their higher education in that city.²⁷ The second incident which had the propensity to derail the Indo-US ties were the media coverage of the arrest of the Ms Devyani Khobragade in New York in December 2013 over the alleged ill treatment of her Indian maid. This had a ripple effect on the two major democracies, who are also projected as natural allies, since it highlighted the difference between the perception of a section of Indians based in the United States and the common masses in India.²⁸

The recent protest over the biased coverage of the Kashmiri Pandits in the *Washington Post* over glossing over the terrorism based on religion and the subsequent ethnic cleansing was highlighted by the protest against such reporting by a section of Kashmiri Pandits.²⁹

The modern states have used media to safeguard and project their national identity and policy agendas in the sphere of international relations. The positioning of their respective national interests will affect its interaction with other states but will eventually also create a middle ground in the comity of the nations.

The influx of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and its interest in the emerging Indian market also transformed the traditional print media, pushing it towards a focus on advertisement revenue and market driven journalism. This development leads us to another important issue concerning the role of the Indian state towards management of the media and unleashing its power. The proximity of media and politics has also as Prof Thomas opines that, it makes it ineffective as there is lack of independent regulatory regime. The Indian state has at times displayed an ambivalent tendency in addressing the issues in the support and distribution of communication resources.³⁰ The challenges are also accentuated by the cross media ownership which has created a precarious situation of mediascape being caught in the labyrinth of corporate media power in India and its impact on right to information and accountability to the public. The print media is not an exception in India and the idea of Foreign Direct Investment remains an uncharted terrain.³¹

The media corporations have the tendencies to emerge as national conglomerates, with reach in a widespread manner ranging from news business, entertainment, media distribution and network business. They also own newspapers, magazines, radio, cable TV and television channel, which have further complicated the attempts to ensure a free media, wherein a

partisan agenda are not promoted nor is any attempt to manufacture consent for any particular political ideological discourse.³²

Conclusion

Since the links between Media houses have emerged as corporate entities and transformed into big business house, they have also moved into much diversified business. This also an impact on journalism, reporting style and the views articulated by newspapers, to the extent that editorial control was gradually taken over by the advertising and corporate functionaries. It was argued that well entrenched journalists had the choice to be righteous or stenographers. Moreover the dominant media is not facing a faceoff about being or not being corporate or business house or an anti establishment agency, they are corporate and they represent the establishment.³³ There is also a counter argument about the independence of journalistic freedom, since the present terms and conditions have been antithetical to editorial freedom with the advent of market determining media products influenced by corporate sector and the state in terms of the advertising revenues.³⁴ We are likely to witness some more cataclysmic change since the developments aren't confined to India but around the world. The globalization of media continues to affect culture, politics and society cutting across national boundaries or gated identities.

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June 5, 2005 URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/05/weekinreview/the-news-media-is-still-recoveringfrom-watergate.html>
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 8. Soroka, Stuart N, Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy, *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 8 (1), Winter 2003, p-28. There has been an attempt to study media content, public opinion and foreign policy concurrently to understand agenda setting and issue salience. When the government loses control over politico-diplomatic process, the media asserts its independence, become more critical and tries to overwhelm the government.
 9. Blaise Pascal was a French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, inventor, and theologian. In mathematics, he was an early pioneer in the fields of game theory and probability theory. *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (IEP) (ISSN 2161-0002), <https://www.iep.utm.edu/pascal-b>
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 11. Turing machines, first described by Alan Turing in Turing 1936–37, are simple abstract computational devices intended to help investigate the extent and limitations of what can be computed. Turing's 'automatic machines', as he termed them in 1936, were specifically devised for the computing of real numbers. They were first named 'Turing machines' by Alonzo Church in a review of Turing's paper (Church 1937). URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/turing-machine>
 12. ENIAC was something less than the dream of a universal computer. Designed for the specific purpose of computing values for artillery range tables, it lacked some features that would have made it a more generally useful machine. Like Colossus but unlike Howard Aiken's machine, it used plugboards for communicating instructions to the machine; this had the advantage that, once the instructions were thus 'programmed', the machine ran at electronic speed. Instructions read from a card reader or other slow mechanical device would not have been able to keep up with the all-electronic ENIAC. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/technology/computer/ENIAC>
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P. Sainath, a reputed journalist states that media companies are into numerous businesses beyond their own realm, that range from real estate, hotels, mining, steel, chemicals, rubber and banks to power and sugar. There are also top political leaders who directly own vast media empires. Who can hold ministerial portfolios (a situation of conflict of interests) while running their media fiefdoms. Media companies also own IPL teams too, or are their media sponsors. The complex nature of media-corporate links still allows for spaces within which honest journalists can function. Hence he argues that journalists, especially entrenched ones, can choose whether they want to be stenographers or not.

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THE STATUS OF CENTRAL ASIAN
WOMEN : A STUDY FROM THE SOCIO-
ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

BIMALENDU GHOSH

Abstract

Central Asian states namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are emerged as independence states due to the disintegration of the USSR in 1990s. Central Asia is a mixture of great cultures and civilizations. In the task of state building in independent Central Asia, several issues have been given priority and women are one of them. Women constitute half of the total population of Central Asia and they are highly educated. They contribute significantly in economy, education, agriculture, society as well as politics. But they are also facing some problems from traditional culture, religion and patriarchy. In addition, in recent decades, challenges and opportunities consequential from transitions to a market economy increased gender imbalances in labor markets and opportunity structures of the region. Having constitutional arrangement in all Central Asian republics, women are not in position as expected. My article is critically analyzing the women problems in the region and also discusses the status of women in Central Asia. Finally, my paper will shed light on possibilities of improving the status of women in Central Asian republics.

Key words : Exploitation, trafficking, deprivation, corruption, economy

The current world population is 7.8 billion as of October 2020 according to the most recent United Nations estimates elaborated by World meters and nearly half of the population are women. The term 'World Peopulation' refers to the human population (the total number of humans currently) of the world (*Current World population, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/#ref-1>, Accessed on:23/10/2020*) The most populous continent is Asia and least populous continent is Oceania. The Central Asian republics are located

in the most populous continent in the world with huge geo-political potentiality. The Central Asian countries are geographically landlocked and economically heterogeneous. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are energy exporting countries whereas Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are agricultural dependent economics. (*Khitarishvili: 2016:2*)

Table-1: Region wise population in the world-2020

Sl. No	Continent	Population	World Share
1	Asia	4,641,054,775	59.6 %
2	Africa	1,340,598,147	17.2 %
3	Europe	747,636,026	9.6 %
4	Latin America and the Caribbean	653,962,331	8.4 %
5	North America	368,869,647	4.7 %
6	Oceania	42,677,813	0.5 %
Total	7,794,798,739	100%	

Source : World Population by Region, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>, Accessed on: 20/05/2020.

The Asian Continent is divided in five sub-regions namely; Southern Asian region, Eastern Asian Region, South-Eastern Asian region, Western region and Central Asian Region. The Southern Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives) is the most populous sub region in the Asian Continent whereas Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) is the lowest populous. Central Asia (2020) has a population of about 74 million, consisting of five republics: Kazakhstan (pop. 18,776,707), Kyrgyzstan (6,524,195), Tajikistan (9,537,645), Turkmenistan (6,031,200), and Uzbekistan (33,469,203).(*Sub-regions in Asia by population,2020*) Women constitute nearly half of the population of Central Asian population and the average life expectancy of females at birth is 70 years. A common determinant of Central Asian women's lives is generally to take care of the house and contribute to income of the family as well. Meanwhile women constitute nearly half of the active labour force in all the Central Asian republics. Women contribute in all type of education is significantly high but nearly 20 percent in National Legislature in the respective republics. In Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have by far the highest share of agricultural GDP, around 28 percent, 27 percent 24 percent respectively but it is notable that Central Asia is only

2 percent of the world's arable land and most of the cultivation done by the women. (Rocca: 2014:3-4) Therefore, women played an important role in all Central Asian republics. Thus, women are vital in comprehensive and inclusive development of Central Asian republics. The discussion of Central Asia is meaningless or incomplete or one-sided without discussion of women of Central Asia.

Table-2: Region-wise population of Asia- 2020

Sl.No	Sub-region	Population	World Share
1	Southern Asia	1,940,369,612	24.9%
2	Eastern Asia	1,678,089,619	21.5%
3	South-Eastern Asia	668,619,840	8.6%
4	Western Asia	279,636,754	3.6%
5	Central Asia	74,338,950	1%
Total	4,641,054,775	59.6%	

Source : Sub-regions in Asia by population 2020, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-asia-subregion>, Accessed on: 20/05/2020.

The status of Central Asian Women (CAW) transformed according to a variety of times, ruling regimes and governments. In other words, the CAW rights, liberties and their identities were shaped and reshaped in each period in which they lived. The current identity and status of CAW is linked to their past i.e. Soviet period or pre-Soviet period, the feudal-colonised period. CAW is a homogenous population mentioned by the several scholars. (Urbaeva:2020 :207) The pre-Soviet time for the CAW is associated with the practice of bride purchase and bride price (Kalym- *old pre-wedding custom*), child marriage, female isolation at the back of the house (Ichkari-*individual houses for women*), isolation through the veil (Paranja-*the Islamic dress that covers a woman from head to toe*), polygamy, violence and complete domination over the lives of women. Women were exploited in every way since they were the legally acquired property of the husband. (Chenoy: 1996: 516) All these practices were socially and legally acceptable throughout the Central Asian region. Moreover, female health and hygiene was appalling because women were considered impure and daughters a burden. Female mortality was high. Besides this, women were illiterate, socially isolated, and economically dependent, despite being engaged in continuous domestic

labour for which they were even not paid a single penny. This labour included productive labour like carpet weaving, animal husbandry etc. The political participation was an entirely distant dream for them. Therefore, status of women in Central Asian society is formed by a lot of invisible social and cultural customs, religion, tradition, patriarchy, family experiences, educational achievements and the history of local development.

The Soviet time proved to be the golden period for Central Asian women. The Government completely banned all the ill practices which were against women. In other words, Soviet propaganda equated women's liberation with their freedom from Islamic traditions that they considered to be oppressive, including the patriarchal practices of early marriage, polygamy, and veiling. (*Urbaeva:op.cit :207-208*) Their education level was enhanced from 2 percent to 99 percent during the Soviet era. The economic participation of women was extensively encouraged and to increase women's involvement in external affairs (apart from home) like crèche, kindergartens, childcare centre, community kitchen etc. Various kind of leave provisions were launched to facilitate the working environment for women. Women had high sort of participation in the local and national government. The quota systems ensured 33 per cent representation by women in the Supreme Soviet. (*Tanwar: 2017: 228*) Women and men were treated equally in constitutional laws. According to Article 122 of the Soviet Constitution, women enjoyed equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, culture, social and political life. (*Tanwar: ibid: 233*) It is ensured by granting women equal rights with men to work, remuneration of labour, leisure and rest, social insurance. In addition, women enjoyed the right to divorce, right to vote, right to equal inheritance of property, right to education without discrimination, right to be witness in court on equal basis as men and right to hold public offices. In addition, women enjoyed the paid maternity leave for up to one year or up to three years unpaid and during that period it was illegal to dismiss a woman from her job in the Soviet age. Women took for granted the state's healthcare system of obsteric and gynaecological clinics, health resorts, delivery centres that cared for women free of charge. (*Tanwar: ibid: 226*) In other words, women's and children's health was given a special preference during the Soviet era. All expected mothers were place under medical supervision from the very first month of pregnancy. As result all women gave birth in maternity homes where processional staff was easily available. A large number of research institutes of mother and child care were established. For example, a low-cost childcare system, free public education; government allowances for families with children and state support for families with many children including additional allowances, inexpensive children's clothing, housing privileges etc. and that helped the women to

maintain their home as well as their family. (*Tanwar:ibid*) Actually, it was the first attempt when women's health was given any consideration and first experience for women when some special attention was offered to them as citizens at government level.

The changing status of CAW from Pre-Soviet period to Soviet period was extremely constructive. At the same time, it is also a fact that even after these phenomenal changes women have not achieved parity with men. The patriarchal form of society and traditional of Islamic practices were holding back women's progress in the society of Central Asian region.

Despite government efforts, CAW continued to engage in traditional religious practices, partly because religious practices by women were implemented out of sight of government officials in the private domain of the family and household. In this way, Central Asian women carried the responsibility of maintaining Islamic traditions, in addition to their family and employment duties. Moreover, women's role in privately upholding Islamic traditions became central to preserving a Muslim identity within local communities. (*Urbaeva: op.cit:208*) However, the 'double burden', wage gap and their nominal number among the top position were some of the challenges women faced in the Soviet era. In addition, women were to some extent facing the common evil of kalym, paranja, polygamy and bride- kidnapping (*abducting women and girls for forced marriage*). Actually, having the constitutional compulsions, women were living the life of beasts where they have not any rights regarding property and divorce whereas the condition of widows was also pathetic. However, Soviet period was the certainly a new dawn for women in the Central Asian republics at least in constitutional level.

The women question is one of the issues in the history which has had its own specific complicated. Uncomfortable global changes have been observed in the post-cold war period and it also seen in the newly independent Central Asian Republics (CARs). The condition of women of CARS was certainly worse in terms of social, political and economic affairs. All the former Central Asian States are in modes of state building, but despite these changes in economic and political direction, institutions of the past have not been completely broken. The CARs were witnessed deterioration in women's condition and women were pushed out of power structures. They largely outdated the USSR traditions in real practice. Therefore, if we understand the status of the Central Asian women, must know the contemporary patriarchy system, Islamic tradition and transitional phase as well as market economy of these republics.

The basic status of the Central Asian women are now depending on the Charter of UNO, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights(UDHR), 1948; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16th December 1966;

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16th December 1966; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW- adopted by the Assembly in 1979); women's rights were human rights (the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993); Millennium Development Goals (Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, 4–15 September 1995 in Beijing, China), Soviet time experience and current constitutional arrangements for women in these republics.

Women's rights are fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet nearly 70 years ago. These rights include the right to live, free from violence, slavery and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage. According to *Article-1* of UDHR, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*) Here all human means both men and women and this is the legal basis of dignity of all women of CARs as well as world. Some other articles of above mentioned declaration also deal the dignity of women. Article 6 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 16th December 1966, every human being has the inherent right to life and this right shall be protected by law and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life. Article 6 to 15 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16th December 1966, deals of social, economic and cultural rights of all pupils. The CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993 took historic new steps to promote and protect the rights of women, children and indigenous peoples (*World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/aboutus/pages/viennawc.aspx>, Accessed on: 14/10/2020.*) Millennium Development Goals also cares the women of the world and it emphasis on the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. (*Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals, https://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/mdgtoolkit_eng.pdf, Accessed on 23/10/2020*) In spite of that Soviet legacy is important role to set up the women status in Central Asian states. Before 1991, CARs was the part of the USSR. In this way, a number of the policies they inherited as the Soviet inheritance and the policies for women

was also a part of all this. Since independence, some of the gender policies were pursued, some were left-out and others modified accordingly by the contemporary system of these republics, which were mainly started by the Soviet system.

The gender and state politics are deeply inter-related. If the state strategy is in favour of gender and keen to reduce gender discrimination, then definitely there would be absent gender issues in that society and men and women can make their equal contribution in the making and development of the nation. The gender policy basically associated with the achievement of equal participation of women and men in decision making structures; the realization of equal opportunities for economic sovereignty; the development of business and career encouragement; conditions for equal realizations of rights and responsibilities for family; and freedom from gender based violence. In this regard, it is essential to scrutinize the constitutional and legal position of women in Central Asian states, what sorts of rights have been offered to them, whether men and women are equal in constitutional point of view and how much legal and social security has been provided to women in these republics. It is also necessary to find out the attitude of the government of these states towards the conventions and other women welfare policies run by UN and which states are adopting all such guidelines in a proper manner and especially, the women's status in reference to the institutional frameworks within the countries. Thus, the focal point is to analyze the status of CARs women in the constitutional, legal institutional frameworks and the policies of present government towards women.

In the task of state building in independent Central Asia, several issues have been given priority. These include the nature of political power and political system; the constitution and structure of governance; ideology and world view of the state and the contending ideologies; the economic structure and economic policies: the transition to 'market societies' or capitalist development; the foreign policies and geo-strategic vision, and relations with Russia and the CIS; the socio-economic structures; and-the impact of these policies on people as a whole. Women are surrounded within these priority areas, and have no separate position as yet. (*Chenoy: Op.cit:217*) But later women issue gets importance and governments take different initiatives regarding the women.

The constitutions of the republics of Central Asia had guaranteed the equality in status/rights for men and women. The basic principles of equal rights and freedom for men and women are formally assured in the constitutions of Central Asian states. The basic framework of Kazakhstan in which the government protects the rights of women and promotes the gender equality in the constitution of 1993, which guaranteed equality of

rights and freedom irrespective of sex and prohibited all forms of discrimination. The Kazakh constitution upholds the legal equality for all citizens. According to Article 14 of the constitution of Kazakhstan, "Everyone is equal before the law and courts and no one can be subjected to any discrimination on the ground of social background, office and property status, sex, race, nationality, language, relation to religion, convictions, place of residence or other circumstances." (*Tanwar: Op.cit:174*) The Criminal Code, the Labour Code, The Labour Law, Family Code and some other laws also prohibited the discrimination between men and women and provide the equal rights in Kazakhstan.

The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan confirms gender equality. According to Article 16 of the Kyrgyz constitution "No one may be subject to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, language, disability, ethnicity, belief, age, political and other convictions, education, background, proprietary and other status as well as other circumstances and men and women shall have equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for their realization." (*Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic*) Women enjoy the same rights as men, including under family law, property law, and in the judicial system.

The Constitution of Tajikistan ensures the equal rights for men and women. According to Article 17 of the Tajik constitution all are equal before the law and the courts. The state guarantees the rights and freedoms of every person regardless of nationality, race, sex, language, religious beliefs, political persuasion, social status, knowledge, and property. Men and women have the same rights. (*Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan*) The National Plan of Action on Promoting of Status and Role of Women, was approved by the Government of Tajikistan in 1998. The aim of the plan is to address the issue of sexual violence and domestic violence against women and girls. In 2001, the Millennium Development Goals were also introduced.

The Constitution of Turkmenistan is also provided equal status for men and women. The Article 19 of the Turkmen Constitution state that "Turkmenistan guarantees the equality of rights and freedoms of individual and citizen, and also the equality of the individual and citizen before the law regardless of their nationality, race, gender, origin, property and official status, place of residence, language, religion, political beliefs, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any party". According to Article 20 of the Constitution, "Men and Women in Turkmenistan have equal civil rights. Violation of equality on the basis of gender is punishable by law." (*Turkmenistan's Constitution of 2008*)

The Constitution of Uzbekistan contains provision calling for protection of the rights of women. According to article 18 of the Uzbek constitution "All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and

freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without distinction by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, individual and social status. Any privileges may be granted solely by the law and shall conform to the principles of social justice.” According to article 46 of the Uzbek Constitution, “women and men shall have equal rights” and article 117 of the Uzbek constitution guarantees the right to elect and to be elected to representative bodies. (*Tanwar: Op.cit:179-80*) The Criminal Code, the Labour Code, Family Code and some other laws also prohibited the discrimination between men and women and provide the equal rights in Uzbekistan.

Women and men in CARs generally have equal rights under the law. However, there are limited mechanisms to actively enforce those rights if they are violated. The constitutions of CARs guarantee equal rights to women and men, and other laws also contain non-discriminatory clauses. So far reality shows different pictures in every respect in the Central Asian states.

Political representation of women in the world is not very encouraging for women. The world average of both houses combined; the percentage of women is 20.8 percent. Single house or in the Lower chamber the percentage of women is 21.2 percent and in the Upper chamber is 18.6 percent. (*Kumari: 2017: 103*) In the dramatic break-up of the Soviet Union, women were not visible in politics in CARs. By 1992, the level of female representation, most especially at national level, dropped to a level equal to that of most European countries. (*Corcoran: 2005: 160*) There are sharply inequalities found in politics and women percentage in National legislature is low. In Kazakhstan, women constitute about 49 percent of the active labour force but only 17.8 percent of the lower house, Majilis and 4.3 percent of the upper house, Senate in the 2012. In Kyrgyzstan, women make up about 42 percent of the labour force and 23.3 percent of Unicameral Supreme Council. In Tajikistan, women make up about 44 percent of the active labour force, as well as 19 percent of the lower house, Assembly of Representatives and 14.7 percent of National Assembly. In Turkmenistan, women hold 17 percent of the seats in the Unicameral Majlis. In Uzbekistan, woman make up slightly less than half of the workforce and constitute 22 percent of the current lower house, Legislative Assembly and 15 percent of Senate, the upper house (*Lansford: 2012:743-1571*). Insufficient representation of women in these republics is a matter of anxiety. Political parties are not interested to promote female membership in the party away from a certain limit so that, men could hold maximum number of vital positions. The representation of women in the higher post and top policy making executive bodies of the parties is extremely low. In elections, a women candidate is barely chosen. Moreover, women play a secondary role in nationalist narratives; for example, historical heroic figures tend to be male in most instances (*Urbaeva: Op.cit:208*) and

that is the reason for women's apathy in politics. In fact, women are not interested in politics and they prefer to engage themselves in some economic activities. A common determinant in their lives is that they generally take care of the home and contribute to the income of the family as well.

The CARs have inherited education system from USSR and education policies and regulations are similar in these republics. CARs have strong basic education systems. Female participation rates in education and enrolment rates in both primary and secondary education are relatively high in the Central Asian states. The literacy rate of CAW is extremely high at 98 percent; it competes with the different developed nations. (*Kumari: Op.cit:103*) Like primary and secondary education, Higher Education policies and regulations are also same in CARs and it is also inherited from Soviet era. In tertiary education, Central Asia may be the only world region where rates of female participation both markedly exceed the world average of 50 percent and fall well below that figure. Actually, school and college enrolment for women remains the highest when compared internationally. Women in Kazaklistan and Kyrgyzstan are more likely than men to enter tertiary education, whereas fewer than 40 percent of their neighbours in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are studying at this level. (*Emma Sabzalieva, Gender gaps in higher education across Central Asia, University World News, 08 July, 2016*) In Central Asia less than a third of all 3- 6 year olds are in pre-schools and schools need massive investments. But privatisation and structural adjustment have cuts in social outlays. Thousands of schools are run and financed by state-owned enterprises; privatisation is creating a crisis in these schools. It was due to the pre-schools and state-run schools (which provided mid-day meals), that women were enabled to work, and enjoy economic freedom. The future of thousands of women of working age is now uncertain. The level of absolute poverty has drastically increased in the CARs. Incomes have decreased and there is no compensation for inflation. The worst affected are the pensioners, unemployed and women.

Different aspects of state building will impact on the position and status of women in the CARs. Ideology and religion will be one amongst them. Varying practices and outrages of Islam from sufism, wahabiism, shiaism, etc, influence different groups and movements. (*Chenoy: Op.cit:217*) Also the influence of Islam on the new political systems will vary greatly. The influence of Islam is possible at various levels. At the state level as world view; at the regime level where different regimes use their Islamic status to interact with states with professed Islamic orientation like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or the Organization of Islamic States; at the oppositional and popular movements' level, where various groups, including right-wing or 'fundamentalist' ones, use Islam to mobilize people against given structures

of power, with an effort to win political power and leverage; and at the private/ societal level as an ethical and cultural code, which influences social practice. (*Chenoy:ibid*)The CARs have declared secular intentions at the state level. The leaders in power in all these states disowned their communist past and professed Islam. CARs have established links with Islamic-oriented states in varying degrees. It is the role of the popular movements associated with Islam, their influence on the government and societal norms, which is an important indicator of Islamic practice today. However, CARs rejects their pre-Soviet status but they do not reject religion as a whole and they are influenced by the Islamic tradition and customs. The Islam practiced in the CAS is as similar as practiced in the Middle Eastern states. Thus, Islamic tradition and customs impact on society which is simply hurtful for women of Central Asian republics.

The changing status of CARs and CAW will come from the ongoing economic reform. During the transition period, the difficulties of transition from Socialism to Market Economy and Democracy had to be faced by women citizens in a different manner. A woman in this confused transition, from socialism to new market mechanism, was really the most insecure. The transition to democracy forced women to uncertainty in the environment of proclaimed democratic values. In fact, while building a new type of democratic society, it is required to follow the best experiences of other countries that gender perspectives may be allied in modern conditions. The creation of different attitudes and decisions demands critical thinking and practice but it was clearly unseen. Rapid social change in transitional societies leads to social upheavals. In the case of the former Soviet societies wide-ranging changes in social stratification are likely to occur. The impact of these changes will first be felt by the women; both at work place and at home. As a consequence of the break of the Soviet Union, it is well known that the CARs suffered economic losses due to a variety of reasons. Privatization and structural adjustment have meant cuts in social subsidy. The share of public expenditure for basic social services like education, health, pensions, child allowances, unemployment benefits, are thus the first to be cut. The current fiscal pressure has not only meant cutbacks on this account, but the CARs government is thinking of user charges and health insurances. Like in the rest of the Soviet Union, women in the CARs have been the first to be laid off. Seventy per cent (70%) of the unemployed are women, and this goes up to 90 per cent in some areas and industries. (*Chenoy: ibid: 518*) Women are being sacked so that private companies can avoid giving unemployment benefits including child benefits and maternity leave. Now women will go into the unorganized sector, secretarial and other gender related positions where they will be subject to further exploitation. Therefore,

the statuses of CAW are still declining due to a combination of structural adjustment policies, weak democracy, and populist ideologies. However, CAW is likely to be hemmed in between the issue of identity and changing status. The changing status will come from the ongoing reforms, whereas the issue of identity will be complicated by the interweaving of traditional roles and customs, the experience of the Soviet past, ethnically and geographically defined frameworks and their own political movements. (Chenoy: *ibid*: 518)

Women were largely worst affected by transition period of Central Asian republics. The reduction in women's employment was a primarily female problem and further curtailed by shrinking of maternity leave and childcare facility. Lacks of skill, gender-based barriers are conditioned women to engage low income jobs like, doctors and teachers which is significantly lower salaries compared with those of the private sector. In fact, women are overrepresented in public sector jobs and underrepresented in management jobs. (Chenoy: *Ibid*) It seemed that in this changed scenario, women's performance was desired in multiple roles: as workers, housekeepers, and tradition keepers.

Table-3: Central Asian Women at a Glance

Country	Literacy rate (%)	Labour participation (%)	Participation in National Legislature (%)	Problem Facing
Kazakhstan	98	49	Majilis 17.8	Kalym, ichkari, paranja, polygamy and bride kidnapping, patriarchy, poverty, unemployment,
			Senate 4.3	market economy
Kyrgyzstan	98	42	Unicameral Supreme Council 23.3	Kalym, ichkari, paranja, polygamy and bride kidnapping, patriarchy, poverty, unemployment, market economy
Tajikistan	98	44	Assembly of Representatives 19	Kalym, ichkari, paranja, polygamy and bride

		National Assembly 14.7	kidnapping, patriarchy, poverty, unemployment, market economy
Turkmenistan 98	X	Unicameral Majlis17	Polygamy, patriarchy, poverty, unemployment, market economy
Uzbekistan 98	49	Legislative Assembly22	Kalym, ichtkari, paranja, polygamy and bride
		Senate 15	kidnapping, patriarchy, poverty, unemployment, market economy

Source :

1. Kamala Kumari, Women in Central Asia, in Sanjoy Deshpande (ed.) Dynamics of Central Asia: Issues and Challenges, G.B.Books, New Delhi and Centre for Central Eurasian Studies, Mumbai, 2017, p.103.
 2. Tom Lansford, Political Handbook of the World, Sage, 2012, pp. 743, 798, 1403, 1471 &1571.
 3. Mukta Tanwar, Changing Status of Women in Central Asia: A comparative Study of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2017, pp. 231-240.
- X–Data not available.

The social status of women in Central Asian Society is shaped by the social, economic, political and religious conditions. The position of Kazakh women in society has been influenced by a mixture of factors like, local traditions and customs, Soviet regime, market economy and Western values. Scholars mentioned that violence against women is a ‘burning issue’ in Kazakhstan with its roots in tradition and history. (*Post:1999:1*) Kazakh women and girls are facing the problems of forced marriage and bride kidnapping till date. In addition, women and foreign women and girls have been victims of sex trafficking and they are raped and physically and psychologically harmed in brothels, businesses places, hotels, homes and other locations all over the country.

In Kyrgyzstan, having law, rural inhabitants continue the traditional practice of bride kidnapping. 12 year old girls are kidnapped for forced

marriage, by being captured and carried away by groups of men who, through violence or deception, take the girl to the home of the intended groom, where the abductor's family pressures and coerces the young woman to accept the marriage. In some cases, the young woman is raped in order to force the marriage. However, rape is underreported, and prosecutors rarely bring rape cases to court. Scholars mentioned that in Kyrgyzstan, no rape cases were reported until 1997 when 321 cases appeared. The crisis center saw 170 people of whom only three went to the police. (*Post: ibid*). There is no specific law against domestic violence and man could not be uprooted from the apartment because there was no space for him to go. In fact, regarding the domestic violence, police often refuse to register domestic violence complaints. Women and foreign women and girls are victims of sex trafficking and they are raped and physically and physiologically harmed in borders, hotels, homes and other locations all over the country. The fact is that there are several laws for protection of women, but many crimes against women is committed and till ongoing which are not reported due to psychological pressure, cultural traditions and apathy of law enforcement officials in Kyrgyzstan.

Tajikistan, a young and fragile democratic state. Traditionally women were not protected from domestic violence and the government is doing nothing. In other words, domestic violence is very high in Tajikistan, due to traditional Tajik patriarchal values and Islamic tradition. In a country-wide survey, 87 percent reported moral violence, 23 percent physical violence, and some women reported they had suffered all forms of violence. (*Post: ibid*) An equation, approximately, fifty percent women have been subjected to physical, psychological, or sexual violence by their husbands or their close relatives. The law of Tajikistan has prohibited the forced and child marriage, but it is seen throughout the country and very little is done to restrain these habits. In Turkmenistan, women are mainly homemaker and women have never worn a veil like to that of the women of some of its neighbouring Central Asian countries. Some women are settled to live as the second or third spouses of prosperous men or to bear children outside of marriage due to their husband are working abroad the country. Actually, women of Turkmenistan face problems regardless of Socio-economic status (SES). The social status of Uzbek women has been influenced by local traditions, religion, Soviet regime and changing social norms since its inception. The return to religion is bringing with it a loss of status for women and many problems. Women are expected to obey the father, husband and mother-in-law. (*Post: ibid*) Forced marriage through bride kidnapping occurs in different parts of the country. There are different customs like; forced sterilization (government-mandated programs which bring about sterilization of people), self-immolation

(act of killing oneself) and human trafficking which is clearly against the women in Uzbekistan.

Women play a secondary role in the narrative of nation building and main heroes are men. These expectations and practices of public patriarchy undermine women's potential societal roles, which are reflected in women's own views about their place in society. Women treated as second citizen of the society and they are the subordinate of male in every respect. The women have no own choice for conduct of their life. For instance, Islamic dress has been largely banned from the public domain, while secular dress has been promoted, which has forced some women to choose between employment and following an Islamic lifestyle. (*Urbaeva: Op.cit:208*)

Conclusion

The status of CAW transformed according to a multiplicity of times, ruling regimes and governments. In the pre-Soviet rule, Central Asia underwent an intensive process of modernization. In effect, the region was disconnected from Asia and thrust into Europe. The traditional culture was either destroyed or made invisible, restricted to the most intimate and private spheres and new national identities were created. During the years of the Soviet rule, women occupied minor to major positions in everywhere of state life. The end of the Soviet era certainly opened new opportunities for the citizen of Central Asian states but at the same time the political and economic changes have also imposed intense straits and women were the first to be affected. CARs have constitutional provisions of equality of rights, liberty and the equality of sexes; however, in practice all these provisions are bypassed. In CARs, women still lead in the domain of both higher and secondary professional education and are also highly enrolled in tertiary education. Moreover, Central Asian women are better off in terms of the male-female ratio. Labour force participation of CARs is also in tier with high-income nations. There are protective laws prohibiting too hard jobs for women for example carrying heavy weights, or working at night.

The transition of Central Asia from Soviet-style governance to modern democratic political structures is far from complete and this is also true in the fields of economic and society. (*The Hindu, 29 March, 2005*) However, transitional process resulted the rapid socio-economic changes of CARs had a tremendous impact on the social, economic and political status of women. There have been erosions of women's rights since the disintegration of Soviet Union. Women have been subjected to the unequal status and inequality in the social system, economic structure and political arrangement. Women are exploited and subjugated in a systematic and structured manner. They enjoy comparatively low status due to age-old traditions, societal taboos and

the patriarchal attitude of society. Women have been pushed out from the governing organizations. The sharp decrease of women's number at all levels of governing organizations despite the existence of qualified women. The low representation of women at the level of decision-making led to political marginalization of women's problems. Now they hold complex identity; as workers, housekeepers and tradition-keepers in the post-independent period as well as in the era of market economy. There is evidence of re-emergence of polygamy which is officially banned in all republics of Central Asia. Their problems are further complicated by poverty, extensive migration, human and drug trafficking, domestic violence and societal restrictions. However, CARs have women-specific policies, welfare programs and laws protecting women's inheritance, right to divorce and right to monogamy, yet there is a gap between theory and practice. Despite being committed to international norms on gender equality, there is lack of strong rules and implementation policies that support these norms.

Despite the international community's commitment to gender equality, the lives of millions of women and girls throughout the world are plagued by discrimination, disempowerment and poverty. Actually, women's rights have not always been part of the larger human rights discourse. Human rights advocates long overlooked the fact that women's needs can differ from and even collide with traditional concepts of human rights, as for example, where protecting religious freedom means condoning religious practices that involve subordination or mistreatment of women. (*Cooper: 2003:59*) This is true in all Central Asian republics. However, the transition states, CARs governments have extensive opportunities to achieve transformations as they reform the major social institutions- the work place, justice system, education, healthcare, social services, as well as the promotion of civil society and public discourse but women and girls are excessively affected by some of the challenges and problems that still remain in their lives, like many girls being forced into early marriages, bride kidnapping, veiling and polygamy etc. In the most of the Central Asian states, women earn less than men for equal work. It is notable that over the years' Central Asian cultures are the men as being superior and women as second class citizens. In addition, millions of women and girls suffer from physical and sexual violence in both at home and work place with little remedy to justice and protection. (*Post: Op.cit:4-5*) Actually, Central Asian governments are not effective in laws implementation for preventing or punishing crimes against women. Therefore, the declarations, conventions and goals are not enough. It is essential that these States move positively from the realm of words to the realm of concrete action.

Gender equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the equal opportunities, outcomes, rights and obligations in all the spheres of

life. The equality between women and men exists when both sexes are able to share equal distribution of power and influence; have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up business; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions. (Tanwar: op.cit: p.240) Yet despite many rules and commitments on international agreements related to women's right, progress on gender equality is uneven in the republics of Central Asia. CAW is still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate and they lag behind men in terms of employment outcomes and economic well-being. They have not access equal medical care, property, credit, training and jobs. They are also far behind the men in political participation and victim by the domestic violence, traditional culture and patriarchy. In other words, the state, patriarchy and Islam have all been and remain influential institutions in the lives of most Central Asian women. (*Urbaeva: Op.cit:207*) In other words, despite ongoing social, economic and political transformations, Central Asian societies are deeply patriarchal, with women underrepresented in leading roles in government and business sectors and family taking priority over education and career goals for the majority of women. The hope is that statuses of women in Central Asian states are gradually improved. They are slow but steady developments in every field in independent republics of Central Asia. Women hold different higher post and position in these republics. Roza Otunbaeva, interim president of Kyrgyzstan after the whirlwind exit of Kurmanbek Bakiev in April 2010, Dinara Kulibaeva, is the only Central Asian woman to have appeared on the 'Forbes' list of world billionaires, with an estimated net worth of \$1.3 billion. She is thought to be the fourth-richest individual in the Kazakhstan, Akja Nurberdyeva, speaker of Turkmenistan's parliament, Lola Karimova, Uzbek ambassador to UNESCO, Ozoda Rahmonova, Deputy Tajik Foreign Minister (*Central Asia's 10 Most Influential Women:2020*) are the few prime examples of CAW which denotes women are forwarding in Central Asia.

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CONTEMPORARY INTOLERANCE IN SOUTH
ASIA : IN SEARCH OF THE RELEVANCE OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

KAUSHIK CHAKRABORTY

Abstract

Religious and ethnic intolerance triggered by different religious and ethnic groups of South Asian Region are rumbling which may reach the crescendo at any moment. This turmoil may result in gross political instability for which the entire region is likely to be confronted with absolute anarchism. We may clarify the issue with reference to cases of some countries falling in this region. For instances, the Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka appear to be the patrons of Singhalese nationalist fanaticism. Having been extending morale booster to the anti-Tamil sentiments for the last three decades, they have now turned their attention to the Muslim minorities as an additional target. Recently the Singhalese are in dreadful communal conflict with Muslim minority. After Sri Lanka, let's turn our eyes on Bangladesh. Bangladesh presents a more shagging picture. The minorities of the country are being treated as second-class citizens. Despite the termination of five decades since independence of Bangladesh, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist minorities have been subjected to humiliation and torture. And in India the term 'Secular' became the most controversial term in present day politics. As a whole, intolerance is a basic factor that shakes the very foundation of the human rights through demolishing the democratic fabric of these countries. Dignity and equality of human beings lie at the heart of the Human Rights framework with its basic idea of elimination of all forms of discrimination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Now, keeping this in mind we need to turn our attention to Vivekananda with an aim to evaluate the cogency and relevance of his ideas in present day context of South Asia through the prism of Human Rights and democracy. Vivekananda recognized universal acceptance through

finding oneness in many and tolerance by affording equal rights regarding opportunity, freedom and human dignity to everyone above and beyond all the differences embedded in them. He put emphasis on freedom of speech and expression as well as equality in opportunity. Similarly, his prime emphasis on freedom of thought and action, universal acceptance and tolerance appear to be complementary and mutually cooperative to human rights as well as democracy. In Vivekananda's thinking, moral personality of each and every individual is subject to equal dignity and honour. Being moved by this principle in mind and action, he did not even impose his own belief upon others.

Against this background, this paper will try to understand two different issues. First one is to identify the core problem related to freedom of thought, expression and action in present day South Asian countries. This first part will focus on the contemporary nature of post-colonial democracy of these countries through the sample country, i.e., Bangladesh and the second part will try to see how far these problems can be addressed through Vivekananda's idea of *universal acceptance and tolerance* or *freedom of speech and expression as well as equality in opportunity* etc.

Keywords : Intolerance, Human Rights, Democracy, Ethnic and Religious Groups, Secularism, Freedom, Equality.

Aim of the study : Majoritarianism, as it is used in present-day in the countries of South Asian region in the name of democracy, poses a serious problem to the view of tolerance. Majoritarianism has two correlated facets – one is polarization, and the other is unilateralism. Polarization denotes the division of two sharply contrasting groups or beliefs, i.e., the act of creating division between two distinct groups holding contending opinion and to corner opposite view- thereby pampering a 'we-they' feeling. This very concept of polarization collaterally leads to unilateralism, which refers to the doctrine or agenda that upholds one-sided action or commitment toward a particular direction in pursuance of one's vested interest in complete disagreement with others. These are the problems of South Asian states. The aim of the study is to see the applicability of the idea of tolerance construed by Vivekananda under the framework of the situation created by these three elements.

Review of literature : I have studied a large number of books, articles, magazines and writings of different scholars dealing with South Asian societies, states and Vivekananda's overall thoughts and ideas. My objective is to examine to what extent these materials have reflected the issues of my research work and to find out the gap in the perspective of the present work. It's necessary to mention, this is not an exhaustive review but one that is

based on some important and relevant studies this researcher has come across so far.

Review of Literature

The book *Connecting Asia: Understanding Foreign Relations, Organizations and Contemporary Issues*, edited by Debasish Nandy, published from Kunal Books, New Delhi, 2020 is a useful one. This book is about India's changing strategies with Asian countries. The scholars of India, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal and Australia have critically analyzed and addressed contemporary issues of South Asian region, foreign relations and observed the role of some international organizations. *Mapping South Asia: State, Society and Security Dilemmas*, edited by Debasish Nandy, published from Blue Roan Publishing, Gujarat, 2019 is another helpful book to understand south Asia as a whole. This book has seventeen chapters. These chapters have covered the socio-political and cultural aspects of south Asian countries from different angles. Sundeep Waslekar's *South Asian drama: Travails of Misgovernance*, published by South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, in 1991 has three broad sub themes. *Regional Dimensions, Indo-Pakistan Equation and Small Neighbour and India*. Overall through fifteen enriched papers this book tries to reveal the regional relations and nature of different countries from different approaches. The book *Chintanayak Vivekananda*, edited by Swami Lokeshwarananda, published from Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata in 2012, has been divided into nine parts namely *Anudhyan, Dharma O Darshan, Bharatbarsha, Rastra, Samaj, Arthaniti, Itihas, Bijgyan, Siksha-Sahitya*. In each and every part of the book eminent scholars have dwelt on specific aspect of Vivekananda's thoughts and ideas. Though the discussions contained in the book are highly valuable, but none of them has directly referred to my research topic. Another book is Swami Gambhirananda's *Yuganayak Vivekananda*, written in three volumes, which have been published by Udbodhan Karyalaya, Kolkata in the year 2008. This book is essentially an authentic biography of Swami Vivekananda. Every stage of Vivekananda's motivational life has been well depicted in this book. This book will provide many inputs to pursue my research work. But here also the basic issue of my research work has not been addressed.

Amiya P. Sen's *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal 1872-1905: Some Essays in Interpretation*, published by Oxford University Press, India, 1993, throws light on certain facts of Bengal's social and intellectual life between 1872 and 1905, particularly Hindu revivalism. The particular period reveals significant progress in the area of social and religious reform which was confronted with hostile attitudes. According to Sen, Hindu revivalism had two facets

within it. The primary objective of Hindu revivalism was to discover the humanist and rational approach of ancient Indian civilization and to repose it on the lofty height of glory. But in course of time, this revivalism transformed itself into aggressive patriotism through Hinduism. In between revivalism and its transformed forms, there was varying range of opinions. The six chapters of this book deal with the snail's movement of transitional pattern of Bengal's intellectual life. Shamita Basu's *Religious Revivalism as Nationalist Discourse, Swami Vivekananda and New Hinduism in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, published by Oxford University Press from Delhi in 2002, is another important work related to my work. Given the peculiar conditions of colonial Bengal, it claims that, nationalism was expressed more as a defense of modernity than as anti-colonial sentiment. It was indeed, a conscious device strategy aiming at building cohesion and solidarity among colonized Hindus. In the author's opinion Vivekananda had a significant contribution to this unitive strategy, reconciling conservative, xenophobic Hindu opinion and radical reformism.

Europe Reconsidered : Perceptions of the West in Nineteenth Century Bengal, written by Tapan Raychaudhuri and published by Oxford University Press, New Delhi in the year 1988, is a vivid account of three major intellectuals of nineteenth century Bengal – Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and Swami Vivekananda. All these three eminent intellectuals were engaged in exploring the pride that has been hurt in the misunderstood ancestral heritage and oppressive indigenous tradition. As Raychaudhuri's work presents Bhudev, carrying the tradition of Brahminism, retained a serene faith in the validity and relevance of Brahminical values despite his admiration of western knowledge. By contrast, Bankim's attachments with Hindu values were far more complicated. Vivekananda has acknowledged the importance of indigenous traditions implanted in Hindu religion on the one hand, and on the other, he has strongly condemned and opposed the oppressive customs and superstitious believes of that religion. Raychaudhuri shows in his book that though Vivekananda was very much vocal and critical of the superstitions of his religion, he traversed a cautious path while speaking about Hindu religion in the West. His firm confidence in India's spiritual tradition has never been diluted. Vivekananda will not be properly justified if he is looked upon as the protagonist of Hindu revivalism. The author has found an active sense of nationalism in him as Vivekananda had preached only the features of Indian culture to glorify the nation.

The studies referred to above are certainly pertinent and important. But none of these reflected my idea directly and indirectly. The approach of my writing has not been addressed so far by any articles. I firmly believe it is

going to be an important text to fill in the existing gap in that area of study so far.

Research Methodology

This article is a sampling-based qualitative research article. Content Analysis method has been used here. In this writing study population is the South Asian region where Bangladesh plucked as a sample, as intolerance and absence of Democracy of study population could be addressed and represented by sample state.

There is a record in world history that the theory of human rights and the field of its applications never believe in friendly coexistence. Though the Greek city-states had hoisted the flag of freedom and democracy, it failed to actualize these in practice. Though Aristotle emphasized that, if a man wants to reach the extreme state of fulfillment he should be given complete personal freedom. But history showed us that, freedom was under the grasp of one specific class's monopoly; the greater portion of the society in which there were women, had been deprived of their rights and human dignity. Plato's justice-related theory or the theory of communism cannot surpass this limitation. Aristotle's theory of slavery and his conception about citizenship in each case it is easy to find out the deprived class. After ancient Greece let's turn our eyes on the Roman Empire, where Cicero's concept of justice, which seemed to be logical but here also, the theory and practice of rights maintained the historical distance as before. The Romans concentrated on maintaining discipline instead of upholding freedom and human rights. So the military forces and the excellence of bureaucracy gave birth to an autocratic government.¹ If we keep the picture of the human rights and human dignity of 21st century besides this historical scenario and measure it with the current international yardstick, then we can see, the picture of south Asian human rights, in terms of its hostile relations between theory and application – does not deny the legacy of history at all. Nowadays what we try to express our ideas through the words human rights, human dignity, freedom, etc, all these theoretical viewpoints have been discussed in several aspects in different stages of history.

Before the Second World War, according to the conventional idea, the protection of human rights was an internal matter of a state. But immediately after the Second World War, the issue of human rights crossed its confinement of national borders and became universal. In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt in his speech in American Congress described his idea of four freedoms. They were the freedom of expression, freedom from deprivation as well as fear and freedom of religion. After the failure of the United Nations, the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference discussed the great importance of an International

Institution for the protection of the dignity of human being and their freedom. The actual condition of human rights in South Asia should be evaluated according to the standard of human rights, human dignity and basic fundamental freedom which have been presented from the middle of the 20th century at the international level.

From the very beginning, the United Nations took initiative in favour of human rights and fundamental freedom for mankind. In its preamble, the United Nations declares its position very clearly to secure human rights as one of the major prime objectives of its establishment. In this connection article 13,55,56,68, etc. can be mentioned where it is said that every state ought to show its respect to fundamental freedom and human rights without making any sex, language, caste and creed based discrimination. Article 56 of the constitution of UN asked every member to take necessary steps and to adopt effective measures to actualize the aforesaid aim.² It is necessary to mention, as all the states of South Asian Region are the members of UN (Pakistan took the membership on 30 Sept. in 1947, India on 30 Oct. in 1945, Nepal on 14 Dec. in 1955, Bhutan on 21 Sept. in 1971, Bangladesh on 17 Sept. 1974, Srilanka on 14 Dec. in 1955, the Maldives on 21 Sept. in 1965) so, none of them can deny the responsibility and their commitment towards the establishment of human rights. In January of 1947, The Commission on Human Rights was established and the main responsibility of this commission was to make a draft on Universal Declaration on Human Rights and to make two different drafts on the Political and Civil Rights as well as Socio-Economic and Cultural Rights. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (adopted on 10th December 1948), was divided into two sections. Article 1 of the declaration confirms the recognition of the basic concept of Natural Rights for all and admitted that each human being takes their birth freely and from the viewpoint of rights and dignity each individual is equal. Articles 2-21 deal with civil and political rights and again articles 22 to 27 come out with socio-economic and cultural rights. It is good to say that as a positive step to actualize the universal declaration, the rights which were mentioned in Universal Declaration and to give lawful identities to them the civil and political rights related agreement along with the agreement of economic, social and cultural rights were adopted in 1966 and came into force in 1976. Now some important articles of the Universal Declaration as well as articles of two different agreements are hereby important to mention which have been constantly violating and denying by the south Asian countries. In article 3 of the Universal Declaration, each person has given their rights to freedom and social security. The rights against torture and misbehavior are accepted in Article no. 5. Article no. 6 and 7 ensured equality before the law. Freedom of conscience and the freedom of religion have been confirmed by Art 18.

According to article 19, freedom of expression, speech and by Article 20 right to assemble in a place with a purpose has been recognized. On the other hand, article 2 of part II, civil and political agreement of 1966, confirmed the duty of all signatory states to ensure the equal rights of all the citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex or political affiliation inside their territory. According to Article 4, under any special circumstances like an emergency, if any country deviated from its responsibility related to human rights then it is bound to send a report to the secretary of United Nations to inform when the normal condition regarding human rights will be restored.

According to Article 5, any individual or any community cannot take any step which violates the mentioned human rights and freedom. In the same way, for the smooth functioning of Articles 22 to 27 of the Universal Declaration (the rights are mainly socio-economic and cultural) in 1976 the agreement on Economic-Social and Cultural rights was taken into force and there also the performance of the state was given importance. According to Article 22 of the Universal Declaration, each individual has the right to social security. Similarly, Article 3 of the agreement (1966) provides equal economic, social, and cultural rights to all and this Article specially declared state responsibility in this regard.³ According to article 11 of this agreement, each person is given a special right to maintain a healthy lifestyle to acquire a standard that ensures the health, food, shelter, and necessary social service. Article 11 of this agreement mentioned specially that, each member state of the UN is bound to help every citizen of its own to overcome hunger and it must look after the rights of the physical and mental health of each person. Some initiatives of the UN for the establishment of Human Rights have been discussed briefly so far, now a day which is treated as International criteria for the protection of human rights. In this context, the Vienna declaration of 1993 is to be remembered that identified human rights, democracy and the economic development as complementary to each other. This universal conference identifies that the expansion of human rights and its maintenance is the responsibility of each country. It is necessary to highlight the condition of human rights, human dignity and fundamental freedom of South Asian countries in this context.

South Asian region holds one-fifth of the population of earth. This region is the poorest, illiterate and famous for massive malnutrition. Still, the states of this region are interested in the production and import of weapons instead of education and health. This region is the poorest because the lowest per capita G.N.P and more than five hundred million people are living under the extreme poverty level where the basic needs of the people never fulfilled. This region holds twenty-two percent of the earth's population (40% of the world's poor people) and produces only 1.3% of the world's income. In Sub

Sahara Africa the per capita income is \$ 555 whereas in South Asia it is \$309. This place is the most illiterate place, where the aged literacy rate is 48%, which is the lowest one. 337 million people of this region are deprived of safe drinking water, 830 million people have no individual drainage system and 400 million people suffered daily from hunger. 260 million people in this region cannot utilize the advantage of primary health. 224 million have no hygienic toilet facility. 85 million children in this region have not any knowledge about the school.⁴ It is to be mentioned here that with some statistical data the actual condition of human rights cannot be revealed at all, but still, it is necessary to keep in mind that, this statistical information is important to understand the quality of livelihood, which can decide the birth of fanaticism, communalism as well as aggressive nationalism. These statistics undoubtedly identify the extreme failure of the 1948 declaration as well as the agreements of 1966. The issues of these statistical data can be identified as the rights of life. Those issues more or less are connected to the very basic idea of human security. South Asian states like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc. built a state-centric idea of security. This is an important reason for the violation of human rights in South Asia where the security of human beings lost their self-identity. Data shows us that, 93% of the total military expenditure in South Asia and 87% of military man-power is under the control of Pakistan and India. In the first decade of 21st century, \$28 was the per head military expense in Sri Lanka, whereas the normal price of war tank is \$ 4million.⁵ Point is that, 4 million vaccines can be given on that resource because \$ 1 is used for an infant to protect him from fatal diseases. The value of modern submarine is \$ 300 million. Whereas yearly per head \$5 is used for safe drinking water, in other words, the price of a submarine can supply safe drinking water to 60 million people. The expense to buy a mirage 2000-5 is \$ 90 million whereas average yearly for an infant's study expense is \$ 30. As a result, 3 million infants can get an education at the expense of one mirage. The Security dilemma denied human rights in this region. There is a competition of the collection of weapons and investment of a huge amount of money for war weapons which restrict human rights related investment. Practically, military-centric national security is often very important, rather it's not an obsolete idea and states have their logic in favor of hard power. This logic may not be applicable for others but the idea of national security cannot pull down the core ideas of human security at all. Machiavelli, the philosopher of the sixteenth century, explained this balance simply and easily. According to him security and expansion are the primary duty of a state, but the life and property of the people should indeed be ensured by the emperor.

Today, South Asian nations are not capable of balancing these different types of security as the way shown by Machiavelli. We have experienced two different things from this region. The preparation of national security to protect national interests obstruct the questions of human rights and, secondly, the states of this region, to protect national interests demolishes the basic idea of freedom of expression, right to religion, rights against oppression, right to life, etc. Fanaticism, communalism and aggressive nationalism are the major threats (when other parameters of life decrease-as stated above, these sentiments automatically increase) to democracy and human rights. In addition to that, majoritarianism, as it is used in present-day in the countries of the South Asian region in the name of democracy, poses a serious problem to the view of tolerance. Thus, this region gave birth to some authoritarian states under the curtain of democracy. Therefore, the concept of state-responsibility never comes out in any harsh circumstances in favour of the oppressed and this is true for every aspect. As these are the common features for the states of this region, so we would take Bangladesh as a sample of our study population to establish the aim of the study.

On 26 January 2007, the administrator of the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh declared an emergency and banned political activities, strikes and all types of printing and electronic media.⁶ On 10th September 2007, this emergency was partially withdrawn. In the first ten months of the emergency, in various excuses, 440648 people were arrested.⁷ According to the global corruption report of Transparency International, two-third people of Bangladesh seeking justice through bribery appeal to the court.⁸ Those who don't have money they have no rights for a petition. What is left next is threatening or killing the judges. That is also very simple to find out. The leaders of banned Jamatul Mujahidin, Abdur Rahaman, and Bangle Bhai, whose judgment was done by justice Haider Hussain was shot dead.⁹ Human Rights workers are constantly tortured by fundamentalist forces. The activity of human rights workers challenges the authority and coercive attitude of the state as well as fundamentalists, so both the institutions want to control them to pursue their vested interests safely. The rights of marginal people as well as the minorities are not only refused or denied by the state but they are extremely deprived and oppressed by the state. Bangladesh as a state has always maintained its domination when it wants to suppress its minorities. In this context, it is essential to mention the picture of the religious minority's inhuman livelihood in Bangladesh. The people of this section are deprived of the right to religions and from the very basic idea of the rule of law.

The measurement of human rights can be done by observing the condition of minorities of a country. The main index of human rights in a

country can be understood through the views of the government and society to the marginal people. We should observe whether the constitution and administrative machinery confirm equality to its entire people without making any religion-based discrimination.

Establishment of the Bangladesh on the 16th of December 1971 when the Pakistani forces surrendered to allied forces and subsequently the acceptance of the four basic principles of namely, democracy, socialism, nationalism and secularism in the new constitution adopted on 16th December 1972 gave hope of survival to the minorities along with the progressives. The idea of secularism however stumbled at the very outset that is secularism was shrouded in mystery from the very beginning. It is said in the Article 12 of the constitution framed in 1972, "For upholding secularism, any form of communalism, according to any special status to any religion, misuse of religion for political motives and prejudice to anyone belonging to any particular religion will be eradicated."¹⁰ But, in spite of such directives of the constitution, a tendency to accord political sanction to all religions has been observed. As a political party Awami League was secular. The idea of secularism was however not clear to them. So, this has been observed, due to lack of clear understanding of the concept, secularism did not materialize appropriately. Simultaneously, the state's favoritism of a specific religion was evident from '72 itself. Bangabandhu was a completely non-religious legendary person. He could not assess the motive and intent of the some of the policy makers. So he mixed up religion and politics. Islamic Foundation was formed and special funds sanctioned for specific religious institutions. Another example of compromise of the spirit of independent Bangladesh was Bangabandhu's participation in the Islamic Leaders conference at Lahore in 1973 dismissing the requests of many Awami top leaders and Indira Gandhi. During Bangabandhu's rule itself, a few faith mongers and clerics embarked to campaign against secularism in the Mosques. They propagated that secularism is non-religiousness. Simple believers got confused. People in power failed to stop this negative publicity due to their weakness, lust for power and inactivity. This failure had started since Bangabandhu's times.¹¹

After the murder of Bangabandhu, Ziaur Rahman on attaining power removed Article 38 (1972 constitution banned religious base political party and activity) from the constitution opening the path for religion traders to form political parties based on religion. Ziaur Rahman did not take any public mandate and removed secularism from the constitution by military proclamation. Disregarded community feeling of Bengalis, differentiated between Muslims and non-Muslims. The religious minorities were relegated to second class citizenship. In 1979 he even presented a loyal parliament. In this parliament, by the 5th amendment of the constitution the exclusion of secularism by

military orders was sanctioned lawfully.¹² Anyways the seeds of communalism which were sowed during Bangabandhu's regime flourished with flora and fauna during Zia's rule.

In June 1988 Ershad, by the 8th amendment of constitution gave Islam the honour of Democratic Republic Bangladesh's state religion. Those citizens who were accorded same rights by Law or Constitutionally, this step took away that right. Religious minorities not only became second class citizens but they also became victims of differentiation at all levels. With this initiative of Ershad the right to live of non-Muslim people with basic human dignity has been refused. By declaring Islam as the state religion Ershad pushed the country backwards. Later, this became the basis of competition. BNP leader commented that Ershad did nothing new. They had already established Islam by the Fifth Amendment. How unfortunate the minorities are! In this respect, human rights activist Sahariar Kabir raised questions on the misuse of Enemy Property law. He showed how this enemy property act had created against the backdrop of India-Pakistan War in 1965 and even after deactivation of this law by Pakistan in 1969 how Bangladesh has been using it for the last fifty years against the Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities.¹³

This law came into force on 6th of September 1965. When the Pakistan-India war started, the Pakistan government on the instigation of the then ruling class declared the movable and immovable properties of the Hindus abandoned or left back to be Enemy Property and got an act passed as Enemy Property Act, 1965. This is known as Emergency Ordinance 91161165 (6/9/65) to 2116167 (16/2/69).¹⁴ After the independence of Bangladesh the Hindu community naturally hoped that the inhuman barbaric law would be scraped and their rights as citizens of a free country would ultimately be established. But when they saw that, Bangabandhu after coming to power did not abolish the law and merely changed its name to 'Non Residential Property' then they were again shocked. Later by the killing of Bangabandhu in '75, the change in the political scenario put everything in doldrums. This law was known as vested property in the military regime. There was massive misuse of the Vested Property Law during the rule of military leaders who came to power after Bangabandhu's death. The growing tentacles of this law attacked the fields even the grassroots. The ultimate misuse of this Act could be observed during Dictator Ershad's tenure.¹⁵ This law has used openly at the aim of occupying the property of Hindus. All these circumstances gave birth to an environment which forced, in-between 1964 to 2001, 218919 Hindus per year-600 persons per day on an average to leave their country.¹⁶ India-Pakistan partition is known as long partition. Till date, we are experiencing the same thing. Throughout the 90s that happened and exposed with a massive number

due to the oppressive state policy that acted as per the blueprint of the BNP-JAMAT coalition Government against the minorities. At that time, with the snap of invested property law, in the whole country, 10,48,390 Hindu families were lost their everything.¹⁷ The main aim of this law was to acquire agricultural and homestead land area.

There is no conflict between religion and politics. Religion is best solution for human being's spiritual peace and liberation. Vivekananda had shown, the religion is the natural tendency of man. It is the urge of human mind to know the Godly entity within him. In his words, Religion is not in doctrines and dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming; it is realization. After challenging all the atheists of the earth he said, "Religion can be realized. Are you ready? Do you want it? You will get realization if you do, and then you will be truly religious. Until you have attained realization there is no difference between you and the atheists".¹⁸ Religion can be felt. Without realization, religion cannot be attained. When one can realize, one can sense the essence of Oneness.

But Bangladesh projected the opposite scenario. When religion is used as a weapon in politics, then its sanctity can't be maintained. When religion is used for occupying power and become equal for staying in power then actual religiosity of religion gets lost. Religion then, emerging as blind or distorted image, devours social life. Post '75 to present day, the disadvantages of religious politics has engulfed the society and culture of Bangladesh. Here, a small example of communalism is brought forth. During Zia's regime the head office of Bangladesh Television was at Dhaka's Rampura. Ram is a hind God or incarnation. So, to avoid uttering this name time and again Information Ministry became eager to search out an Islamic name. At this time getting government support communal hardliners had the audacity to propose the change of the name of Surya Sen Hall and later the national anthem. This transformation might have happened if not the Zia Government was collapsed.¹⁹

The religious minority people who became second class citizens, their democratic rights became violated equally. Ershad in 1988 with the 8th amendment of constitution declared Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh, since then the basic rights of religious minority people have been violating. On 6th December 1992 orthodox communal community demolished Babri Mosque in India and in reply to that, Hindus of Bangladesh were vehemently tortured. After that, 28000 Hindu's houses destroyed. 3,600 temples and prayer halls were completely demolished or affected, 2600 young girls were physically abused and monetary loss was above 200 crores.²⁰ In the 90s, when BNP workers and supporters were used to talking like that, casting vote in favour of NOUKA (The Boat- the symbol of Awami League)means Muslim wants to hear the sound of conch instead of Azan from the Mosque;

On 26 March of '97, when, the historical lamp was lighted in the memory of freedom fighter and has been identified as fire-worship of Hindu culture by Maulabis; when Delowar Hossain Saidi, described the incident of offering flowers to Sahid Minar as idol worshipping; when Ershad in the month of Romjan declared to keep shut hotel or restaurant mandatorily or when the picture of a handshake between the Prime minister of Japan and Sheikh Hasina, identified by moulabis as enough reason of a violation of religious discipline and when they ordered Sheik Hasina to apologize without any condition for her anti-religious attitude then we can understand that in this country maulabis are how much dangerous and undemoniac in their attitude.²¹

In administrative level religion is mixed with politics deliberately and the rights of minority people, their human dignity and little bit honour were stuck with extreme pain by the state machinery. In the election of 2001 Khaleda-Nizami communal alliance came into power and destroyed everything which is against Islam and confirmed that *Sariyati law* would be the basis of the state. After the election of 1990-92, this time also in 2001, post-election communal torture of communal force defeated the barbaric attitude of Pakistani's, faced by the people of Bangladesh in 1971. The editorial column of The Daily Star, published on 16th November 2001, mentioned that in Vola district within one night almost 200 women from minority became rape victims and in this list, there were girls of eight years to seventy years old aged-woman.²² According to the survey report by NFP published in 2001, from the district of Kumilla, Nator, Chattogram, Jhinai Daha, Bagura and Pabna 29 thousand 900 minority people have left their motherland and took shelter in India.²³

There is no savior in this country—all are voracious. There are so many examples of demoniac attitudes, ruthlessness, and revengeful attitudes. These incidents showed, in Bangladesh how days after days the human rights are violated, the daily life of disgraceful minority people proved that, tall talks of international human rights are nothing but hypocrisy for them. Human Rights activist Shahariar Kabir identified the activities, expressed or tacit—the activities which are forcing, irrespective of social status and classes, the minority people to send out from their own country, as “ethnic cleansing”.²⁴

Secularism and human rights the two words are complementary to each other. The insecure life of minority people and their helplessness disapprove of the basic idea of human rights. In this darkness, in 2010 some positive steps were taken by Bangladesh Supreme Court in black and white to protect the ideals of secularism, though, in this respect, the role of Government was quite painful. The freedom of unbiased mass media is an inevitable part of the establishment of human rights. A large part of mass media in Bangladesh is being controlled by administration year after year, either the military

Government or extreme fundamental alliance—none gave freedom to media. In the first decade of 21st century under the fundamentalist regime so many things happened to this industry. 10 TV channels were banned, weekly *The Haque Protibad*'s editor Mostapha Kamal Uddin was killed, reporter Sariful Sheik was attacked by JCD etc.²⁵ Its a long list and the same thing is continuing today with a democratic manner.

The point is that since after 1975 Bangladesh is suffering from lack of patience, lack of the capacity of considering different views, lack of the sensation of pluralism. In emergency, journalists from different printing media were arrested and tortured who raised questions against the Government.^{25A} The state did not allow a minimum space of difference of opinion. Socially, politically, culturally—whatever it may be.

From 2009 to till date, there were so many opportunities to change the scenario. There were so many opportunities to Sheikh Hasina for giving back the real secular sense to the Constitution of Bangladesh. But she could not have done this. This complete bow down to fundamentalism brings her next to Ziaur Rahaman. This becomes the legacy and Bangladesh is suffering from that known illness of intolerance. The view of others—who are not the majority, who are not in power, is not acceptable here. So, the basic idea of democracy—the power of acceptance of difference and to honour it, the multiculturalism, and sense of pluralism is not here and thus Bangladesh became the sample of South Asian countries. Here, intolerance to 'others' other than 'we' is the basic problem for all the countries. For instance, the Buddhist monks of Sri Lanka appear to be the patrons of Singhalese nationalist fanaticism. Having been extending morale booster to the anti-Tamil sentiments for the last three decades, they have now turned their attention to the Muslim minorities as an additional target. Recently the Singhalese are in dreadful communal conflict with the Muslim minority. After Sri Lanka, let's turn our eyes on Bhutan. People, taking the biggest share of Gross Domestic Happiness, are forcing the Nepalese to cross the borderline. Pakistan and Bangladesh present a more shagging picture. The Hindu minorities of Pakistan are being treated as second-class citizens. Ahamedia and the Shia community of Pakistan are in an equally volatile situation. Despite the termination of five decades since the independence of Bangladesh, Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities have been subjected to the same humiliation and torture. And in India, the term 'Secular' became the most controversial term in present-day politics. As a whole, intolerance is a basic factor that shakes the very foundation of the democratic fabric of these countries. Majoritarianism, as it is used in present-day in the countries of this region in the name of democracy, poses a serious problem to the view of tolerance. A line of demarcation can be drawn between democracy and majoritarianism.

In a democracy, the rights of the minorities are protected by the majority rule. But in majoritarianism, only the majority of views are taken on board without considering others. Majoritarianism has two correlated facets – one is polarization, and the other is unilateralism. Polarization denotes the division of two sharply contrasting groups or beliefs, i.e., the act of creating division between two distinct groups holding contending opinion and to corner opposite view- thereby pampering a ‘we-they’ feeling. This very concept of polarization collaterally leads to unilateralism, which refers to the doctrine or agenda that upholds one-sided action or commitment toward a particular direction in pursuance of one’s vested interest in complete disagreement with others. In other words, unilateralism is the process or fact of acting, reaching a policy-decision, or pursuing a principle without involving others. These three are common for all the countries of this region. Now, let us see how far these problems can be addressed through Vivekananda’s idea of universal acceptance and tolerance as well as equality in opportunity, etc. and will try to see whether his idea of tolerance is capable of facing political and social intolerance of South Asian countries.

Vivekananda’s idea of religion and society, their inter-relation was holistically based on a spiritual, liberal, benevolent, pluralist, and integrative worldview. And his thoughts are capable of paving the way for any present-day endeavor by creating a balance between identity politics and cultural pluralism. Vivekananda’s pluralist idea of integration is completely opposite to narrow communal theories. We can find an instance of his liberal point of view in his letter written to his fellow disciple of Ramakrishna, Swami Rama Krishnananda in 1894: “See to it that no form becomes necessary, unity in variety should not be compromised at any cost. Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment – universality ... universality – perfect acceptance, not tolerance only, we preach and perform. Take care of how you trample on the least rights of others. That is the cause of many shipwrecks. Absolute devotion without bigotry – this is what we have to show, remember that.”²⁶ This meant, to preserve universality, one might have to sacrifice everything; Vivekananda intended to establish that absolute tolerance was not everything, one would have to consider all religions to be true.

To identify the relevance of Vivekananda in this perspective, let us start our discussion with ‘cultural pluralism’. Once Sri Rama Krishna had said: “People of all belief have glorified their own beliefs...but the one who has worked towards achieving harmony is the real person. Many people are the same, but I can see- just one.”²⁷ It was a clear instruction to Vivekananda. From here we can derive the core understanding of cultural pluralism is as follows- the mutual acceptance of diverse interests, thoughts, ideas, ways,

and ways of living within a society or within the framework of the nation and the practice of building a space for their peaceful coexistence. To maintain integrity within the society that is characterized by plurality, even after recognizing the cultural plurality of smaller, marginalized and minority communities by the state, active efforts have been taken to build national unity and provide for reservations. Identity politics and cultural pluralism did not have the same meanings in Swami Vivekananda's times as they have today.²⁸ But there definitely were claims for recognition of diverse thoughts and ways and efforts to establish unity in diversity. The life of Sri Rama-Krishna is the biggest instance. Drawing from his life and experiences, Vivekananda provided an explanation that was fit for his time. In this regard, we have to first mention Swamiji's declaration in his speech in the World Parliament of Religion, Chicago on 11th September 1893: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a religion whose holy language, Sanskrit does not a word for 'exclusion'. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."²⁹ Towards the end of his speech, taking note of communalism, orthodoxy and religious fanaticism, Swamiji hoped: "...that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."³⁰ In his short speech on 15th September, he used an analogy of a frog inside a well to speak of how Hindus, Muslims, Christians, all think of their wells to be the whole world and oppose each other. He called for breaking the barriers of these smaller worlds.³¹ Swamiji hoped that a little collaboration from people one idea could be materialized and that idea was that of the successful implementation of a 'universal religion'—a religion that would be "one which will have no location in place or time", a religion "which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the total of all these, and still have infinite space for development."³² But that would not mean that "the Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth"³³ - this is what Swamiji hoped for. Stating this on his lecture on the last day on 27th September, he once again warned the religious fanatics saying: "...if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart."³⁴

Not only in the World Parliament of Religion, but Vivekananda also kept propagating his idea of universal religion even afterward in public meetings, interviews given to news media, or in personal letters and conversations. He laid stress on Vedanta philosophy as he believed it was the most favorable for the establishment of a universal religion. Because he believed that the Vaidantik point of view could make a Hindu a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim or a Christian a better Christian. In 1897, down south in Kumbhakonam, Vivekananda in his lecture titled '*Vedanter Bani*' said: "Two scientific conclusions can be drawn from a comparative study of religions. The first one is: all religions are true. And the second one is: all objects in this world seem visibly different, but all have developed from one thing."³⁵ In another part of this same speech, he while explaining the importance of tolerance towards other religions, said: "As long as orthodoxy, bloodshed or brutal atrocities do not end, humankind will not grow; as long as we do not become amicable to others, no civilization will be able to develop; and the first step towards the expression of this amity is to respect religious beliefs of others. Not just this, for this amity to be etched in your hearts, not only you will have to be friendly towards others – you will help others in every aspect even if their religious beliefs are different."³⁶

Vivekananda he did not mean certain beliefs or ritual when he spoke about religion. According to him, the feeling which "elevates animals to humans and humans to gods" is religion.³⁷ The rituals, programs, customs —they are not the 'religion' but they are the different forms of that idea and not inevitable at all. Religion is not doctrines or dogmas, rituals or books, temples or forms. Not only that, in his thinking, but a man may also believe in all the churches in the world, he may carry in his head all the sacred books ever written, he may baptize himself in all the rivers of the earth, still if he has no perception of God, then he would be treated with the rankest atheist. A man, who has visited all the temples and religious places of the earth, has swallowed all the sacred religious books of the universe and floated himself in the holy river of the earth but if he cannot have self-realization, he would be called none other than an atheist. Therefore, the essence of religion in his word: "Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man"³⁸ True religion is nothing other than the manifestation of the divinity which is already in man. This religion is not about faith and practices some manners, not dogma which creates obstacles in the freedom of mind, it is not a theory. This religion cannot tell you to believe in impossible, unreal imaginary facts of legends or myths. The essence of this religion is 'being and becoming', 'being divine' and 'becoming divine'.³⁹

He strongly believed that in this diverse land, often characterized by contradictory elements, a spiritual sense of unity could be the only basis

of national harmony. Swamiji in his lecture titled 'Bharater Bhabishyat' delivered in Madras said: "A nation or race is made up of its unnecessary divisions, religions, languages, system of governance and so on. If the nations or races are compared with one another are compared, it will be seen that the elements forming them are way less in number. Aryan, Dravid, Tatar, Turk, Mughal, European – it is as if the blood of all races of the world is here. We have a beautiful amalgamation of languages here – and the diversity that can be noticed in the two racial branches of India does not even exist in between the East and the West. But our only sacred tradition is our religion; that is our basis of unity, we will have to form our national identity based on it. Religious unity is going to be necessary for shaping India."⁴⁰

His deliberate opinion on the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity can be traced from a letter written by Vivekananda to Muhammad Sarfaraz Hossain. There he wrote: "...it is our firm belief that the philosophy of Vedanta can be extremely refined or wondrous, but without the practical domain of Islam, it will remain incomprehensible to most of humankind. We want to take humanity to where there is no Vedas, no Bible, no Quran; however, we need an integration of the Vedas, the Bible, and the Quran to do so. We have to teach men that all religions 'unilaterally are representations of that one religion only, so one can choose the religion which is the most convenient for them. In our motherland, a synthesis of the religious forms of Hinduism and Islam—Vaidantic mind and Islamic body—is the only hope."⁴¹ This was a matter of his firm belief and realization, his exposure to different kinds of people across the country and the world, his own intellectual and spiritual consciousness, and of course, his guru, Sri Rama Krishna's teachings of harmony.

Vivekananda has not advocated that diversity can be stopped by bringing in mechanical equality. Rather, he has recognized universal acceptance through finding oneness in many and tolerance by affording equal rights regarding opportunity, freedom and human dignity to everyone above and beyond all the differences embedded in them. In dealing with the question of tolerance, he has emphasized freedom of speech and expression as well as equality in opportunity. Similarly, an individual should be allowed to have freedom in choosing food, apparel, and wedding partner and in other matters, including religious practice, so long his freedom does not harm the freedom of others. Freedom is inseparably connected with tolerance. Vivekananda holds an antagonistic view from the prevailing one that everybody will see eye to eye with others that contracts the space in expressing their opinions. His goal was to move forward to reinforcing unity within the framework of differences without destroying it. In Vivekananda's thinking, the moral personality of each and every individual is subject to equal dignity and honor.

Being moved by this principle in mind and action, he did not even impose his own belief upon others. The message of tolerance is implicit in acknowledging the reciprocal distinct difference with honour. At the very beginning of this writing, we have identified the problem of this region-Religious and ethnic intolerance triggered by different religious and ethnic groups of South Asian Region are rumbling which may reach the crescendo at any moment—and at the end of the writing it can say, without doubt, the solution is Vivekananda's idea of toleration and oneness. We need to believe this idea of oneness, we should help others to believe this Vaidantic theory of oneness—this is the only way to a positive change of our ethnic, religious, cultural outlook. If this can be done, political outlook will be changed automatically.

He was the first person to make India familiar to the rest of the world by carrying out this message of toleration to them through age-old Indian scriptures and writings unfolding the spirit of unity in diversity emphasizing cohesion beyond the apparent differences existing among all human beings. The variation in faith and ways is quite natural, pertinent, and, at the same time, it is non-permanent which can, by no means, stand in the way of forging unity as visualized by Vivekananda. He thinks that it is not possible at all to put all individuals in the same bracket despite our unyielding efforts to do the same. Nature has made mankind unequal. So long the process of creation will sustain in the universe, it is beyond our capacity to remove all kinds of distinctions and differences. He has vociferously spoken of the uniqueness, characterized by distinct traits, of every individual and clan. He has considered stagnation caused by the absence of social diversity and social differences to be equal to death. To him, distinctness in thinking, creed, and mode of expression of the individual is natural. Therefore, freedom of thought as well as expression appears to him to be the first and foremost condition for the development of mankind. Everyone needs to have the freedom to bring out his own nobility and distinctness as freedom leads to the development of the sense of divinity from within and the manifestation of this very internal divinity is religion. The sense of God can be felt with the manifestations of all the inner possibilities of an entity. The same divine force exists in all – the only difference lies in the mode of its revelation. To say it differently, diversity and tolerance are the two sides of the same coin.

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INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY : AN EXPEDITION
FROM LOOK EAST TO ACT EAST

JOYPROKASH MONDAL

Abstract

India's foreign policy has been drastically changed in the post-Cold War era. The orientation of India's foreign policy has been shifted from Idealism to Realism. Nehruvian legacy got declined due to adoption of realistic foreign policy in early 1990s. The over dependency on West was shifted into East. In early 1990s, under the regime of Mr Narashima Rao India had started to think about the importance of South-East Asian Nations and gradually made a bridge with ASEAN member countries looking to their economic potentiality. India bluntly refused the proposal of sectorial dialogue partners twice with ASEAN in the year 1975 and 1980 respectively. But after Soviet Union's collapse India finally joined ASEAN and there was a drastic paradigm shift in India's relations with the South East Asian nations. The present study has been done through content analysis method and observation method. There are two research questions of my research work—(1) Is India's foreign policy poses realism instead of idealism with the adoption of Look East Policy? And (2) is there anything difference between "Look East Policy" and "Act East Policy". The growing synergies of India-ASEAN relations have brought a new dimension in India's foreign policy. This research paper will delineate and explore India's economic and socio-cultural connectivity with ASEAN through a new outlook. It will further try to justify that how the economic and socio-cultural factors are closely linked with strategic and security affairs.

Keywords: Look East, Act East, Socio-cultural, ASEAN, Foreign Policy

Introduction

India's Look East Policy includes India's relations with Far East and South-East Asian nations. Most of the ASEAN countries got priority in India's foreign policy since early 1990s. It has been evolved over the last

28 years. “Look East” has been renamed as “Act East”. There is no basic difference between the two policies. One thing is very much important in this regard that is “Look East” is more factional than “Act East”. In 2014, when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India then he had made it clear that India’s relations with the ASEAN countries even with Japan and South Korea will be given more priority than ever before looking up to its national interests. It also declared by South Block that it would be more action oriented rather than dialogues. “ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization of ten countries in Southeast Asia. Its member countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. ASEAN was initially formed by the leaders of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand by the signing of the ASEAN Declaration on 8 August 1967.” Brunei Darussalam attached on 7 January 1984, Vietnam united on 28 July 1995, Laos and Myanmar connected on 23 July 1997 and Cambodia joined on 30 April 1999. East Timor officially had applied for membership in March 2011.¹

Background of India-ASEAN Relations

Actually, after independence, non-alignment policy was the significant hallmark in Global Politics for India. This policy was basically influenced by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. He established India’s neutral standpoint in global arena. In the then World Politics, USSR was the closest and powerful friend to India and India fosters the policy of mixed economy. In early 1990, India had to face a number of challenges in shaping its foreign policy for adjusting with new global order.²The major factors and consequences behind this are as follows –

1. The disintegration of Soviet Union and emergence of new global system.
2. The collapse of Socialism in Eastern Europe and the United States has emerged hegemonic power in global politics and economy.
3. Adaptation of liberal market economy and seeking FDI.
4. The unimpeded force of globalization influenced Indian economy and society.
5. To mitigate the demands of people in global arena India had established its linkages
6. The relevance of NAM and mixed economy had started to loose.
7. Reducing the over dependency on West and starting the interaction with the east on the basis of interdependency and bargaining theory.

Under such circumstances, India has to redefine its foreign policy and India has needed to revive its economy. As because of losing her most

powerful partner (USSR) India was to seek an alternative superpower (USA) on the one hand and for selling and purchasing the goods India had to search some negotiable countries, the South East-Asian countries, Japan and South Korea were the best alternatives in this regard. Partner market and India also felt, regional blocks were the powerful mediator of global trade. Through this consideration, gradually ASEAN was the important alternative for India's geographical proximity in other hand, south-south co-operation and diplomatic pressure from China repaired the relation between India and ASEAN countries strategically. We know, once India bluntly refused the proposal of sectorial dialogue partners twice with ASEAN in the year 1975 and 1980 respectively. But after Soviet Union's collapse India finally joined ASEAN and there was a drastic paradigm shift in India's relation with the super-powers.³ So we have to concentrate on research findings to identify the reasons behind the continuous efforts of India's 'Look East' or 'Act East.'

India has to take a realistic and logical stand point to keep good relations with neighbor countries as well as with great powers. Thus, the South East Asian states again became suspicious of India's designs for the region as they saw soviet power lurking behind India's new status at a time when the western powers were disengaging from that region.⁴ however, South East Asia is vitally important for India's security. The strategic environment in south and South East Asia has also become more complicated with Sino-American rapprochement. So, India now seriously wants an engagement with South East Asia actively and develops the relations over the previous decade. India have been attached with the co-operation and decided to launch a multi model communications and transportation system.⁵ Hence India had to choose its option.

Evolution of Look-East Policy

The 'Look East Policy' adopted by India in 1991 along with its liberalization programme and economic reforms, prime minister P. V Narasimha Rao outlined his vision for South-East Asia during a speech in 1994. Since the early 1990s, the economic relationship between India and ASEAN has improved significantly. In 1992, India was admitted as a sectorial dialogue member of ASEAN and was granted the status of a full dialogue partner by December 1995. Since 2002, India has been meeting with the countries like China, Japan and Republic of Korea on the annual basis. In 2012 India declares to carry on dialogue with the ASEAN countries at least for the period of 20 years. The year after, it became a member of the Asian Regional Forum (ARF). Later, India was invited to be a member of the East Asian Summit in 2005. India might turn into a part of the ASEAN+3 and make over this forum into an

ASEAN+4. The ties between the two entities have progressed substantively, providing a well-built baseline for co-operation in different fields.⁶

Indian global policy in the post-cold war period has been dramatically changed due to the contemporary scenario of world politics. Like other countries India's global policy also influenced by its contemporary socio-political, economic and geo-strategic positions.⁷ India has been too much realistic. For example, India was silent about the question of Iran when USA arranged vote against it in the year of 2009. Some scholars argue that India follows a realistic foreign policy due to fulfill her own national interest but India's stand point on peace keeping, protection of universal human rights, to support third world countries movement against new colonialism are still now same as earlier.⁸ So India has to adopt and adjust itself with a really new world and the salient features of present day international relations have to be recognized.

The Look East Policy has at present advanced into a dynamic and action oriented Act East Policy. Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi had decided to move from the Look East to Act East.⁹ The year 2017 was the Golden Jubilee of ASEAN and eventually, that year was the silver Jubilee year of INDO-ASEAN partnership. This Anniversary of both impresses to involve in strong connectivity. 2018 was also a hallmark for 15th years of summit level interaction and 5th years of strategic partnership. Even India also welcomed and appreciated the ASEAN states in New Delhi on January, 2018 to concrete the ASEAN-India plan of Action (POA) and digital connectivity with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. Thus India has driven by real politic as opposed to mere idealism. India established a concrete relationship with Japan. Modi visited Japan in 2016 and concluded nuclear technology transfer treaty. Modi government has also given emphasizing to make more and more economic and defense relations with Indonesia. Through enhancement of tourism both India and South-East Asian nations are building economic and people to people contacts. India, now enhanced diplomatic and defense linkages with Vietnam. India is using 'soft diplomacy' in order to make more and more connectivity with the East. Although Malaysia is a very good economic and defense partner of India, yet, due to some irritating issues in September and October 2019 India is avoiding Malaysia to give it a lesson. This is called bargaining diplomacy. In India's 'Act East' policy India is demanding to assignment its demographic potentiality, big marketplace with sizable middle class, technological improvement especially, in IT and space science etc. India's desire to be a global power is a lot dependent up on its getting and inevitability to South-East Asian nations.¹⁰

Look East Policy: What and Why

In the era of globalization economic complimentary provides a greater synergy for co-operation. In the early nineties of the last century India's initiating the 'Look East' policy was symptomatic of its desire of depending its engagement with the Asia pacific region. The first phrase of Look East Policy has launched by the Narashimha Rao government in the early 1990_s, focused on renewing contact with region that India had drifted away from, thanks to the logic of the cold war and its insular economic policies. In 1991 the first year of look east policy saw a steady expansion of trade and investment links with East Asian countries.^{7/11}

The end of the Cold War era there was uncertainty to India to get substantial assistance from USSR's successor Federation of Russia. Due to gradually decline of NAM most of the countries were beginning to redefine their equations with the remaining sole super power.¹² Then India's foreign exchange affairs brought liberalization to close and to revive its ties with south-East Asia under the new rubric of Look East Policy. Actually a new politico-economic context for India's regional diplomacy was created after the end of the Cold War, which spelled out a clear need for the reassessment and reorientation of India's foreign policy making. Non-alignment, which was exclusively defined in terms of the east-west conflict of the Cold War, became irrelevant. Besides, with the structural changes taking place at the international level, characterized by worldwide strategic, economic and political changes,¹³ India started to redefine her position.

The Look East was launched as a policy alternative in the after math of India's liberalization, which gave greater focus to economic issues and concerns.¹⁴ The three basic implied objectives behind India's Look East Policy were¹⁵—

1. To prevent China from using South-east Asia, through its linkages with countries like Myanmar and increased activities in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean region, to challenge India position in India's own backyard of South Asia.
2. To limit China's influence in the region so that India does not become irrelevant to the regional states.
3. To have a sufficient economic and political presence and influence in the region to advance India's own multifaceted interest in direct competition with china.

Why India found the new path of foreign policy like look east, the key reasons may be identified¹⁶—

- a. Prosperity has been power to stop conflict. The economic growth of in this region provides a power full force to side line conflict.

- b. The Asian tigers have heavily invested in human capital through health care, electronics, tourism, education and infrastructure and have become economic power house. India must give her attention in the areas to promote national economic strength.
- c. East Asian nations have skilled and semi-skilled workers for various industries. India must take full advantage from her strong democratic fundamentals, legal system, large technical personal, English language and it industry.
- d. Look East Policy can help India in promoting peace and stability in the region and at the same time put India on par with the western nations and china vis-à-vis regional security.
- e. To combat international terrorism collectively.
- f. To enhance medical tourism, education exchange programmes, capacity building and people to people contacts.

Network of Reverse Swing Politics : Opportunities and Challenges

When emerging new idea of India was started with challenging, the existing views of the world of academia by ASEAN, in intellectual thoughts proved for regional integration against the bias globalization policies and Western lobby in third world. Even India wanted to establish a value politics in the favor of Asia where SAARC countries suspect hegemonic role of India.

India's north eastern states are strategically placed as the gateway to South-East Asia through Myanmar, an ASEAN member country.¹⁷In fact, the north east stretched from Burma to the strait of Malacca in the 1860s and was known as 'farther India'; It was the center of Asia.¹⁸ The environment of today's world has become increasingly complicated when compared to the old days. The complexity and diversity is not averse to a nation's economics,¹⁹ rather the regulations of a government may vary which may influence a nation's comparative advantages.²⁰ Therefore the recent development of ASEAN as a vibrant and growing regional organization has met with enthusiastic receptions from members of the group as well as from other major partner countries outside of the region.²¹ Even after independence, each former colonial country still had more to do with its former colonial master than with its neighbours in the region.

Yet, the paradox of the nationalist history in south-east Asia is that once achieved its goals, the shared ideas of the movements began to give way to the new notions and design of state power and system of the newly nation-states, resulting in the formation of national conflicts and even armed confrontations between neighboring countries. Historically, the land and people of this region was known to outsiders such as the Greeks as 'the golden chersonese' and to the Chinese and Japanese as the "South Sea".²²

The state-centric narratives have been one of the most common methods of study of the region, producing rigorous concepts like the “Mandala”, “Solar System” and “Charter State” the Mekong river flows from Yunnan province through Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and forms part of the international border between Laos and Myanmar and Thailand.²³ Geography and economy thus have shaped the spatial history of Southeast Asia. On the mainland, the landscape is dominated by several great rivers which begin near each other high in the Himalayas, carrying water.²⁴

So, India’s focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN is an outcome of the significant changes in the world’s political and economic scenario.²⁵ Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like BIMSTEC, MGC, BCIM etc. India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe meeting, East Asia summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN defense ministers’ meeting + (ADMM+) and expanded ASEAN maritime forum.²⁶ Other mechanisms like the East Asia summit (EAS), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor (BCIM), the silk road project, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) are all designed to foster greater Co-operation between India and countries of South East and East Asia. There are also negotiations underway with regard to the US-promoted trans-pacific partnership (TPP).²⁷

However, it is to be highlighted that ASEAN compared to SAARC has spelt enormous profits in terms of regional co-operation and economic development. In an era of globalization, it becomes necessary that the Indian foreign policy maintains “growth model”.²⁸ The adoption of “ASEAN India vision statement” that charted the future prospects of ASEAN India co-operation.²⁹ Many efforts are now underway to build new connectivity, not just over land, but also through air and water.³⁰ It is, therefore, very important that India and its Asian neighborhood come together to ensure progress and stability in the region.³¹

ASEAN’s regional “game plan”³² of China was the strategy from the revolutionary cold and into the regional fold; it has been argued that the contemporary Asian security order is hegemonic in kind, with China at its epicenter and ASEAN as well as other Asian countries relating to Beijing. China’s rise as a major economic and security concern and concur on the need for the United States—despite rising anti-Americanism within some South-East Asian societies in recent times—to remain actively involved in Asia and maintain a stable balance of power therein.³³

Challenges

India’s current neighborhood practices such as strengthening bilateral

ties, diplomatic activities, sub-regionalism and elements of continuity or modify and their applicability to establishing harmony in the region has made an enormous impact in the region. ³⁴A nation's destiny is related to its neighbourhood. That is why my government has located the highest concern on advancing amity and teamwork with her neighbours.³⁵ But S.D. Muni identifies five problem areas in India's approach towards the neighborhood:³⁶**Firstly**, the lack of a balanced political perspective; **Secondly**, the power differentials; **Thirdly**, India's economic clout; **Fourthly**, extra-regional powers; and **Fifthly**, mindsets, diplomatic styles and personalities. The improvement of China-ASEAN relations brings the outlook of stability, certainty and completion to China's neighbour policy. This is the first time that such feelings have characterized China's relations with south-east Asia.³⁷ The benefits from this good relationship are wide-ranging: China can deal with the North Korean problem, China-Japan relations and the Taiwan issue attentively; it can, together with ASEAN, promote the development of East Asia regional co-operation, or even pan-Asian co-operation including Central Asia and South Asia.³⁸ In fact Chinese reassurance has succeeded in its aims, ASEAN countries today generally regard China 'as a good neighbour, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a non-threatening regional power'.³⁹

Act East: The Shifting Voice of Strong Connectivity

India's 'Act East' policy is the up gradation of the 'Look East' policy from 2014. This shifting voice of Look East recommends a platform for deepening and strengthening relationship with ASEAN and the East Asian economies. The least-developed nations of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) have been a special focus area for India. This economic advancement has been enjoyed greatly by India and CLMV countries. With 'Make in India' emerging as a key campaign for manufacturing, developing new global value chains in partnership with the four least-developed economies of ASEAN would bring benefits to both sides. India has also strategically focused on human capacity development and small projects with high impact to address poverty alleviation.⁴⁰

The objective is to support regional value chains with greater integration of India.⁴¹ India's 'Look East' policy was developed and enacted during the P.V. Narasimha Rao's government (1991–1996) and Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998–2004).⁴² Now, Under the leadership of Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** the new government of India has made its relations with East Asian neighbors a foreign policy priority at a time when the **United States** has engaged as a 'pivot to Asia'. The former **Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj** proposed a new outlook calling is Act East policy,⁴³ it will be appropriate to call it as

'Look East Act East Policy' as it is continuation of the policy with an input of vigor and vibrancy for intensifying co-operation through soft power approach. The new type of connectivity visualized for strengthening the bond moves beyond physical infrastructure to encompass digital linkage and human contact.⁴⁴ India wants to push for a 'balanced' Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which gives equal emphasis on goods and services as this could become a 'springboard' for regional integration and prosperity. During last meeting of ASEAN in November 2014 at Nay Pai Taw, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed to the world leaders that his government accorded high priority to turn India's erstwhile 'Look East' policy into an 'Act East' policy.⁴⁵

He further informed that his Government has moved with a great sense of priority and speed to turn our 'Look East Policy' into 'Act East Policy' and that the East Asia Summit is an important pillar of this policy. It is a welcome development, to ensure ways of getting better market access—through diversifying India's exports basket and improving our competitiveness in the Information Technology (IT) services sector.⁴⁶

Look East to Act East: A New Paradigm

The present diplomatic policy of the government in relation to its neighbours shows strong evidence of traits related to the concept of "soft power". The current government has been deploying essential elements of statecraft such as power and realism in a Machiavellian way. The tradition employs 'power' in a certain manner to ensure its own 'security'. India in this stance has truly exhibited its goodwill amongst its neighbours of south Asia and East Asia. Therefore, the hardening of the software has seen the order of the day in Modi's regime.^{40/47} India has used soft power to get most of the countries in the neighborhood to its side more systematically for about a decade. Institutions like the public diplomacy division of the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Council for Cultural Relations set up across the world is playing a key role in facilitating this approach. 'Incredible India' promoted by Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Overseas Indians 's effort in demonstrating India's social, political and cultural aspects overseas have created a new image of India abroad. Support of 170 countries to International Day of Yoga on June 21 every year in the UN General Assembly is an evidence of India's success in showcasing its original knowledge for wider acceptance. Foreign policy initiatives are now embossed with cultural assets of India as much as developing economic and strategic relationship with countries in Asia and outside.⁴⁸

It is mostly accepted that to financial organization may perform same functions following the western model. It could potentially assist non-EU

member states with their development projects. While a North-South transport corridor linking Russia, Central Asia and India has been talked about, gaps in infrastructure remain. Fast tracking the development of Iran's Chabahar port will not only help India gain better access to countries such as Kazakhstan but also establish direct trading routes with Afghanistan. As India makes tracks towards Asia, an Act North Policy would complement perfectly India's Act East initiative.⁴⁹

The first phase of India's Look East Policy was ASEAN-centered and focused primarily on trade and investment linkages. The new phase of this policy is characterized by an expanded definition of 'East' extending from Australia to East Asia, with ASEAN at its aim. The new phase also marks a shift from trade to wider economic and security issues including joint efforts to protect the sea lanes and coordinate counter-terrorism activities. On the economic side, phase-II is also characterized by arrangement for FTA and establishing institutional economic linkage between the countries of the region and India.⁵⁰

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that in the 21st century, ASEAN has witnessed a number of challenges, despite of this ASEAN has been able to attract the major powers of Asia and the world at large. The strategic importance of South-east Asia to India will can be implemented through North Eastern India (NEI) by territory, through Bangladesh by sea and road and rail. Myanmar can be linked through road.⁵¹ So India's interaction with ASEAN was very much essential in India's foreign policy and for formation of the Look East Policy. It has noticeable a strategic swing in India's perception. Today, India's Act East Policy has become more comprehensive because of the adoption of "extended neighborhood" theory, according to this India's Look East Policy include not only ASEAN but also North-east Asia, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan and South Korea.⁵² India is trying to establish its relations with South-East Asian nations including far east and New Zealand and Australia with multi-layered diplomatic, economic and security engagements. Now, India is using the tools of 'soft diplomacy' in order to enhance people to people contact. Actually, there are no major qualitative differences between 'look East and Act East' policy.

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REVISITING THE TRAJECTORY OF
GLOBALIZATION IN THE WAKE OF
COVID-19

LAKSHMI PRASAD

Abstract

Globalization is to be precise, a historical process which began with the development of communication tools. With the advancement of more and more sophisticated tools of communication, the process accelerated further and brought 'nation-states' closer to one another. Capitalism's worldwide expansion and the free market are the primary driving force behind the current era of globalisation. However, despite encouraging and promoting integration and connectedness, globalization has failed to develop a shared reality of human life. In its effort to maintain the neoliberal capitalist system, it has disrupted countless industries, dislocated millions of workers and promoted monopolistic competition and homogenization. Mostly fuelled and propelled by neoliberal capital, globalization has become the main driver of the homogenous 'global village'.

This paper attempts to unravel the current debate on Globalisation-whether Covid-19 will lead us to reconsider the nature of Globalisation or will it halt the process of integration and interconnectedness. How to manage globalization during this great humanitarian crisis is a serious challenge confronting the world today as human lives, migration and mobility have taken new directions due to the covid 19 and at the same time China is aspiring for a new global order and championing its cause for the world leadership.

Keywords : Globalization; Nation-States; Capitalism; Covid-19; Global Order

It is believed that the word 'globalization' was popularized in 1983 by Theodore Levitt in its modern sense, in an article entitled "The Globalization of Markets," published in the Harvard Business Review. It puts forward the

idea that there is a growing “new reality” based on developments in technology—especially in the communications and transport sectors—and a global trend of homogenization that stimulates the transformation of multinational economic actors into global¹ ones. However the end of the bipolar world, which was based on an ideological rivalry between the liberal Western bloc and the Soviet Communist bloc, prompted many scholars to claim the world was entering a “new era” dominated by globalization. Following the collapse of the Bretton Woods System², “Globalization” arose as an ideology unfolding an epochal change in global integration. Later a celebrated work that popularized the term “globalization” entitled ‘The Lexus and the Olive Tree’ (1999) by a journalist, Thomas Friedman, who described globalization as establishing and intensifying interdependencies among different nations, especially economic ones, which he believed would contribute to the prevention of vicious conflicts.

While many scholars think that globalization will continue on the agenda of policymakers for the near future, others claimed that event such as, the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Islamic State attacks in Paris, and the Syrian refugee catastrophe, can be viewed as harbingers of the end of globalization (James and Steger 2014). Another trend called “alter-globalism” seeks to reconfigure the processes of globalization to a new vision that is based on a just and egalitarian system for all. Some theorists argued that well-managed globalisation would make all, or at least most, better off. Nonetheless, that has not happened. Conservatives have also argued that globalization requires nations to become more competitive by lowering taxes and rolling back the welfare state. Gradually, we are becoming rich countries of poor people (Stiglitz 2006). This paper is divided into two sections, in the first section we will explore the brief debate on Globalisation and deglobalisation. In the next section emphasis will be given to dissecting despair: pandemic war on Globalization.

Roland Robertson’s chapter entitled “Interpreting Globality” (1983) appeared in the same year as Levitt’s article and his goal was to provide a sociological, non-economistic, and non-ideological alternative reading of globalization. Robertson pointed that there was a prevalent deceptive tendency among those who sought to describe and examine globalization—to overemphasize the physical/material aspect of interconnectedness at the cost of the cognitive phenomenon he called “global consciousness” in terms of “thinking the world as a whole.” Robertson concluded that the “thinking of the world-as-a-whole” trend can be traced back to ancient times when ideas such as “cosmos” and “ecumene” predominated. The alternate³ argument with the rise of modernization is that globalization has gone hand in hand with modernity and capitalism. This argument is made by those who

define globalization as the spread of modernization and capitalism across different societies through trade, colonization and wars.

As such the term “globalisation” is used to delineate a range of economic, cultural, social, and political changes that have shaped the world over the past 50-odd years, from the much illustrious revolution in information technology to the shrinking of national and geo-political boundaries in an ever-expanding, transnational movement of goods, services, and capital. The growing homogenisation of consumer preferences, the integration and expansion of corporate power, the sharp increases in wealth and poverty, the “McDonaldisation” of food and culture, and the increasing ubiquity of liberal democratic ideas are linked to globalization in one way or another (Guttal 2007). Anthony Giddens in a lecture⁴ entitled ‘Globalisation, has mentioned three different phases in the development of the debate on globalization (Talani L. S 2019)—

- The first phase saw a confrontation between the so-called skeptics, who questioned the very existence of the phenomenon, and the ‘globalists’ who firmly asserted that its existence was irrefutable.
- In the second phase, the idea that globalisation was a new phenomenon was harmonized and the debate moved into the streets, where anti-globalists vigorously protested its emergence, generally linking it with the outspread of international imperialism and economic neo-liberalism.
- Throughout the third phase of this debate, even the anti-globalists have come to terms with the inescapability of globalisation, and debates have moved to address the issue of how to implement globalisation so that it can be good for all.

Realists maintained that globalisation is hardly a new phenomenon⁵ (Gilpin 2000; Hirst et al., 2009). To them, the notion of the globalised economy is a convenient myth⁶ which is used by hegemonic states to retain their influence at both the international and regional levels. For liberal institutionalists, globalisation is a reality that cannot be put against any prior instances of international market integration (Held and McGrew 2000). Despite following a concept of globalisation similar to the realists, the globalists maintain that the evidence indisputably proves the existence of the phenomenon. However, divergent to realist analyses, the neo-institutionalists shows the emergence of a completely new phase in the evolution of the global economy characterised by a growing level of economic interactions between states and economic activities overcoming national boundaries to acquire a global dimension. According to Held, this historically distinctive variety of globalisation dates back to 1945. To distinguish this process from previous historical waves of internationalisation, Held distinguishes four

different forms of globalization based upon the four spatio-temporal dimensions: *extensity*, *intensity*, *velocity*, and *reciprocity* between local and global development. The argument states that all of these dimensions are quantifiable and need to be deliberated to know which phase of globalisation we are currently in (Coleman and Sajed 2013). The four types of globalisation recognised by Held are:

- *Thick Globalisation*, characterized by high extensity, intensity, velocity, and reciprocity;
- *Diffused Globalisation*, in which extensity, intensity, velocity are high, but reciprocity is low;
- *Expansive Globalisation*, where extensity and intensity, are high;
- *Thin Globalisation*, when there is only an extensity of connections.

A common definition of globalization as “time-space compression” (Harvey 1990) or “time-space distantiation” emphasizes how an event that takes place in a distant part of the world becomes part of one’s everyday life. Globalization creates “distant proximities” in James Rosenau’s lexis (2003), which eventually results in the emergence of both scourges (e.g. , economic crisis, refugee and terrorism) and opportunities (e.g. offshoring, global media revolution, cyberspace, NGOs, social movements, and supranational tribunals on crimes against humanity or individual freedoms). Based on the certainty that globalization is both unavoidable and irreversible, hyper globalists recommend adjusting policies and visions to global transformations rather than attempting to oppose globalization. Hyperglobalists⁷ perceived neoliberal globalization as inevitable and stipulated globalization as the retreat of the nation-state system.

From a Marxist world view, the Dependency School and the world-system analysis by Wallerstein emphasized that globalization reinforces the unilateral mechanisms of trade and exploitation guided by a transnational coalition of capitalist elites. Consequently, globalization is perceived as serving the interests of the few at the expense of the majority. Besides, globalization is typically empathised as a phenomenon weakening, if not eroding, local traditions, and genuineness. For instance, in his books titled *The McDonaldization of Society* and *Globalization of Nothing*, Ritzer claims that the spread of a capitalistic market culture is a key feature of globalization that results in the replacement of local cultures by uniform “ empty “ types and structures (e.g., shopping malls) that are easily imitated regardless of any differences.

Apart from the above perspectives, globalization is furthermore characterized as a process of “deterritorialization” and supraterritoriality in the sense that it ordains and spreads organizations, networks, and flows that challenge or go ahead of the traditional Westphalian understanding of

sovereignty as territorial control. Considering the superfluousness of inside / outside categories and of such theses as the “impermeability of territorial borders,” traditional approaches to governance, security, and development have become contested in the context of globalization. The emergence of humanitarian interventions, the global war on terror, and the idea of “new wars” point to the shifts in the perception and behavior of sovereignty in an increasingly “shrinking world.” Many scholars including David Held and Anthony McGrew suggest differentiating between “thick” and “thin” forms of globalization based on the differential duration of globalization in both spatial and temporal terms. They generally differentiate “thick globalization” from “thin globalization” in terms of higher levels of extensity, intensity, velocity, and effect in all spheres of social life (Held et al. 1999). The contemporary period is one of Thick Globalisation (Coleman and Sajed 2013). It is indispensable to acknowledge the possibility of the coexistence of “many globalizations” instead of a singular trajectory, due to the variety of experiences and prospects about globalization in different parts of the world.

The terminology used in globalization studies is ambiguous, reflecting the variety of meanings and perceptions related to globalization. A general ambiguity prevails about the roots, the meaning, and the orders of globalization and it is compounded by various ontological and epistemological orientations adopted by globalization scholars. For instance, the rational choice approach supports the conceptualization of globalization as a process that is planned and guided by insular and self-interested actors such as states, social groups, and organizations. Neo-Marxist and realist scholars argue that both the origins and the orientations of globalization point to the West at the expense of the rest of the world. In this circumstance, globalization is generally abridged to such trends as imperialism, Americanization, Westernization, “McDonaldization,” and neoliberal capitalist development (Ritzer 1993). Next section will address discussion on the deglobalisation debate of the neo-liberal economic model of globalization.

Deglobalisation Thesis

The celebrated theses of Benjamin Barber’s “Jihad versus McWorld” or Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” identify the global order as endangered by the rise of rival blocs based on different cultures, civilizations, religions, worldviews, and lifestyles. Barber and Huntington regarded Islamic fundamentalism as an anti-globalization tendency, ignoring the constitutive impacts of globalization on the emergence, mobilization, and representation of Islamic fundamentalist identity and movement. While some scholars claimed that global conflict is likely to take place between two poles (North versus South, East versus West, or Islamism versus secularism), while others

expected a multi polar⁸ world subverting the Western predominance and contemplative the rise of the “rest,” including the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – and the Muslim world. While others argue that the future global order will bear a resemblance to the medieval era when there were multiple and overlapping authorities competing with one another. Friedman (1994) contends that the decline of the West from its central position in the global system has led to the rise of previously suppressed identities and movements. In this unique circumstance, social, political, economic, humanitarian, and legitimacy crises faced by modern societies pave the way for the emergence of fundamentalisms such as ethnic nationalism, cultural fragmentation, and violent modernization movements that emerge as a reaction. (Gulmez 2017)

As a catalyst of deglobalization, liberalism recognizes domestic political opposition against globalization. Realism, on the other hand, sees the end of US hegemony as the cause and China’s emergence as a geostrategic competitor. The two theories point to different scenarios for the global economy’s future. Just as globalization does not require each nation to become more interdependent – North Korea, for example, is potentially going against the trend by being less interdependent since the end of the Cold War – de-globalization does not require each country to become less interdependent. What happens in the world as a whole is representative of globalisation or deglobalization (Witt 2019).

Globalization requires two main ingredients for liberalists: the willingness of states to collaborate in building interdependence and supporting infrastructure that enables such cooperation to take place. At the same time, it also includes two pathways to de-globalization in a liberalist world. The first is the lack of the willingness to promote transparency for the institutional framework that facilitates globalisation. For example, diverging interests between countries may impede the creation or maintenance of the institutions necessary for sustaining or advancing openness. In the background of the Doha Round of WTO negotiations, we saw such a difference of interests, in which developed industrialized countries pressed for more free trade (except in agriculture), while the emerging markets lobbied for what they considered fair trade. While in early rounds, in which the developed industrialized countries were strong enough to drive their interests through, in later periods increasing pressure from emerging markets led to a Doha Round stalemate (Witt 2019). The second way: a shift in national political priorities leads countries to opt-out of interdependence in economic terms. In line with the notion that shifting interests may be linked to the current de-globalization, in many economies, public support for globalization has fallen since the early 2000s (OECD, 2017). In a survey conducted in 23

developed and emerging markets in November 2016, an average of 53 percent of respondents had little to no confidence in international organizations, 61 percent had little or no faith in large companies, and a substantial minority was worried about immigration (with no majority in favor) (IPSOS, 2017).

Realism, on the other hand, claims that waves of globalization essentially represent the rise and fall of global hegemony, that is to say, disproportionately powerful states. Throughout the 19th century, Britain had encouraged globalization. By the Great Depression, the U.K. had been eclipsed by the U.S. Yet the U.S. was unwilling to assume the lead position and so the first wave ended. The US stepped up to endorse globalization after World War II, first in the Western camp of the Cold War, then internationally after 1990. But it is a declining hegemon, compared to other nations (and relative power is what matters to realism). The closest rival to American hegemony is China, which has outpaced the United States in terms of GDP at purchasing power parity and is steadily building up its military. We can already see China challenging the American world order, whether in the South China Sea or by rivaling the Asian Development Bank through the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Bank.

The main pathway to globalisation, for realists, involves coercion⁹. The regime becomes unstable if the hegemon declines – i.e., it loses control compared to other countries to the extent where it is no longer overwhelmingly powerful. While hegemonic decline has been a recurrent phenomenon in history (Gilpin, 1983; Organski, 1958), precisely when a state ceases to be a hegemon is not necessarily clear. Realism's theoretical parsimony makes it much easier to explain how the latest de-globalization era coincides with hegemonic decline¹⁰. The theory of hegemonic stability connects the openness of the international economic system with the preponderance of the most powerful country, which has been the United States of America in recent history.

De-globalization, on the other hand, accompanies a decline in power of the strongest state, not necessarily in absolute terms, but in comparison to other Countries. If the decline is present, then de-globalization will be anticipated. Realism expects globalisation, primarily in the form of a global hegemon. In a multipolar world, in which at least two superpowers constitute regional (not in the sense of global) hegemony and neither is powerful enough to become a global hegemon, realism would expect economic blocs to emerge around each regional hegemon supported by various sets of institutions¹¹ (regimes). The most likely scenario under realism for the near-to-medium future is thus a continuation of the international political economy's Cold War configuration: a bipolar world in which two superpowers in their respective spheres of interest create two distinct structures. The US remains

less than a global hegemon in this sense but strong enough to deny China the mantle of global supremacy. This may be a transitional period for the coming decades or it may become a permanent state if China does not break through the middle-income trap¹² and thus does not grow much stronger.

II

Dissecting Despair: Pandemic war on Globalization

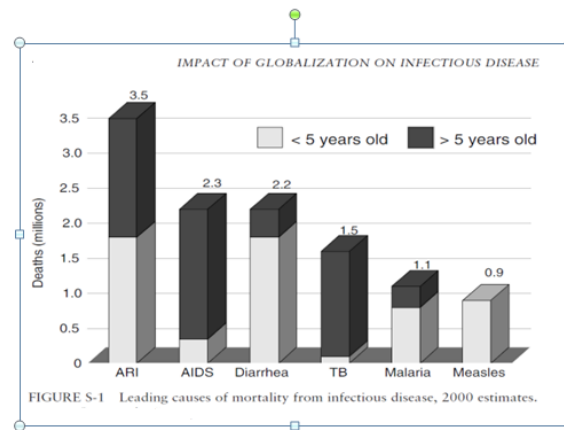
Following the global Covid-19 pandemic¹³ and its devastating destruction of human life and well being, questions have been raised about globalization, which was the main engine of interconnectedness and interdependence. Like Globalisation, pandemics are also not recent phenomena; Thucydides' early reference to an outbreak in the ancient Greek city of Athens¹⁴ demonstrates its existence from the very beginning of human search for power and more territory. A pandemic is an outbreak of disease on a very wide geographical scale, maybe worldwide or at least impacting a significant region of the world. However, a disease or illness is not just a pandemic because it is common or kills many people; it must also be contagious or infectious. Pandemic like COVID-19 is a devastating incident which is simultaneously individual and collective, intimate and public, contemporary and historic (Munro 2015). The unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic has shut down borders, grounded aircraft, quarantined more than half of the world's population, caused widespread hysteria and 'shaken global capitalism to its core' (Mary Mostafanezhad 2020).

What Covid-19 would mean for globalization is one natural question. The coronavirus pandemic may slow down some globalizing trends¹⁵ that have already decelerated (or may be even reverse them). The 2003 SARS¹⁶ outbreak was a landmark for governments to use mass surveillance and big data in the interests of public health, while Covid-19's omnipresence poses a problem of a different nature. The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has come at a time when a lot of states have turned inward. The fracturing of the relationship between the US and China, the rise of populism in Europe, Brexit Britain, an isolationist United States, nationalist India, a clandestine and authoritarian China, and Russia, playing with decoupling from the global internet, are destabilizing forces at a time when cooperation is necessary. The novel Corona virus¹⁷, or SARS-CoV-2, is battering both lives and economies across the globe. The swift spread of coronavirus in the present scenario is a consequence of the planet being a global village¹⁸. Although the virus has sprung up in China, it is spreading to some of the world's most remote regions. This is considered one of the greatest disasters in human history and may be the world's largest epidemic. Fran Baum (2001) writes—

All the signs are that globalization's existing forms make the world a safe place for unbridled market liberalism and consequent rise in inequality... [and] posing substantial threats to human health and the health of the planet¹⁹.

As people, products, food, and resources navigate the globe in unprecedented numbers and at incredible pace, so do the multitude of microorganisms that cause disease. No nation is resistant to the increasing global threat that an isolated infectious disease outbreak in an increasingly remote part of the world can pose²⁰. Corona Virus Covid-19 clearly proves it. Today, be it carried by an anonymous traveler or an opportunistic vector, human pathogens can reach anywhere in the world quickly. Therefore, the globalization of infectious diseases is characterized by the transformation of individual entities into a unified epidemiologic system.

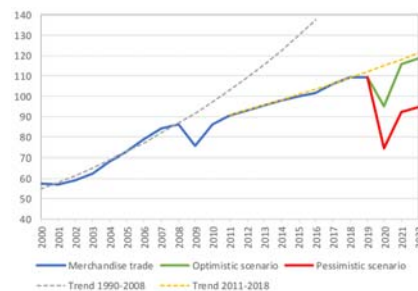
In spite of various mechanisms to control many infectious diseases and even to eliminate some deadly afflictions, throughout the last century, 13 million people worldwide died each year from these diseases (See Figure S-1). While the burden for the developed world is greatest, infectious diseases pose a growing challenge to all nations.



Source : (Klaucke D. 2002) Globalization and Health: A Framework for Analysis and Action. Presentation at the Institute of Medicine Workshop on the Impact of Globalization on Infectious Disease Emergence and Control: Exploring the Consequences and the Opportunities, Washington, D.C. Institute of Medicine Forum on Emerging Infections.)

The “end of globalization” has already been predicted, yet some speak of “post-globalization,” while others speak of localisation and/or glocalisation. Aggressive intervention by the state, closure of borders and restriction of physical movement “Social distancing,²¹” collapse of the travel industry and several other global changes has emerged as a partial pandemic outcome.

One aspect of the Corona tragedy concerns the official promulgation of new protectionism and localism through the actions of various states worldwide. Ulrich Beck²² wrote about globalization in his book *What is Globalization?* It seems to be an irreversible, self-evident truth. Yet, it took only a virus to stop international movement and travel across borders within a span of few weeks. According to the World Trade Organization, global trade is anticipated to plummet by 13 percent to 32 percent in 2020 as the COVID 19 pandemic disrupts normal economic activity and life around the world. The broad range of possibilities for the expected downturn is explained by this health crisis's unparalleled existence and the ambiguity about its specific economic effects²³. But WTO economists believe that the downturn is likely to surpass the trade slump caused by the 2008/09 global financial crisis (Chart 1). Estimates of the anticipated recovery in 2021 are similarly unpredictable, with outcomes largely depending on the duration of the outbreak and the effectiveness of the policy responses.



Source : WTO Secretariat.

Trade was already declining in 2019, weighed down by trade tensions and declining economic development, before the virus struck. World merchandise trade reported a small decrease in volume terms for the year of 0.1 per cent after a 2.9 per cent rise in the previous year. Meanwhile, the dollar value of world merchandise exports dropped to US\$ 18.89 trillion in 2019 by 3 per cent. The COVID-19 pandemic economic shock inevitably calls for parallels with the 2008-09 global financial crisis. For some ways, these crises are close but in others, very different. As in 2008-09, governments once again responded with monetary and fiscal policy to fight the downturn and provide enterprises and households with temporary income support. But restrictions on movement and physical distancing to prevent the spread of the disease mean that today labor supply, transportation and travel are directly affected in ways that they were not before the financial crisis,

prompting some thinkers to wonder whether globalization itself may be a victim of the corona virus. Professor Beata Javorcik²⁴ says that the rate of change in the global economy in just the last 17 years has been profound. “If we look back at the SARS outbreak in 2003, China accounted for 4 percent of global production,” “China now accounts for four times as much, 16 percent.

Ian Goldin states that this pandemic marks a sea shift and that ‘2019 was the year of fragmentation of the peak supply chain’ though protectionism has already been felt; Covid-19 seems to be able to accelerate the cycle. The pandemic would speed up not globalization’s downfall, but its transformation. The probable outcome is an acceleration of changes toward a new, different, and more limited form of globalization that has long been in motion. The worldwide interconnectedness of products, services, resources, individuals, data and ideas and the dangers of dependency has completely entered the consciousness of the general public²⁵.

Yet this is not going to be the end of globalisation. Instead, the world is likely to see another, more minimal form of global integration than the one we’ve seen over the past three decades. The contours are scarcely perceptible but still noticeable²⁶. Nevertheless, for the idealists, a global pandemic would seem to be precisely the kind of common threat that might lead to a new age of international cooperation. There will always be economic globalization but it will continue to move from global to regional and bilateral levels. Also China’s Belt and Road Initiative creates regional and bilateral, not global, relations. This Pandemic can mark the endpoint of the post-Cold War period.

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Endnotes

1. What distinguishes a global corporation or market from a multinational one is the former's conception of the world as interconnected rather than divided into separate, territorially bound communities. In other words, a global corporation operates as if the world is a single place moving beyond the national, regional, and local differences in economic and social terms. Given the distinction between the global and the multinational, it is possible to claim that there has been a semantic shift from multinational to transnational and global studies in the late 1980s (James and Steger 2014). (Cited in Globalization: Didem BuhariGulmez: Istanbul Kemerburgaz University, Turkey)
2. The Bretton Woods System, initiated in 1944 to guide the postwar order, was engineered to promote growth by managing exchange rates and trade flows between individual nation-states, each responsible for designing and administering its own domestic policies. For Bretton Woods foundations, Barry J. Eichengreen, *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 96–106; Eric Helleiner, *States and the Reemergence of Global Finance: From Bretton Woods to the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 25–50. (Cited in Globalization and Its History by: Michael Lang, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 78, No. 4, December 2006), pp. 899-931.
3. The developing literature on alternative and multiple modernities challenge the tendency of associating globalization with a Eurocentric account of

modernization that implies the spread of liberal, secular, rationalist, and scientific norms. Similarly, the emerging literature on post-Westernization suggests abandoning dichotomies such as “the East versus the West” or “Europe versus Asia” in an era where social, political, and cultural boundaries have become blurred due to increased mobility, communication, and transactions. (Didem Buhari Gulmez (2017) *Globalization* : Istanbul Kemerburgaz University, Turkey).

4. The state of the debate’ UCLA, 7 November 2005 (Talani L. S 2019)
5. The realist perspective draws on a quantitative definition of globalisation, one that is concerned about ‘quantifying’ globalisation through the identification of suitable measures for all of the elements which are generally included within its scope. Then (neo)-realist scholars have proceeded by comparing the ideal type of the ‘globalised economy’ with the ideal type of the ‘internationalised economy’, using data on the performance of the real economy to verify to what extent one or the other ideal type corresponds to the actual state of the world economy (Hirst and Thompson 1999a, b; Hirst et al. 2009). (Cited in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary International Political Economy* (2019): Edited by Timothy M. Shaw • Laura C. Mahrenbach)
6. This conclusion is the outcome of adopting a quantitative definition of globalisation. After realising that measures of globalisation do not confirm its existence or its relevance as a new phenomenon, they conclude that it is a convenient myth. (Cited in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary International Political Economy* (2019): Edited by Timothy M. Shaw • Laura C. Mahrenbach)
7. However, the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization in 1999 increased the visibility of the social movements that oppose the neoliberal economic policies advocated by hyperglobalists. They suggest “more globalization” (in the form of, for example, global governance regimes on environment, security, economy, politics, and law) rather than “less globalization,” as a solution to current problems and crises in the world. Some hyperglobalists claim that globalization is likely to create a harmonious and peaceful order that empowers individuals and humanity as a whole. They point to the rise of liberal movements and public protests in non-Western societies as evidence for the contributions of globalization to democratization, cosmopolitanism, and emancipation. (Didem Buhari Gulmez (2017) *Globalization: Istanbul Kemerburgaz University, Turkey*).
8. O’Sullivan argued that until 2018, multi-polarity was a more theoretical concept—more something to write about than to witness. This is changing quickly: trade tensions, advances in technologies (such as quantum computing), and the regulation of technology are just some of the fissures around which the world is splitting into distinct regions. Multi-polarity, where regions do things distinctly and differently, is different from multilateralism, where they do them together. China, in particular, is interesting in the context of the switch from globalization to multi-polarity, not least because at the 2017

World Economic Forum the Chinese president claimed the mantle of globalization for China. China benefited greatly from globalization and its accoutrements (e.g., WTO membership), and it played a vital role in the supply-chain dynamic that drove globalization. However, trade flows into China increasingly betray a move away from a globalized world and toward a more regionally focused one. For instance, IMF data show that in 2018, compared with 2011, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Malaysia traded more with China and relatively less with the United States. These countries, together with Bangladesh and Pakistan, have allowed themselves to be enticed by trade- and investment-based relationships with China and are now in its orbit. O 'Sullivan' Michael (2019) , "The Levelling: What's Next After Globalisation").

9. This is the thrust of a sub-theory of realism called "hegemonic stability theory" (Keohane, 1980; Kindleberger, 1973; Krasner, 1976). Hegemonic stability theory argues that periods of globalization occur when an overwhelmingly powerful country, a "hegemon," creates and maintains, for its own benefit, sets of international institutions ("regimes") that govern aspects such as trade and investments. The hegemon will keep this system in place as long as it remains strong enough to do so and the benefits from keeping the system exceed the costs. Other states may or may not benefit from the system. Importantly, while the international system under hegemonic stability may look much like an institutional structure along the lines of that envisioned by liberalism, these institutions are in reality epiphenomenal: they do not exist in their own right but reflect the interests and power of the hegemon. In essence, they are a matter of convenience for the hegemon: it is easier to hand out a rule book than to tell each country on a case-by-case basis what to do. (Witt Michael A. (2019) De-globalization: Theories, Predictions, and Opportunities for International Business Research, Journal of International Business Studies).
10. US GDP at PPP and constant 2011 international dollars relative to all other countries in the world combined, as well as relative to the respective next largest economy in the world (Japan until 1998, China from 1999 onward). The time series begins in 1990 because the World Development Indicators database used does not report GDP at PPP for earlier years. Relative to the rest of the world, US economic strength in this period peaked in 1999 at 20.6%. By 2017, that figure had declined to 15.2% of world GDP, a drop of 26.2%. The picture is even clearer for US GDP relative to the next largest. Again, US strength peaked in 1999 with its GDP at 289.4% that of China's. By 2013, China had reached parity, and in 2017, US GDP was down to 83.2% of China's, a decline by 71.3%. While one can argue whether the United States was an economic hegemon in 1999, it is clear that, by 2017, it was far from hegemony. At the same time, it is also clear that China is not (yet?) an economic hegemon, either. US military spending reached its high point in 1992 at 46.4%. By 2017, it had declined to 36.1%, a drop by 22.2%. Again, the picture is even clearer relative to the next closest

contender: US spending peaked in 1992 at 921.7% that of the next closest, France. By 2017, it had decreased to 261.7% relative to the Chinese military budget, a drop of 71.6%. As already mentioned, especially the more recent figures are likely to underestimate the attendant shift in military power. Overall, these data show a picture that is consistent with de-globalization. To the extent that the United States used to be a hegemon that could erect and maintain an open international economic system, it is unlikely that it remains powerful enough today. Its economy is already smaller than China's, and the Chinese military is rapidly catching up. (Witt Michael A. (2019) De-globalization: Theories, Predictions, and Opportunities for International Business Research, Journal of International Business Studies)

11. The development of the World Bank, The International Monetary Fund (IMF), multilateral trade institutions such as world trade organization (WTO), regional banks such as European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) indicated the drift from the dominance of the state as the only authority for interpreting the international affairs. (Gandhi and Globalization By Dr. Tabassum Sheikh :<https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi-and-globalisation.html>)
12. The term Middle Income Trap, which was introduced by Gill and Kharas in 2007, usually refers to countries that have experienced rapid growth and thus reached the status of a middle-income country (MIC) in a very short period of time, but have not been able to further catch up with the developed high-income economies. Some typical examples of MIT countries are Malaysia and Thailand in East Asia and Brazil and Colombia in Latin America. (<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/322961/adbi-wp749.pdf>)
13. The Chinese government reported it officially on December 31st, 2019. News reports suggest that China may not have been open with the global community regarding the scale and severity of the outbreak. According to Bloomberg, US Intelligence sources reported that "China has concealed the extent of the coronavirus outbreak in its country, under-reporting both total cases and deaths it's suffered from the disease." (<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/china-coronavirus-trump-geopolitics>). Only in January, when it had spread in some parts of the country did the World Health Organization take cognisance, but did not acknowledge the severity of the problem. This cataclysmic pandemic has affected the lives of everyone. (Lessons from COVID-19 & Gandhi: Virus Pandemic has Challenged the Foundations of Globalisation: Ramanand Nand : MARCH 27, 2020, <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/lessons-from-covid-19-and-gandhi-the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-challenged-the-very-foundations-of-globalisation-2553781.html>)
14. In the summer of 430 B.C.E., a very violent epidemic struck the Greek city of Athens. According to the contemporary Athenian historian Thucydides (who himself suffered from the disease and is the most important source of information about it), the epidemic first affected the adjacent port area (Piraeus) and then moved into the central upper city. The epidemic occurred

early in the Peloponnesian War, a major conflict between the city-states of Athens and Sparta and their respective allies, which began in 431. The disease accompanied Athenian military forces in their campaigns of 430 and 429, both at sea and against the Chalcidians of Thrace. The epidemic returned strongly in 427, after apparently easing in 428. It then disappeared, at least from written records, although it may have spread as far west as Rome in later decades. (J. N. Hays 2005)

15. The globalisation of goods and capital had already begun to plateau or stagnate since the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC). Trade as a percentage of global GDP rose from 39% in 1991 to 61% in 2008 but has remained flat over the past decade. The figure stands at 59% in 2018. Similarly, net foreign direct investment inflows, which were never under 1% of global GDP before 1989, occasionally crossed 4% over the past 30 years. But by 2018, it had dropped precipitously to 1.4%, its lowest level since 1996. Similarly, personal remittance flows, previously on the rise, flattened to around 0.75% of global GDP. The United States' (US) sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007-08, and its spillover to the eurozone, exacerbated national sentiment in Europe, which had previously been a model of international integration. In fact, the globalisation of people accelerated, although in a manner that was partial and subordinate to national interests. The stock of global migrants grew steadily from 190 million in 2005 to 243 million a decade later. The number of international tourist arrivals rose from 900 million in 2009 to 1.4 billion in 2018. A global pandemic and globalization: Dhruva Jaishankar : Apr 12 2020: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/a-global-pandemic-and-globalisation-64468/>
16. SARS (the cause of the common cold) against which humans had no immunity. A patient at a hospital in Guangzhou passed the infection on to a doctor, who then travelled to a wedding in Hong Kong. He then passed the disease to a number of guests at the hotel where he was staying. One of them was a 78-year-old Canadian who flew back to Toronto and died eleven days later after passing the condition on to her son. The virus then spread throughout the hospital where the son was treated. Over the following weeks there were at least six transmission chains in Canada; 400 people became seriously ill, 25,000 were placed in quarantine and 44 died. (<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/china-coronavirus-trump-geopolitics>). Even the risk of diseases quickly spreading across continents is not new; since 2003, the world has seen successive outbreaks of SARS, swine flu, MERS, Ebola, and the Zika virus. (Globalization Will Look Very Different After The Coronavirus Pandemic By Richard Fontaine April 17, 2020)
17. A distinctive feature of coronaviruses is that they are zoonotic, meaning they can spread from animals to humans. The SARS-CoV2 is not airborne or waterborne. It spreads through human contact. (Lessons from COVID-19

- 186 Tabu Ekalabya : Contemporary Issues of International Relations
- & Gandhi: Virus Pandemic has Challenged the Foundations of Globalisation: Ramanand Nand : March 27, 2020, <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/lessons-from-covid-19-and-gandhi-the-coronavirus-pandemic-haschallenged-the-very-foundations-of-globalisation-2553781.html>)
18. Spatial change is leading to increased migration of people throughout the world. The increased movement of people and other items creates a complex equation of pluses and minuses for each society. Similarly, temporal change affects the spread of disease. The speed of modern transportation systems means that infections can potentially move around the world within a few hours (as illustrated by the SARS outbreak in 2002–03)-Syed Q, Sopwith W, Regan M, Bellis MA. Behind the mask. Journey through an epidemic: some observations of contrasting public health responses to SARS. *JEpidemiol Community Health* 2003; 57: 855-856.
 19. Baum F. Health, equity, justice and globalisation: some lessons from the People's Health Assembly. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2001; 55: 613-616.)
 20. The Impact Of Globalization On Infectious Disease Emergence And Control (2006) : <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11588.html>
 21. It is widely used as preventive measure but instead of 'social distancing', it must be physical distancing; social distancing has socio-cultural dimensions.
 22. Beck. U. 2000. *What is Globalization?* Oxford: Polity
 23. WTO Director-General Roberto Azevê do said, this crisis is first and foremost a health crisis which has forced governments to take unprecedented measures to protect people's lives.
 24. Chief economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development since September, 2019.
 25. For U.S. consumers, the first visible sign came when virus-shuttered factories in China prompted delays in Apple's delivery of iPhones, and continued as other firms reported interruptions. When the pandemic spread in the United States, Americans learned that 72 percent of the facilities producing pharmaceutical ingredients for U.S. consumption are located abroad—mostly in the European Union, India and China. The share is reported to be as high as 97 percent for antibiotics. (Globalization Will Look Very Different After the Coronavirus Pandemic By Richard Fontaine April 17, 2020)
 26. Even the most globally oriented politicians avoid touting the benefits of open borders, trade, and international engagement. Many recent elections have been won by emphasizing the harms of what has come to be derided as "globalism," and promising protection from the effects of exposure. Consequently the nationalists prefer strong borders, tariffs, and restrictions on immigration. (Globalization Will Look Very Different After The Coronavirus Pandemic By Richard Fontaine April 17, 2020)

RUSSIA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS :
NORD STREAM 2
RENU MANN

Abstract

Presently, the bilateral relationship between Russia and the European Union (EU) has been going through a trouble phase due to Russia's incorporation of Crimea into Russian Federation (RF) in March 2014 and the Ukraine Crisis. Recently, the poisoning of Russian opposition hero Alexy Navalny has brought rift in the relationship between the EU and Russia. The Ukraine crisis has led to the episode of sanctions on Russia by the European Union and its individual member states and the United States (US). Nord Stream 2 (NS2) pipeline can be seen as one of the major geo-politics area which has suffered from sanctions. Therefore, the paper highlights the pattern of Russia and the EU relationship in the context of NS2 Pipeline which is still under construction as a consequence of sanctions game.

INTRODUCTION

The Russia-European Union (EU) relations have been shaped by several factors, such as, political, economic, cultural, but energy has been dominant one amongst all. The bilateral relationship between Russia (the then Soviet Union) and the EU (the then European Economic Community) has evolved parallel with the developments, which structured the world politics post-world War II. During the Cold War era, both the actors have not recognized each other due to the fear of their distinct ideologies, political system and sphere of influence.

The paper primarily focuses on the Russia-EU bilateral relationship based on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, begun in 2015 and how the construction of NS2 has reshaped the relationship between the two actors post-2014 Ukrainian crisis? The paper is factual and analytical in nature and is primarily based on the primary- and secondary sources of data and existing relevant literature. Following the contemporary period of the topic, it mainly draws the facts from several news agencies in Eurasia and Europe.

BACKGROUND

Post-demise of the Soviet Union, the economic partnership between Russia and the EU has evolved significantly despite political differences. In 2000 Russia-EU Energy Dialogue was established that aimed at improving investment opportunity in the energy sector, expanding the energy infrastructure and further led to the opening of the market to promote energy efficiency (European Commission 2012). During the second presidential term (2004-2008), Putin started to renationalize the industrial assets which would enhance State power. Oil and natural gas were the key factors. Seen from a European perspective, he halted other structural reforms that were intended to diversify the economy away from its dependence on oil and other natural resources (Cooper 2012).

In the continuation of all dialogues between the two actors, in 2011, current Russian President Vladimir Putin, the then Prime Minister of Russia and the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder (1998-2005) together attended the symbolic ceremony of Nord Stream 1 (NS1) pipeline. The pipeline was Europe's biggest energy project between the two actors, which started in 2005 and ended in 2012. As expressed by Sherr (2016), in 2012, the EU has accounted for 52 per cent of Russia's export, out of which 68 per cent was fuel and energy.

NORD STREAM 2 AND THE RUSSIA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS

NS2 is a new export gas pipeline project and an extended form of NS1 from Russia to Europe across the Baltic States. It is inaugurated in 2015 despite the deteriorated relationship between the two due to the Crimea's Incorporation by Russia in 2014 and the Ukraine crisis. The pipeline is second most major project of Russia's Gazprom after NS1 and will supply energy directly to its European partner because the domestic gas production has declined in Europe, which has resulted in an increase demand for imported gas.

In October 2012, the Nord Stream shareholder finalized the construction of NS2 after examining the feasibility study for third and fourth string of the gas pipeline, which has the total capacity to supply 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year. Hence, the four string of NS2 along with NS1 has the capacity of 110 billion cubic meters of gas per year. NS2 gas pipeline project involves five European energy companies ENGIE (France), OMV (Austria), Royal Dutch Shell (Netherlands), Uniper (Germany, Duesseldorf) and Wintershall (Germany, Kassel), which will provide 50 percent of the total cost of the Project. (Gazprom: gas pipeline Nord Stream 2)

The geo-politics of NS2 gas pipeline can be understood with the Map 1 given below.

MAP 1 : Nord Stream 2



Source : <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/nord-stream2/>

As shown in the map the pipeline starts from Russia's Ust-Lunga area of the Leningrad region and ends in the Greifswald area of Germany. It covers an area of 1200 kilometers. For better understanding of the topic, it is inevitable to dive into the history of their energy relations. During the Cold War era, in 1968, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and German Democratic Republic (GDR) signed an intergovernmental agreement on natural gas supplies. Then in 1970, the same agreement was signed between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), also known as West Germany. Following this, the same agreements were inked in 1974 and 1979 to speed up the gas supplies. The first Germany Company is Verbundnets in the GDR, which received supply natural gas from the USSR in March, 1973, whereas, in the West Germany (FRG), the first gas supply was conducted by Ruhrgas. In 1974, the 'Orenburg Agreement' is signed regarding the involvement of builders and gas industry workers from East Germany and other member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Afterwards in 1981, Soyuzgazexport and Ruhrgas signed the fourth agreement to import additional 8 billion cubic meters of gas per year to West Germany between 1984 and 2008. (Nord Stream 2)

Post-Germany Reunifications (03 October, 1990), Russia's Gazprom and Germany's Wintershall established WIEH joint venture on natural gas trading, transmission, storage and marketing on various European countries. Secondly, the disintegration of the USSR took the relations to a new heights, resulted in establishment of the WINGAS joint venture between Gazprom and

Wintershall that aims to supply gas not only to German consumers, but also the consumer in Belgium, France, the UK (United Kingdom), the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Denmark. Gazprom signs a number of long-term contracts with WINGAS and WIEH on gas supplied to European consumers. However, in 1993, Gazprom and Wintershall also completed the construction of the 313-kilometer STEGAL gas pipeline and the 702-kilometer MIDAL gas pipeline in Germany, which provided Gazprom direct access to Germany's gas market. (ibid)

During the second presidential term of Yeltsin in Russia, 1998, Gazprom and Ruhrgas signed the Agreement on the extension of most contracts until 2020 and the participation of Ruhrgas in Gazprom's shareholders equity. In the same year, Gazprom and Wintershall put onstream WEDAL, a 236-kilometer gas pipeline in Germany. This connects the gas transmission system of WINGAS to Belgium's gas pipeline network and further connects gas pipeline running from continental Europe to the UK across the North Sea. Before the resignation of Yeltsin in 1999, WINGAS implemented Rehden, the largest Underground Gas Storage (UGS, working capacity of 4.2 billion cubic meters) facility in Germany and Western Europe to its full capacity. (Warnig, 2018)

In 2000, Vladimir Putin became the president of Russia. During his presidency, in 2001, first, Gazprom and E.O.N Gastransport signs agreements to forward natural gas through Germany to the Netherlands and Belgium. Secondly, in 2003, Gazprom and Wintershall established Achimgaz joint venture so that exploration of the first pilot block of the hard-to-reach Achimov deposits at the Urengoykoye field could bring in process as shown in Image 1. The major development happened during 2003 was that Gazprom and WINGAS inscribed the long-term Agreement to sell natural gas to the UK until 2028.

Image 1 : Comprehensive gas treatment unit No. 22 at Block 2A of Achimov deposits, Urengoykoye field



Source : <https://www.gazprom.com/projects/germany/>

In 2005, Gazprom, RAG, and WINGAS inked an Agreement to construct Austria-based Haidach, the second largest UGS facility (2.8 billion cubic meters) in Central Europe. The idea to construct Nord Stream gas pipeline introduced in the year of 2005 from Russia to Europe across the Baltic Sea between Gazprom, BASF/Wintershall, and E.ON. The three companies inked the agreement. In 2006, first project with a foreign partner has been implemented to create a value chain from production to end consumers that came into stage as an agreement signed between Gazprom and BASF/Wintershall to trade upstream and downstream assets. Based on the agreement, Gazprom increase its share in the WINGAS joint venture to almost 50 per cent, and BASF/Wintershall remains with 25 per cent minus one share in Severneftegazprom¹, which is engaged in the development of the Yuzhno-Russkoye field. In the same year, Gazprom and E.ON Ruhrgas decided to extend their four major contracts for gas supplies until 2035. Furthermore, in 2007, the first train of the Haidach UGS facility got completed and Yuzhno-Russkoye field came into process of beginning. (ibid)

Figure 2: Haidach UGS Facility (2005-2007)



Source : https://www.gazprom.com/f/posts/21/153452/09-11-2016_germany-9.jpg

During the presidency of Medvedev (2008-2012), in April 2010, the construction of Nord Stream gas pipeline was launched and Wintershall and E.ON Ruhrgas both each had 15.5 per cent share in Nord Stream AG. In May 2011, the Haidach UGS facility got completed. Hence, in November 2011, Nord Stream had its commercial gas supply to Germany via its first string. While

the second string of Nord Stream gas pipeline got brought into operation with the annual capacity to 55 billion cubic meters of gas. The success of NS AG contributes in the construction feasibility of NS2 in 2015. (Kusznir, 2017)

The construction of NS2 has begun when Russia and the member states of the EU were involved in the biggest crisis of the 21st century, the Ukraine crisis and the incorporation of Crimea into Russia in 2014. According to Gusev and Westphal (2015), "Russia is and will remain – the EU's major supplier of oil, natural gas and coal at least for the next decade... Gazprom will maintain its key role as a supplier to the EU because of existing long-term contracts that extend beyond 2025 and its ability to supply gas at low cost".

The pipeline has become a contentious issue on the European continent due to EU's gas directive amendments, US Senate sanctions and Kiev's transit fees issue. The controversy of the construction of NS2 has delayed the timeline of its completion in the following manner described below.

The pipeline project has not been only criticized by the United States (US), rather, a number of eastern European-, Nordic- and Baltic Sea countries as well. They all have fear that the completion of NS2 will escalate EU's energy dependency on Moscow. As a result, in March 2019, Denmark raises an issue and denied to grant permission for a northern route in its territorial waters of the NS2 pipeline project, instead asked Gazprom to search for a southern route, which is subjected to a law that allows Copenhagen to assess the request for the construction of NS2 in order to evaluate foreign and security policy. Apart from that, it has to provides the "Danish authorities with an environmental impact assessment, it has to go through the normal procedure with public hearings" (Brzozowski, 2019). But in October 2019, Denmark approved NS2 to pass through waters in its exclusive economic zone despite criticism from other European member states. (Erlanger, 2019).

The green light signal to NS2 gas pipeline project angered Ukraine. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said on the project that "this is not only matter of energy security, it is a geopolitical issue". Zelensky added that the move "strengthens Russia and weakens Europe" (BBC, 31 October 2019). In February 2019, the EU decided to amend the Gas Directive in regard to NS2. The Directives involve the scope that the pipeline with third countries has to act in accordance with EU gas rules. The Directives came into force in July 2019 (Yafimava 2019). Although, the Directives could not halt the construction of NS2, but the pipeline is a serious concern for Ukraine. Because once the pipeline is completed, Russia can abandon completely gas transit through Ukraine. And it will cause a huge loss to the Ukrainian economy, around \$ 3 billion and will affect 2.5-3 per cent of its GDP. (Datskevych, 2019)

In June 2019, Zelensky made his first European tour and met with Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin and requested Merkel to consider impact of NS2's on Ukraine energy and economic stability. He said that his country's role in transporting and storing Russian gas is "a guarantee of energy security for both Ukraine and Europe" (latimes 2019). On 31 December 2019, Gazprom, Naftogaz and Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine (GTSOU) signed a new agreement, hour before the existing ten-year (2009-2019) about to expire on 01 January 2020, for five years, and later, it could be transfer for an additional ten years (Khakova 2019)

In addition to all these hurdles, In December 2019, the US Senate approved a defense bill, named, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) impose sanctions on companies who are working with Russia's gas pipeline project. The NDAA also imposed sanctions on companies who are installing deep sea pipeline for Russia's \$ 10.5 billion NS2 gas pipeline and also targeted TurkStream project from Russia to Turkey, costs around \$ 12 billion. Russian foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov reacted to US NDAA and said that "I assure you that neither Nord Stream 2 nor TurkStream will stop" because of U.S. sanctions. While Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has joined Russian criticism of the sanctions, and said that "European energy policy must be decided in Europe, not the U.S." (Ellyatt, 2019)

The US actions over the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany urged Members of the European Parliament to defend European companies by taking counter measures, including purchase of US LNG. NS2 EU representative Sebastian Sass reminded that the EU has always opposed extraterritorial sanctions by third countries as a breach of international law as emphasis given by the EU's High Representative, Josep Borrell and former Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker. Geropoulos (2020) has argued that "it is a question of European sovereignty. Companies, citizens and investors that comply with all applicable laws in Europe must have legal certainty and be trust the rule of law. Over 120 companies from over 12 European countries could become directly affected. This is bad for the economy, for employment and European prosperity".

Katja Yafimava, a senior research fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES) said that "Germany has always been overwhelmingly in favour of Nord Stream 2, and such support is bipartisan and cuts across party lines. With this in mind, it is not at all surprising that Germany vows to defend Nord Stream 2, particularly as US has clearly demonstrated that it intends to use all means to make finalization of Nord Stream 2 construction as difficult and as delayed as possible,". In her opinion, "Nord Stream-2 will strengthen flexibility and competitiveness of Russian gas in Europe" (Geropoulos, 2020).

Based on the roadmap of EU-Russia energy cooperation until 2050, endorsed by Russia and the EU in 2013, the five recommendations can be assumed based on Gusev and Westphal (2015): first, “be aware of spillover effects if energy relations deteriorate; second, normalize energy relations with Russia and ground them on sound commercial projects; third, aim at a de-securitization of energy relations in the political framing and detach the EU’s energy policy narratives and imperatives from the fixation on Russia; fourth, envision a common energy future and a common energy space; and finally, re-engage in energy diplomacy in wider region”.

Recapitulation

The construction work of NS2 will be completed either in 2020 and in the beginning of 2021 despite having trouble in its construction due to various factors as mentioned in the paper but 95% of its work has come to an end despite all troubles, criticism and sanctions game. Moreover, the COVID-19 has badly affected the economy of all nations worldwide, which is beyond geo-politics and sanctions on one country by the other country. The whole focus of all actors across globe is to invent a vaccine against this unseen enemy.

The NS2 gas pipeline project has introduced internal division among EU’s member states. The critics came from the members, who think that the pipeline will make Europe and Germany more dependent on Russian gas, oil and energy market. However, the US Senate’s sanction on European gas companies has put Europe in doubt whether US’s commitment towards European security can be weakened at any time due to counter sanctions by European nations. But it will not overcome soon, rather it does have impact on the US-European bilateral ties in future unless NS2 gas pipeline will not come to an end to transfer its supply to European market. (Elliott and Scheid, 2019)

With regard to Ukraine, Russia will obviously have to follow up a neutral policy because Moscow does not want to deteriorate its ties with Kiev due to its historical and energy ties. Hence, both the actors agreed to extend the energy transit agreement for the next five years until 2024. On the other hand, Ukraine’s Naftogaz agreement with Gazprom will somehow provide Europe the guarantee of energy security in future, and might this dynamics bring Russia and Ukraine again to a period of normalization and trust to build their ties strong amid geo-political chaos.

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Endnotes

1. Severneftegazprom is one of the primary producing enterprises within the Gazprom Group. The company's shareholders are Wintershall Dea GmbH (Germany) and OMV Exploration and Production GmbH (Austria). The company's central project is development and infrastructure building for the Yuzhno-Russkoye oil-gas-condensate field, one of the largest in Russia. The field's gas is the key resource for the Nord Stream gas pipeline. Facilities for gas production at Yuzhno-Russkoye were built in only two years, and are among the most modern and technically sophisticated in Russia. (en.severneftegazprom.com/company/company-profile/).

THE MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN
BANGLADESH : FOCUS ON HUMAN
SECURITY

DEBTANU MAJEE

Introduction

The contradictions between the majority and minority communities have generated community insecurity around the world. Restricting the participation of the minorities in the common institutions and institutionalizing the cultural differences have seriously undermined the human security of the minority communities (Manisha Priyam, Krishna Menon, Madhulika Banerjee 2009). In the context of Bangladesh, scholars have argued that the country though has got a formal democratic mechanism to enable the minority communities to exercise their political rights, but the absence of substantive democracy in the country has seriously undermined the human security of the minority communities. They are often victims of political violence flare-up especially before and after elections (Nazneen 2008). After Independence, the first national constitution of Bangladesh recognized 'nationalism', 'socialism', 'secularism', and 'democracy' as the guiding principles of the state (Hossain 2019). It was believed that the principle of secularism and democracy will provide the much-needed environment for securing the rights of the minority communities. However, with time, narrow-centric nationalism, capitalism, fundamentalism and authoritarianism have replaced these much-cherished principles. Today, the lives of the people belonging to the minority communities are characterized by human insecurity. It is observed that minority communities are excluded from the decision making process. Sectarian politics, constitutional amendments, and legislative changes have caused a structural change to the rights of the religious minorities. Diminishing religious diversity is questioning the security of the minority communities in Bangladesh. In 1971, Bangladesh constituted 23.1% minorities and today only 9.6% of the population is made up of minorities (MRG 2016). Adoption of Islam as the state religion and the exploitation of the minorities especially

the Hindus under the Vested Property Act 1974 have pushed out the Hindus and other minority groups from the country. There is a common perception in Bangladesh, that the Hindus are outsiders. It is interesting to note that the other religious minority communities in Bangladesh – especially the Buddhist and the Christian have not significantly declined in numbers. In 1974, the Buddhists and the Christians constituted 0.6 and 0.3 percent of the population respectively. According to the 2011 census, the same percentage of Buddhists and Christian are residing in the country (MRG 2016). Nevertheless, these two religious minority communities have also encountered violence, discrimination, and human insecurity. This article explores the human security challenges, faced by the minority communities in Bangladesh.

Research Methodology

This research is based on both primary and secondary data. After making a thorough study of the available literature, I consulted experts and members of the religious minorities to prepare this article. I have employed the methods of content analysis, observation, and interview to acquire knowledge about the problems encountered by the minority communities in Bangladesh. I have applied purposive sampling for choosing the participants. Quantitative and Qualitative data were analyzed to draw the inferences.

Research Questions

In this article, I seek to address two research questions which are as follows :

1. Are the minority communities in Bangladesh vulnerable to human insecurity?
2. Is the government of Bangladesh playing a prominent role to ensure the human security of the minority communities?

Exploring the idea of Community Security

A community comprises a group of individuals based on culture, religion, caste, language, gender, which seeks to shares certain attitudes and interests in common. Membership in a community provides a sense of security to the individuals. However, some traditional communities itself became a threat to the members of those communities. Those communities have promoted bonded labour and perpetuated violence on women. Female and male circumcision is practiced traditionally by members of some communities. The process of modernization has challenged these traditional practices and the members of the world community seem to be critical about these traditional practices causing distress. Various people's organizations have emerged to end the oppressive practices through legal actions (UNDP 1994). There are several instances where we witnessed clashes between communities. In

today's world, most of the community clashes occur between ethnic and religious groups. Limited access to opportunities is mostly responsible for ethnic and religious clashes. As a result of the community clashes, the normal lives of the individuals got disrupted and many people got killed. Community insecurity has also triggered economic, food, health, personal and political insecurity. One of the major causes identified for lack of community security is the desire of every community to become superior to other communities.

Human Security of the Minority Communities in Bangladesh

Human Security is a dynamic term. For maintaining human security, the right of the people to live a life with dignity and freedom must be ensured. Most importantly, eradication of poverty and despair from the lives of the people is important for the protection of human security. We need to provide equal opportunity to the vulnerable section of our society to develop their full human potential along with freedom from fear and freedom from want. The security of every individual is prioritized when we talk about human security as it is an individual-centered approach. However, human security does not undermine the question of community security, rather it encompasses the security of the different communities and demands their empowerment and protection. Human security also takes into the account that, reasons of insecurity for the individuals are not the same everywhere. Thus, while addressing the problems of human security we also need to adopt a context-specific approach. Promotion of peace, development, human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are the sine qua non for enabling human security. Human security must not be confused with the responsibility to protect as the two are not the same. Furthermore, it is important to note that human security is not a replacement for state security, rather they are complementary to each other. Human security prohibits the use of force against individuals for securing their allegiance by the state or any non-state actors. It becomes the responsibility of the government of a country to protect the citizens from the menaces of human security by enabling the conditions necessary for survival, livelihoods and dignity. At the same time, the international community is also responsible for helping the governments for addressing emerging threats. Governments, civil society, international and regional organizations require to work hand in hand for promoting human security. It is necessary to implement human security with full respect for the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations without endangering the sovereignty of states, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal matters of the states (United Nations 2012).

Bangladesh is an ethnically homogenous country, which comprises 98% of the Bengali population. In terms of ethnicity, only two percent of the population forms the minority communities. But if we try to identify the

minority communities based on religion, we will find the Hindus as the largest minority community followed by the Buddhists and the Christians. During Bangladesh's liberation war, Bengali identity was emphasized and all the Bengalis fought against the repressive forces of West Pakistan uniformly. At that time, the objective was to establish an independent country comprising only Bengali speaking citizens. The driving force of the liberation war was the Bengali Nationalism. After independence, the leaders of Bangladesh decided to adopt 'secularism' as one of the core principles of the constitution. However, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman was killed, a dramatic change took place in the politics of Bangladesh. From 1975 to 1990, Bangladesh was ruled by two military rulers- Ziaur Rahaman and Ershad. Under the military rule in Bangladesh, the ideal of 'secularism' was abandoned. The ethnic-linguistic history of the people was ignored by Major Zia and he emphasized on Muslim identity, Bengali nationalism was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism, and religion was applied as a divisive instrument. Identity politics was Zia's trump card to consolidate his power. The Bangladeshi nationalism is often criticized as a narrow-centric nationalism that excludes the minority religious communities and it is based on Muslim identity. Some commentators have noted that Bangladeshi nationalism is antithetical to the very idea of Bangladesh based on 'Bengali' identity. The supporters of the Pakistan army during the liberation movement are the main drivers of Bangladeshi nationalism. They are believers of Pakistani ideology and ignored the long-cherished ethnic-linguistic history of Bengali people that made the birth of Bangladesh possible (Das 2020). As mentioned by one of my respondents, it is disgraceful to think that major Zia who himself was a freedom fighter and fought with Pakistan for making Bangladesh an independent nation destroyed the social fabric of the country by indulging practices that are pro Pakistan. During Zia's regime, 'Bismillah-ar-Rahma-ar-Rahim' was inserted at the top of the preamble of Bangladesh's constitution which shows the intention of Zia to get away with the concept of secularism. Various religious extremist groups got the opportunity to attack the religious minority communities due to this naive model of Islamization followed by Zia. Hussain Mohammad Ershad further destroyed the secular nature of the state by declaring 'Islam' as the state religion of Bangladesh. One interesting fact to note here is that Zia though promoted Islamization, did not introduce constitutional changes to discriminate against any citizen based on religion, caste, sex, and place of birth. Besides, he retained the same national flag though it did not contain any symbols of Islam and the national anthem was also not changed by Zia when the Muslim League and other Islamic parties demand to change the national anthem as it was authored by Rabindranath Tagore, who was a Hindu (M.Ollapally 2008). In 1991, when

democracy was restored in Bangladesh, it was expected that the rights of the religious minority communities will be protected. But unfortunately, the human security of the religious minority communities did not improve with the revival of democracy. Democracy in Bangladesh has failed to end communal and sectarian politics. The altering demography of the minority population in Bangladesh, especially of the Hindus, has been projected as silent ethnic cleansing by many experts. Murder, rape, forced conversion, looting and burning of households, land grabbing and temple destruction are the methods applied to ignite fear among the minorities. Furthermore, militant Islam and the appeasement politics followed by the government of Bangladesh to the communal forces has engendered a large scale exodus of the minority population to neighbouring India. A judicial commission claimed that after the 2001 parliamentary election in Bangladesh, two hundred Hindu women were raped (Peace Women 2011). Richard Benkin, a human rights activist, working to protect religious minorities in Bangladesh, especially the Hindus mentioned in his book 'A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing: The Murder of Bangladesh's Hindus' that he interacted with a 14-year old Hindu girl and she informed him due to her Hindu identity she was raped by the Muslims (Benkin 2012). Rape is used as an instrument for a long time to disgrace community members as they could not protect the honor of their women. Both military and the democratic regime have failed to ensure the human security of the minority communities in Bangladesh. A member of the Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad(HBCOP) believes that both the political parties- Awami League and BNP are not bothered about the minorities, Awami League is happy because they get votes from minorities and if the members of minority group leave the country, Awami league get their land. Similarly, BNP gets the land if the minorities leave the country and they are also benefited from the election point of view as the Awami league loses votes (J.Acharya, Nirapattahin, cited in Bangladesh by Sohela Nazneen 2008).

During the liberation war, Pakistani invaders destroyed the Ramna Kalibari. However, remnants of the temple have been demolished by the government of Bangladesh after independence and its land was distributed to the Dhaka Club. (Anirban Choudhury Arup and Priyanka Bose Kanta 2015). When the Babri Masjid riot occurred in India in 1992, Hindus in Bangladesh were attacked by the Muslims. Temples were demolished, Hindu women were raped and properties of the Hindus were snatched. Some commentators have claimed that the members of the minority communities are treated as second-grade citizens in Bangladesh. They are deprived of their human rights and violence against them is increasing at a rapid rate. During the 2001 national election, the members of the minority communities were attacked by the BNP

cadres as they were considered as the vote bank of the Awami League. Besides, the vulnerable position of the minority communities has been utilized by some opportunist elements to attack them. VPA has been used as a mechanism by local influentials systematically to encroach the property of the Hindus and other minority communities in Bangladesh. As we know land is a scarce resource in Bangladesh, local people get involved in communal politics to compelled the minorities to evacuate from their land. When they move out, the politically influential people grab the land. However, the rich Hindu families having a close connection with the BNP are not attacked generally (Nazneen 2008). But many of my respondents are of the opinion that 'class identity' is overshadowed by 'religious identity' while these attacks on minority communities are carried out. Land grabbing has escalated economic insecurity, personal insecurity as well as community insecurity of the minority communities. Bangladesh government though has promised to return the properties of the Hindus under the Vested Properties Return (Amendment) Bill, not many have achieved the fruits of it (Ethirajan 2011). When the BNP acquired power in 2001 under the leadership of Khaleda Zia, a systematic campaign of violence was carried on Hindus for one fifty days. As a result of this violence, one thousand Hindu women were raped and five hundred thousand Hindus migrated to India. In 2013, more than fifty Hindu temples were destroyed along with fifteen hundred homes when the International Crimes Tribunal held several Jamaat members responsible for war crimes against Hindus during the 1971 atrocities in Bangladesh. The destruction of the properties of Hindus was caused in retaliation by the supporters of Jamaat (Minority Rights Group International 2018). A Hindu priest, Jogeshwar Roy was murdered by the Islamic militants inside the Deviganj temple in Panchagarh district in 2016 (Hindustan Times 2016). Along with Hindus, the Buddhists are also discriminated against and attacked by the members of the majority community. A rumour was spread on 29th September 2012 that a Buddhist youth has posted an image of a burnt Quran. As a result, the Buddhist community was attacked, consequently, twenty Buddhist temples and forty houses were torched and looted. This incident took place in Ramu, a village located in the Cox Bazar district. According to media reports, the actual perpetrators of the violence were not arrested by police instead some innocent people were harassed (MRG 2016). This is a very common scenario in Bangladesh, the law enforcing agencies give shelter to the criminals and deny justice to the victims. It is also evident that the eyewitnesses fear to speak before the court about the acts of violence as they are concern about their safety. Another violence, targeting the Buddhist community, ignited between 29th July and 3rd August of 2013 in Taindong. Various Buddhist villages were attacked to grab their land. Two

Buddhist temples were damaged and the people who moved to other places during the violence could not get back their land (MRG 2016). The members of the Christian community are also suffering from human insecurity. They do not have access to employment. Most of the time they are recruited for the poorly paid jobs. The members of the Muslim community always discriminate against them. It is observed, that the Muslims do not rent their houses to the Christians. Furthermore, electoral violence in the pre and post-election phases jeopardized the human security of the Christians. A Catholic church located in Gopalgank village was attacked on 3rd June 2001. As a result of this attack, nine people were killed, and near about twenty people were injured. This attack is projected as one of the first major attacks on the Christian community in Bangladesh. Due to insignificant numbers of Christian in the country, the majority group considers them as weak and an unresisting force. Most of the attacks are carried on them with a motive to grab their land. Rumours are also employed as an instrument to channelize attack on the Christian community. Mandi Catholics were attacked by a group of Muslims on 7th January 2014 and a house was set on fire at Jamalpur due to a land dispute. Again in July 2014, a convent in Dinajpur was attacked by more than fifty armed men due to a local land dispute. Furthermore, the extremist groups are also involved in jeopardizing the right to life of the Christians in Bangladesh. In October 2015, an attempt was made to slash the throat of a priest in Pabna (MRG 2016). It is claimed that the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh was involved in this attack. The ethnic minorities in Bangladesh are also experiencing large scale poverty due to low economic opportunities, specific geographic locations, exclusion, deprivation, and dispossession of lands. In the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT), non-income poverty and lack of health and educational facilities are endangering the human security of the ethnic minority communities. Many scholars have argued that the dispossession of land is a cause as well as a result of poverty. In addition, human rights violations in the CHT are occurring constantly despite the peace accord signed in 1997. In the inhuman perpetration occurred in March 2020, one Jumma youth was injured due to a communal attack in Matiranga of Khagrachari district, one Buddhist temple was destroyed in Manikchari, two Marma adolescent girls were sexually assaulted by some settlers, BGB and army personnel did blank firings, beaten four villagers and they also held three villagers for engendering fear among the people. It is observed, that the level of persecution is escalating and this is igniting the crisis of human security for the people belonging to the ethnic minorities in the CHT region. When asked about the community security in Bangladesh, a member of a majority community and the member of a minority community are of the following opinion.

Participant from the majority community: “Bangladesh is a peaceful country. The minorities are completely safe in Bangladesh. If you look at the history of independent Bangladesh, no communal riot has occurred. There are some people, trying to defame Bangladesh by projecting the country as not secured for the minorities. We are a people’s republic, not an Islamic republic. We are a secular country.”

Participant from the minority community: “The minority communities face different types of insecurities like their temples and idols are sometimes destroyed. Their houses are set on fire, their land is often grabbed. Sometimes a rumour is intentionally spread against Hindus/ adibashis blaming them for making bad comments on Islam, which brings out unprecedented disaster in the lives of minorities. But the government generally takes strict actions against the culprits; especially the present government is much concerned about the security of the minorities.”

Constitutional Provisions

Article 2A of the constitution of Bangladesh clearly states that Islam is the state religion of the country. Although, other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic. According to article 28, any citizen must not be discriminated based on religion, race, caste, sex, or, place of birth. Again, Article 41 of the constitution mentioned freedom of religion. Subject to law, public order, and morality, every citizen has the right to profess, practice, or propagate any religion and every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions (Article 41A). No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship if that instruction, ceremony, or worship relates to a religion other than his own (Article 41B) (Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh 1972).

Analysis

To analyse the human security conditions of the minority communities, I focused on their economic, food, health, personal and, political security. Minority communities though vulnerable to environmental insecurity, I deliberately did not take it into account as the level of environmental insecurity are the same for both the minority and majority communities. In the realm of economic security, it can be argued that minority communities in Bangladesh are constantly struggling to secure their lands and property. The destruction of the houses and looting of other valuable assets of the minority communities have negative implications on their economic security. In addition, the land has been grabbed from the minority communities and as a result, many wealthy families have been impoverished. Many scholars

believe that the attacks on minority communities in Bangladesh are more economic than religious. Economically Hindus in Bangladesh were in a better position than the Muslims and they dominated over the majority Muslim population for a long time. But after the partition of India, Muslims started to capture the economic, social and political power in Bangladesh. Anti infidel persecution in Bangladesh forced the Hindus to migrate to India. This forced migration engendered economic insecurity for the Hindus as many of them departed from Bangladesh in a single cloth. Upon arriving in India, they had to stay in refugee camps where they encountered a shortage of food and health facilities. The Hindus who stayed back in Bangladesh are robbed of their personal belongings even today. Though the representation of the minority communities in the government jobs have increased and they comprise five to seven percent employment, they are often discriminated in the private sector jobs. It is to be noted that the destruction of property, temples, looting of shops owned by members of minority communities and land grabbing have escalated the economic hardship of the minority communities. Besides, there are people from indigenous groups in Bangladesh, having no access to employment opportunities, health and educational facilities. In a country like Bangladesh, agriculture is a source of income for many. People belonging to religious and ethnic minorities are also dependent on agriculture to secure their livelihoods. But the encroachment of the land of the minority communities by the majority community is restricting them from earning their livelihoods. Not only that, by taking away their lands and property, the majority community wanted the minorities to migrate to other countries. In this context, it is pertinent to mention that once Major General Manzur, the Officer of Command, Chittagong Division Branch claimed that: "We want the land and not the People" (Mohsin cited by Nikhil Chakma and Mathilde Maitrot 2016). Even today, the members of the majority community along with the politicians of the ruling party as well as the opposition parties work in a network to forcefully acquire the land of the religious and ethnic minority communities. Repeated attacks on minorities are also detrimental to their health and personal security. Some members of minority communities during interactions claimed they are treated discriminately in public hospitals. Incidents of rape, sexual assault, physical torture, injury, and murder are also hurting the health and personal security of the minorities. Lack of economic security has also endangered their food security to some extent. Human rights violations, pre and post-elections violence, deprivation of voting rights in some cases have endangered their political security. Most importantly, they have been demoted to second-grade citizens. The constitutional provisions mentioned above have not been reflected in reality. The provision of the state religion is detrimental to secularism. The forced

conversion and destruction of religious places have not allowed minorities to practise their religion in peace and harmony. Violations of the constitutional provisions are visible, the way minorities are treated in Bangladesh.

Role of the Government

The government of a country is responsible for protecting and empowering the citizens, irrespective of religion, caste, colour, gender and so on. In the age of neo-liberalism, it is evident that the government interferes in the lives of the citizens whenever there is a crisis, otherwise, the market mechanism based upon free market, competition and freedom acts as the guiding principle. Along with the expansion of modified liberal principles, democracy has been adopted as the most popular form of government. Even the dictators like Kim want to project him as a democratically elected leader. It can be argued that there is an intrinsic link between democracy and minority rights. If the democratic institutions are strong in a country, the human security of the minority communities will be better protected, than a country with weak democratic institutions. The prevalence of Secularism is also a sine qua non for ensuring the human security of the minority communities. In Bangladesh, both democracy and secularism are absent in the truest sense of the terms. The government has ignored the problems of minority communities to a great extent for a long time. The military regime boosted anti-secular practices and destroyed religious harmony. Both, Ziaur Rahman and Ershad, introduced laws that were antithetical to the security of the minority communities. The BNP government under Khaleda Zia was also silent about the plight of the minority communities. In most cases, they termed the violence against minority communities as few exceptional cases. After the resurgence of democracy in Bangladesh since 1991, the two major political parties- Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party along with other left and right-wing parties promised to promote the rights of the minority communities and enable better human security for them. However, the promises have not turned into reality. In practice, the AL and BNP led governments have not responded adequately to the problems of the minority communities. There are multiple occasions when the powerful members of both parties got involved in repressing the minorities. However, the present Awami League government has repealed the Vested Property Act. Minorities are also better represented under the present government in the parliament. It is also observed that the festivals of the minority communities like Durga Puja are taking place in Bangladesh without any violence. In 2018, 31,272 Durga Pujas were held in Bangladesh. In 1997, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was made possible by the Awami League government to secure the interests and welfare of the ethnic minority communities in the region.

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury of BNP along with some leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami responsible for atrocities against Hindus and pro-liberation elements during the liberation war was executed as war criminals under the Awami League regime. S.K. Sinha became the first chief justice of Bangladesh from the minority communities under the present Awami League government (The Economic Times 2018). However, the most notable achievement of the present Awami League government is that it enabled better economic security of the minority communities as evident from the increased share of government jobs and the abolishment of the vested property act. The present Awami League government also provided 27 Kathas of land worth fifty crores taka to Dhakeshwari temple in Dhaka at a discounted price of 10 crores taka (The Economic Times 2018). But the problem with the Awami League government is that it remained pessimistic to check criminalisation of politics and refrained from framing laws that contradicts Quran and Sunnah. For vote bank politics, they have protected the members of the majority community, perpetrating violence on the religious minorities. Furthermore, many jamaats and BNP leaders have entered in Awami League, which the supporters of Awami League believe will destroy the secular outlook of the party (Raju 2019).

Conclusion

The contradictions between the majority and minority communities have undermined the human security of the minorities in Bangladesh. In comparison between Awami League and BNP, it is to be noted that, Awami League is more secular and committed to the welfare of the minorities. However, both the parties have failed to rescue Bangladesh from the vices of fundamentalism and religious intolerance. Eliminating the anti-secular forces and promoting inclusive politics will be crucial for maintaining the human security of the minority communities in Bangladesh.

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INDO-AFGHAN RELATIONS : A STUDY OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

PARTHASARATHI BANERJEE

Abstract

The edifice of Indo-Afghan relations has withstood the lethal test of time and the enduring spirit of bilateral friendship has survived since the days when Seleucus Nicator gave Bactria or present-day Afghanistan to Sandrocottus or Chandragupta Maurya in 305 BC as part of a marriage alliance treaty till today when India became the first regional donor pumping in funds to the tune of millions of dollars in economic aid to war-ravaged Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The inking of the Strategic Partnership Agreement on 4th October, 2011, the first of its kind in Afghan history in addition to the subsisting Treaty of Friendship of 4th January, 1950 bears testimony to the fact that the bonhomie between the two countries has failed to ebb in spite of the toxic romance of the Taliban era. The fact that India piloted and championed the move to provide membership to Afghanistan in the SAARC on 3rd April, 2007 paved the way for its firm integration into the South Asian block forever. In this context, the present paper aims to focus on the historical perspective of Indo-Afghan relations as it meanders down the centuries to the current age applying the historical-analytical method. The basic objective of the instant paper is to highlight the glorious ancestry of the affairs of the two nations and to emphasize the shared civilizational space on which the foundation of a strong future can be erected and built.

Keywords: history, relations, trade, route, agreement, security, economic aid, nation-building.

Introduction

Throughout history Afghanistan, better known earlier as Bactria or Ariana, was interminably linked with Bharat. Archaeological explorations conducted in the 20th century led to the discovery of artefacts belonging to the

Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron ages in Afghanistan and the city of Mundigak near Kandahar is believed to have been a colony of the erstwhile Indus Valley Civilization underpinning the link with India. In the 6th century BC when the Archaemenid Persians overthrew the Medians and integrated Arachosia, Ariana and Bactria, the political entity of Afghanistan was born¹.

Indo-Afghan Relations during the time of Alexander

Alexander after defeating Darius III of Persia in the historic Battle of Gaugamela in 330 BC gained control over Bactria and established his settlements therein. When he left soon afterwards, the Seleucid Empire which succeeded him led by Seleucus Nicator gave Bactria or present-day Afghanistan to Sandrocottus or Chandragupta Maurya in 305 BC as part of a marriage alliance treaty upon terms of intermarriage and in exchange of 500 elephants². A royal link between Afghanistan and erstwhile Bharat was thus firmly established and Indo-Afghan Relations can thus be termed as 'Badshahi Rishta'. Later, with the construction of *Uttarapath* by emperor Chandragupta Maurya which is one of Asia's oldest arteries connecting Purushapura, Takshashila, Hastinapura, Kanyakubja, Prayag, Patliputra and Tamralipta, covering a distance of around 2,500 kilometers, it further strengthened the bond linking Bharat with Central Asia extending from the Ganges in the east to the north-western Frontier of the Mauryan Empire³. Overland trade flourished widely through this route. Interestingly, several historical figures who attacked India from the 10th century to the mid-18th century namely the Ghaznavids, Ghoris, Khiljis, Lodis and Durranis were all based in modern-day Afghanistan. But the relations survived the onslaught and never soured.

Sher Shah Suri (1486 – 1545), who was an ethnic Pashtun belonging to the Pashtun 'Sur' tribe and the founder of the Suri Empire hailed from Sasaram in Bihar which enforces the Afghan connection strongly. During his seven-year rule from 1538 to 1545, he started extending and modernizing Chandragupta's Royal Road in the 16th century linking it from modern day Bangladesh all the way to Afghanistan.⁴The route was referred to as 'Sadak-e-Azam' by Suri, and "Badshahi Sadak" by the Mughals. In the 1830s the East India Company started a programme of metalled road construction and this road was renamed as the Grand Trunk Road.⁵

After the arrival of Chandragupta Maurya, the complexion of Afghanistan thus changed from Greco-Bactrians to Indo-Greek and Hindu, Buddhist and Zoroastrian cultures started flourishing in and around the Hindu Kush mountains. The strong Hindu connection can be further made out from the name 'Hindu Kush' mountains, i.e the slayer of the Hindus. It bears testimony to the fact that this route was extensively used by the Hindu traders in

ancient times, most of whom perished in this region due to the extreme cold weather. Another interesting link between the two nations has been the language of Sanskrit. It is reported that Muslims and Hindus lived side-by-side in Kabul. "From all verifiable accounts, Sanskrit was methodically taught in the Afghan monasteries, as in the shrines of Kucha, Kashgar and Khotan. Sanskrit was introduced in Central Asia by the Sarvastivada School of Himalayas which had its stronghold in Kashmir, the North Western Frontier Province and Afghanistan. Sanskrit inscriptions found at Gardez and Tapu Skandar are revealing. Prakrit was also used. At Bamiyan, the people and the priests knew Sanskrit. The knowledge of Sanskrit in Bactria is indicated by a manuscript, 'Sangitaparyaya' found in a cave in Bamiyan."⁶

In the fourth century, a major part of Afghanistan was known by the regional name of Khorasan and Balkh, Merv, Nishapur and Herat were its capital cities. At that point of time, Kandahar, Zabulistan, Ghazni and Kabulistan formed the frontier between Khorasan and Hindustan. The arrival of the Arab Muslims brought Islam into the western part of Afghanistan in the 7th century AD. Thereafter, it gradually spread eastwards and in the 12th and 13th centuries, with the help of a swift cavalry and vast armies united by ethnicity and religion, the Muslims ultimately established the Delhi Sultanate in India. The Sultans successfully repulsed numerous attacks by Chenghiz Khan and his Mongol raiders thereby saving India from ensuing plunder loot and destruction which led to the large-scale immigration of Afghans into India due to the prevailing chaos and instability in that region, thus creating a new Indo-Islamic culture in north India⁷.

From the eleventh century, the Afghan armies started marching into India relentlessly, subjugating it and looting its treasures. Mahmud of Ghazni is said to have invaded India seventeen times between 1001 and 1027 AD. Mohammad Ghori invaded India seven times in the twelfth century while the Lodhi dynasty of Pashtuns ruled north India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Sur dynasty ruled in the mid-sixteenth century. The Mughals were not ethnic Afghans but carried on their invasions mostly from Kabul and Kandahar. It can thus be said that Afghanistan was once the launching pad of countless foreign invasions in India and "today, 20 U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan — the highest concentration in any region anywhere in the world" in the words of President Donald Trump⁸.

Indo-Afghan Relations during the Pre-Colonial Years

Several kingdoms had come to power in the region comprising present-day Afghanistan including the Greco-Bactrians, Kushans, Kabul Shahiyas, Saffarids, Ghaznavids, Ghoris but finally it was the Hotaki and Durrani

dynasties which marked the political origins of the modern Afghan nation. Mir Wais Hotak, seen as Afghanistan's George Washington, was the first to make the Afghan region independent from Persia in 1713 AD after killing Gurgin Khan and decisively defeating the Persian armies of Khusraw Khan and Rustam Khan. Thereafter, in 1738, Nader Shah captured Kandahar from Shah Hussain Hotaki and made Ahmad Shah Durrani the commander of his four thousand Abdali Afghans. They overran Delhi in the Battle of Karnal and took the famous Koh-e-Noor and Darya-e-Noor diamonds with them. With the death of Nader Shah in 1747, the Afghans chose Ahmad Shah Durrani as their leader who then conquered and unified the entire present-day Afghanistan in 1747 A.D. It became the greatest Muslim Empire after the Ottoman Empire⁹.

Durrani defeated the Marathas nine times, the last being the Battle of Panipat in 1761. The biggest blow to the Afghan Durrani Empire came from the Sikhs in 1813 when under the famous Hindu General Diwan Mokham Chand the Sikhs defeated the Vizier of Afghanistan, Fateh Khan and his brother Dost Mohammad Khan in the Battle of Attock and ended the Afghan dream of regaining Punjab. Another Hindu General Diwan Misr Chand later defeated the Afghan General Jabbar Khan in Kashmir in 1819 and ended the 500-year Muslim rule there. In 1834, the Sikhs of Punjab under Ranjit Singh invaded Afghanistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region and its second capital Peshawar along with Multan, Sindh and Balochistan¹⁰. In 1837, Akbar Khan and his Afghan army finally managed to defeat the Sikhs in the Battle of Jamrud thus ending the cycle of love-hate relationship between the two States.

By that time, the Great Game had become active in the subcontinent. After the Battle of Gandamak or the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839 – 1842) between William Elphinstone and Akbar Khan, which resulted in a crushing defeat for the British, the British withdrew all forces from the country but nevertheless diplomatic relations were established with the Afghans. Forty years later, the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878 – 1880) culminated in the Battle of Kandahar in September, 1880 in which the British forces decisively defeated Ayub Khan and installed Amir Abdur Rahman Khan to the throne and started dictating the foreign policies of Afghanistan eventually resulting in the separation of 'spheres of influence' between Afghanistan and British India on 12th November, 1893 with the drawing of the Durand Line by the Foreign Secretary of India, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand¹¹. This crucial line dividing the ethnic Pashtun and Baloch territories remains controversial even today adversely influencing the geopolitics of the region as a whole.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) had thundered against such acquisitions of foreign territories by the British and had passed a Resolution

in December, 1904 on the British invasion of Tibet which seems prophetic even today in the context of Afghanistan—

The Congress protests strongly against the injustice and all the more because it apprehends that the Tibetan Expedition was but part of a general forward policy which, with the Mission to Afghanistan and Persia, threatens to involve India in foreign entanglements, which cannot fail to place an intolerable burden on the Indian revenues and prove in the end disastrous to the best interests of the country.¹²

It was only after the Third Anglo-Afghan War and the signing of the Treaty of Rawalpindi on 8th August, 1919 that King Amanullah Khan declared the independence of Afghanistan. His social reforms like the abolition of the traditional Burqa for women, opening of co-educational schools, making elementary education compulsory which were aimed at modernisation of the country ‘struck at the roots of conservative Islam’ and enraged and alienated the tribal and religious leaders¹³. This mass abhorrence of the traits of modernity and blind support for Islamic conservatism rooted in tribal culture has led to the undoing of the nascent state and marked a clear departure from the route independent India would take a few years later. In 1929, Amanullah Khan was overthrown by Habibul Kalikani, a Tajik who in turn was overthrown nine months later, marking the beginning of the Pashtun Musahiban dynasty spanning five decades. The first leader was Muhammad Nadir Shah and after his assassination in 1933, his son Zahir Shah took over at the tender age of nineteen years.

Indo-Afghan Relations during the Post-Colonial Years

‘Old order changeth, yielding place to new’ goes the famous English proverb. Similarly, the foreign policy of a nation never remains static. With its historic tryst with destiny at the midnight hour of 15th August, 1947, India emerged on the world stage with complete independence from British rule. Drastic political changes in the domestic front coupled with radical changes in the international environment caused fundamental transformation in the old benchmarks discarding core beliefs of the previous regimes and initiating new thoughts and judgments on the unfolding situations. Moreover, its foreign policy was directly or indirectly, determined by its immediate surroundings which included Afghanistan. With the partition of British India, Pakistan came into existence as a new buffer state between India and Afghanistan thus inheriting the bitter acrimony concerning the Durand Line. India does enjoy a small tract of border with Afghanistan as Home Minister Amit Shah has rightly said in Parliament during a debate on the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 referring to the 106-kms abutting Wakhan Corridor in the Badakhshan province that separates Afghanistan from Gilgit Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)¹⁴. India has always claimed its

right over PoK and the Indian maps show PoK as Indian territory.

On 4th January, 1950 a historic Treaty of Friendship was signed between the Government of India represented by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister cum External Affairs Minister and the Royal Government of Afghanistan represented by Nadjibullah Khan, the Ambassador to India. Article 2 of the said Treaty categorically stated –‘There shall be everlasting peace and friendship between the two Governments who will further strive to maintain and strengthen the cordial relations existing between the people of their respective countries’.¹⁵This led to the establishment of a broad and sweeping relationship between India and Afghanistan and laid the foundation for a better future engagement between the two countries.

Soviet Involvement in Afghanistan and its implications

Although Afghanistan did not participate in World War II and had preferred to remain neutral and non-aligned, it started taking benefits from both the conflicting blocks of Soviet Union and the United States of America thereby giving a fillip to the Great Game and was later inevitably sucked into it. Soviet aid to Afghanistan began with a subsidy of thirteen aero planes in 1919 to be followed by the establishment of an air route from Moscow to Kabul via Tashkent and the laying of telephone lines between Herat-Kandahar and Kabul-Mazar-i-Sharif in 1925. After the Second World War, the road from Peshawar to Kabul via Tang-i-Gharu was built with American assistance¹⁶. From 1955 to 1987, Soviet assistance rose to \$1.27 billion in economic aid and \$1.25 billion in military aid while the United States poured in \$533 million in Afghanistan¹⁷.

In 1963, when Zahir Shah again tried to introduce an era of modernity and democratic freedom, he was soon deposed on 16th July, 1973 in a bloodless coup during an official overseas visit, by his cousin Daoud Khan who became the first President of Afghanistan. During the India-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971, Kabul first chose a non-aligned stance but at the height of tensions, even proposed a confederation between Pakistan and Afghanistan as illustrated by former Pakistani ambassador to Kabul Aslam Khattak in his book ‘A Pathan Odyssey’ and quoted by former Pakistani foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri in his book ‘Neither a Hawk nor a Dove’¹⁸.

The outcome of the India-Pakistan War of 1971 which resulted in a crushing defeat for Pakistan compelled it to seek the support of the Afghans more than ever for ensuring their strategic security interest on the western border. Hence, an opportunity emerged for solving the vital bilateral issue of the Durand line during Afghan President Daud Khan’s last years. He and Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto were about to reach an agreement

to stop using their soils against each other but the Communist Coup in Afghanistan and Zia-ul-Haq's Coup in Pakistan shattered their chances¹⁹.

In 1978, the Saur Revolution by the Afghan Communist Party under the name and style of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) led by Nur Mohammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal and Hafizullah Amin overthrew the existing government of Daoud Khan by assassinating him and Taraki of the Khalq faction took over as the President while Hafizullah Amin became the Prime Minister. Together they established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and initiated several reforms with a socialist agenda which became unpopular yet again.

The United States in the meantime, as part of its Cold War strategy, began strengthening its ties with Pakistan in spite of repeated warnings from Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, that this might prompt a Soviet intervention in neighbouring Afghanistan. The CIA began using Pakistani ISI as a proxy network to recruit, finance and arm the Mujahideen fighters inside Pakistan to prevent the Soviet Union from reaching the oil-rich Persian Gulf through Balochistan. In September, 1979 Taraki was executed by Hafizullah Amin and on 24th December, 1979 the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev decided to send the Red Army to Kabul. Upon arrival, they staged a coup killing President Hafizullah Amin and installing Soviet loyalist Babrak Karmal in his place. This deployment was seen by most including the West as an 'invasion' and by some others as 'a legitimate supporting intervention' in furtherance of the Brezhnev Doctrine' of ever-expanding bolshevism.

Jawaharlal Nehru (15th August, 1947 to 27th May, 1964) the first Prime Minister of India embarked upon a foreign policy whose guiding pillars were anti-imperialism, non-alignment and third world solidarity. However, he failed to pay the required attention to his own backyard and his neighbours. Harish Kapur has rightly pointed out that—

If India's role in the global system was institutionalized, it never had one for the region; for Nehru neither established any framework nor fixed any real goals vis-a-vis India's neighbours.²⁰

This has led to the Afghan conundrum that India is facing today. He was engrossed so much with the Soviet brand of socialism that he overlooked all its evil designs and excesses. He preferred to ignore the geopolitical realities in spite of repeated caution and warning. In a letter to Josip Broz Tito, Nehru wrote on 22nd December, 1959 – "I had long talks with President Eisenhower about a variety of problems. Eisenhower was troubled at the Soviet aid given to Afghanistan. I do not personally see any danger there...I told him that I was convinced that no danger of invasion lay there"²¹. India was opposed to this Soviet intervention as it would jeopardize the peace

and stability of the region. The then Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh opposed the Soviet intervention and the Foreign Minister of the Janata Government, Atal Behari Vajpayee asserted that the Soviet Union must make a prompt declaration that it will withdraw its forces and that the US must not use the developments in Afghanistan to induct arms in Pakistan. However, this stand was short-lived and was reversed once Indira Gandhi made a political comeback in January, 1980 and India did not feel it appropriate to raise its voice of protest at the United Nations against the Soviet intrusion. An Afghan from Zahir Shah's group told a R&AW Officer in Geneva, 1986— "We [Afghans] are unhappy with the Government of India for not supporting the Afghan people and for supporting the Soviet troops. But that has not lessened our admiration and affection for Indians"²².

In response, the Reagan administration increased US arming and funding of the Mujahideen as the United States was eager to give the Soviets their own Vietnam and an approximate \$40 billion dollars were provided. Pakistan's President General Zia-ul-Haq feared that the Soviets might invade Balochistan in this fashion. Hence, the CIA and the Saudi Arabic General Intelligence Directorate (GID) started funneling more funds and equipments to the Afghan mujahedeen through Pakistan's ISI. About 90,000 Afghans, including Mullah Omar were trained by the ISI during the 1980s. President Carter's classified legal authorization for the CIA's covert war described the purpose of U.S aid as 'harassment' of Soviet forces²³. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan by signing the National Security Decision Directive 166 augmented this 'finding' of Carter by giving sweeping authorization to use 'all necessary means to aid the Afghan rebels against the Soviets. The manner and extent to which the United States of America had backed the mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the 1980s is brilliantly portrayed in Steve Coll's account—

Just west down the Grand Trunk Road from Rawalpindi, in a flat expanse of agricultural fields... sits a walled compound that was for most of the 1980s the Afghan operations headquarters of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency... the trucks this ISI compound disgorged and received each day... four to five dozen of them departed each morning between five A.M and noon... in their locked cargo bins rattled Chinese-made long-range rockets, or Soviet-made rifles bought from the Egyptians, or American-made anti-aircraft missiles, or Italian-made antitank weapons, or British-made limpet mines, or even on occasion Argentinian horses and Texas mules shipped across the Atlantic by the CIA to slog through the rugged, treeless Afghan mountains in service of the mujaheddin.²⁴

In November 1986, Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev announced a partial withdrawal of Soviet Troops from Afghanistan and replaced Babrak Karmal with Muhammad Najibullah, the former head of Afghan secret police. After about 10 years of occupying Afghanistan and causing the deaths of about

1 million Afghans, mostly civilians, the Soviet forces finally started withdrawing on 15 May, 1988 and the last Red Army units rolled across the Termez Bridge from Afghanistan on 15 February, 1989 leaving the government forces alone but continued to support the Afghan President Najibullah till 1992. During the war, about five million Afghans had fled across the Hindu Kush mountains into exile in Iran and Pakistan. In an interview, Babrak Karmal, the Afghan communist who had ushered in the Soviet tanks in Afghanistan in 1979, argued that “none of the wreckage of war, revolution, and counterrevolution surrounding him in Kabul was his fault. He had simply been overwhelmed...by what he called the ‘force majeure’ of the east-west conflict’ narrates Steve Coll wonderfully in his book²⁵.

It was generally expected that the withdrawal of the Soviet forces would set the stage for a new emergent Afghanistan crawling out of the ruins of communism that would gradually make its presence felt in the global arena, but instead, the CIA instigated Operation Cyclone to arm and finance the mujahedeen to drive out the Soviets from 1979 -1989 led to a new cycle of violence after the Soviet Army left. It soon paved the way for a new variety of conflict between the Afghans themselves on the basis of the existing old codes of ethnicity, tribalism, family and faction. This genetic obsession with war undeterred by the fragility of its body politic and a volatile existential crisis led Afghanistan to sink again as a nation state into the morass of chaos and confrontation, instead of marching forward towards peace and prosperity.

After the Communist government collapsed due to such ongoing internal ethnic and tribal divisions and President Najibullah of the former Communist Republic of Afghanistan was forced to resign on 15 April, 1992, six of the seven major Afghan anti-Soviet resistance parties agreed on a peace and power sharing agreement called the Peshawar Accords on 24 April, 1992 at the instigation of Pakistan thus creating the Islamic State of Afghanistan. Save and except Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s (the Pashtun who had earned the respect of the CIA and the affection of the ISI during the Soviet years) Hezbe-Islami all the other parties came under this coalition umbrella. In June, Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Tajik dominated Jamiat-e-Islami was made the interim President of the new Islamic State of Afghanistan. Islamic laws were introduced, bars were closed and women were ordered to wear the hijab. Ahmad Shah Massoud who was a Sunni Hanafi Muslim recruited by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood at the tender age of 16, and who had managed to defend his Panjshir Valley from being taken by the Soviets and thereafter by the Taliban, was appointed the new Minister of Defence as well as the government’s main military commander. “Massoud wanted an independent prosperous Afghanistan living in peace with its neighbors. He wanted the people to choose their government. He spoke of democracy in the context

of the people of Afghanistan, who are Muslims. Massoud did not support a liberal democracy where Islamic Law would be watered down or abandoned in the name of moderation²⁶. With the exception of only nine months in 1929, for the first time in centuries, power had shifted from the Pashtuns to the Tajiks in Afghanistan. Both Massoud and Rabbani were of Tajik ethnicity and by February 1989, Ahmad Shah Massoud had wielded so much influence in northern Afghanistan militarily that he had become the most influential man in the region. As the Peshawar Accords failed, Rabbani lost no time in reaching out to New Delhi in September, 1992 amidst mounting tensions with Hekmatyar²⁷.

At this point, Afghanistan was on the cusp of significant change but the sweeping instability in this strategic location always provided an opportunity to the external forces to push their own security and political agendas. Pakistan being keen for a breakthrough in Central Asia provided full logistical support to Hekmatyar. Adding fuel to the fire, Saudi Arabia and Iran both vying for regional hegemony, also started supporting Afghan militias against each other – as Iran supported the Shia Hazara Hezb-e-Wahdat forces of Abdul Ali Mazari, the Saudis supported the Wahhabite Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and his Ittihad-e-Islami faction. Abdul Rashid Dostum's Junbish-e-Milli forces formed an alliance with Hekmatyar in 1994 and together this conflict escalated into a full-scale war which resulted in another 25,000 deaths and almost half a million deserted Afghanistan.

Indo-Afghan Relations during the Post-Soviet Years

The Taliban arrived on the scene in 1994 as a new politico-religious force. The word '*Taliban*' is a Pashto word for 'students'. The initial foot soldiers of the Taliban were genuine Muslims who were deeply concerned about the people of the country. They were mobilized under the leadership of Mohammed Omar with the covert backing of the CIA and the ISI. Actually, the Taliban was the Trojan Horse of Pashtun nationalism. It was a conglomerate of disenfranchised Pashtun tribal fighters who were alarmed by the fact that a non-Pashtun has gained control of the country. With the logistic support of Pakistan and financial aid of Saudi Arabia, the Taliban unified the Pashtuns and managed to capture most of Afghanistan. Since the Taliban's ideology is a peculiar mixture of Sharia law based on Deobandi fundamentalism and militant Islamism tagged with Salafi jihadism of Osama Bin Laden and married to the social and cultural norms of the Pashtuns better known as 'Pashtunwali', the Al-Qaeda used the Taliban as a host to further its own global agenda. The greater geopolitics of the region in relation to global issues was more vital for Al-Qaeda than the local politics of Tajiks and Pashtuns. Moreover, the Al-Qaeda had its eyes on the strategic northern mountains of Afghanistan

for extending its operations to the Central Asian countries. The Taliban suited them most because it was against any modern system of governance and supported the implementation of Islamic Law based on local interpretations. Thus, the Taliban gradually took control of the entire southern and central Afghanistan sequestering power from the Mujahideen warlords and promising stability and rule of law in the war-torn country, leading ultimately to the fall of Kabul on 27 September 1996. After seizing Kabul from President Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik whom they viewed as anti-Pashtun, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established and the Afghan capital was transferred from Kabul to Kandahar. It has been rightly said “What was good for Afghanistan was not necessarily good for Pakistan and vice versa. Indeed, Pakistan and Afghanistan generally had poor relations until the Taliban’s arrival”²⁸.

In view of such developments, the Tajik forces of Massoud and the Uzbek forces of Dostum formed the Northern Alliance which included the Hazara factions under Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq and Pashtun forces under Haji Abdul Qadir against the Taliban. The formal diplomatic recognition to the Taliban government was given by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates only. Hamid Karzai, who lived in the Pakistani city of Quetta among the Afghan refugees was disenchanted with the Taliban when his father was shot dead in July, 1999 and henceforth decided to work closely with the Northern Alliance. Left with no other option, India backed Ahmad Shah Masood to retain its hold on Afghanistan during the entire Taliban era. Former External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh records, in his book, *A Call to Honour*, “India’s co-operation with the Northern Alliance is still largely an untold account. A more complete narration of it has to wait”²⁹.

In 2001, Massoud and Karzai warned the United States that the Taliban were closely connected with the Al Qaeda and that a plot was underway to attack the United States. On 9th September, 2001 Massoud was killed by Al Qaeda agents in a suicide bombing attack and two days later, the Twin Towers of America fell to the suicidal airstrikes by Al Qaeda terrorists. On 26th September, 2001 a CIA team led by Gary Schroen, codenamed ‘Jawbreaker’ landed in Afghanistan and began the effort to overthrow the Taliban. Operation Enduring Freedom was launched on 7th October, 2001 and the Northern Alliance worked hand-in-hand with the US Special Forces to bring down the Taliban regime.

Concluding Remarks

India had all along supported Afghanistan, right from the tenure of King Zahir Shah to President Daoud Khan and even during and after the Soviet occupation. The post-Soviet Najibullah government sought close relations

with India as Pakistan decided to support Hekmatyar and was given humanitarian aid by India. By 1994, it had become apparent that in the face of increasing Indian involvement, Islamabad's strategic goals in Afghanistan seemed threatened, if not lost. Thus, later during the Taliban regime, Pakistan turned the heat on India and marginalized its influence significantly. With the days of the Taliban being finally over but not out, courtesy the new US designated Peace Plan, it is to be seen whether India can make further inroads into the inhospitable terrain of a hospitable country banking on the historical relations it has always cherished and nurtured with Afghanistan.

War never ends in Afghanistan, where nationhood is still suspect, polity is severely marginalized and peace is the greatest casualty. The Afghan chessboard has witnessed countless wars and battles with external forces over the centuries and the Great Game has ebbed and flowed over it without anyone winning a decisive victory over the Afghans. But India has not only shared strong cultural bonds with Afghanistan but even today commands immense love and respect in the hearts of the Afghans. From a buffer zone between the leading regional powers, Britain, Russia and Persia to the 'Graveyard of Empires' where colonial Britain, communist Soviet Russia and capitalist United States have licked the dust, Afghanistan remains an enigma where India's principal interest lies in playing an independent, constructive and meaningful role of institution-building which will lead ultimately to nation-building. Instead of a campaign of half-measures, India looks upon Afghanistan as a friendly ally while Afghanistan looks at India as a trustworthy friend and this dual reciprocity of faith and trust can help propel unity and prosperity in the entire region.

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‘NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY’ ANALYZING INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS

ALIK NAHA

I. ABSTRACT

The Maldives was recognized by the Government of India after it gained independence in 1965. Being surrounded by the salty waters of the Indian Ocean, the country faces a scarcity of basic resources required for survival and maintenance of its population. India has been providing necessary daily essentials, medical care, education facilities, and other capacity-building assistance for the development of the Maldives. India’s relationship with the Maldives is based on the fundamental premises of - Cultural and Historic links, Trade and economy, and Security interest in the Indian Ocean. History has in records India’s readiness to aid its South-Western neighbour at times of difficulties – from the 1988 coup attempt to providing medical and financial assistance during the on-going COVID-19 crisis despite the former suffering from the same pandemic demonstrates India’s commitment towards her neighbours. This heightened involvement is often attributed to India’s geostrategic and geopolitical interest and an attempt to counterbalance the growing influence of China whose strategic interest converge with the financial necessities of the Maldives.

Keywords : India, Maldives, China, Indian Ocean, Geostrategic, Security, Assistance, Capacity-building.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Indian sub-continent is a highly diverse region in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, flora, fauna, etc. It is home to nearly 25% of the world population and a big market for the industrialized countries. Civilizational, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic similarities bind this state together. The countries of the Indian Sub-continent also have a shared colonial past being colonized by the British Empire. The region is also marked by

underdevelopment, illiteracy, poverty and unemployment. The constituent countries of the sub-continent also vary in terms of their size, population density, Human Development Index (HDI), economy, military capability, etc. But despite these similarities and proximities, the varying nature of the economy, asymmetric governing pattern, and other factors have failed the region to evolve as a 'unified region'. The growing threat perceptions in the region are also the product of the asymmetric balance of power that exists. Several unanswered questions of the colonial past also contribute to the regional imbalance and conflicts.

The Maldives which is made up of about 1100 islands grouped into 26 atolls is the smallest and one of the least developed countries of the sub-continent. Despite its smaller size, the nation is one of the global hotbeds of geostrategic and geopolitical interest. The country, due to its locational drawback and peripheral economy, has to depend on its neighbours (like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc.) and other major powers for its overall development and to meet its basic food requirement. India, on the other hand, is the largest country of the sub-continent in terms of size, population, economy, military capability, etc. It maintains a close historical, cultural, religious and economic relations with all its neighbours. But on several occasions, India has faced difficulty in dealing with its neighbours largely due to its size and strength, its interventionist and assertive policies for which it is regarded as a 'hegemonistic power' or 'Big Brother' by its neighbours and also because of the internal hostilities that these neighbouring countries had during and after gaining independence. The interventionist attitude of India may be attributed to its aim of maintaining regional peace, harmony and stability with which India's national interest is deeply associated. Despite several constraints, India has made every possible attempt to maintain cordial relations with its neighbours and to settle all disputes bilaterally and peacefully. As Indira Gandhi once remarked, "We in India do not believe in big or small. We accept the sovereignty of independent nations, and if we want to strengthen ourselves, it is not to make our power felt, but merely to enable us to stand on our feet and to look after our own people." The Gujral doctrine also envisioned India's accommodating and generous attitude towards her neighbours without any reciprocating demands. This helped to solve several outstanding disputes with Bangladesh and Nepal. The current NDA government's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' also upholds the vision of prioritizing the neighbours. This holistic approach of India is believed to develop relations with her neighbours based on equality, trust and mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The study is thus aimed at analysing the trends in the Indo-Maldives relation from its historical perspective focusing on the broader areas of cooperation and interest.

III. INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic relations began with the archipelago nation with the opening of the Indian High Commission in Male in 1982. Since then the relationship has been cemented through regular exchanges of leaders at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Both are members of the United Nations (UN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the signatories to the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) under the SAARC regime. The roots of the relationship are cemented in – ‘maintenance of cultural and historical relations, trade and economic access, and finally, security interests, including the safeguarding of critical sea lines of communication’ (Poplin, 2014). The relationship began to flourish during the tenure of PM Indira Gandhi in the 1970s. The relationship witnessed its first major strategic progress when the Maldives was victimized to a coup by Tamil infiltrators belonging to the People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). The Indian Air Force was rushed in under the much-celebrated ‘Operation Cactus’ to contain the threat and restore democracy, making India a dependable ally for the Island country. Also, during the 2004 Tsunami, India despite suffering casualties and devastation supported its junior partner with relief and medical assistance. In 2008, when President Nasheed of the Maldives assumed office, greater co-operations were finalized in the fields of defence and security of the Island nation. Since then India has made large scale investments in the development of infrastructure and security of the nation. However, since 2009, a growing Chinese influence was observed more with assuming of power by President Yameen in 2013. In 2014 the sole desalination water plant of the country collapsed resulting in a severe freshwater shortage. India stood by the atoll nation by immediately providing 200 tonnes of freshwater and an additional 35 tonnes of water was supplied through the Indian Navy’s INS Deepak and INS Sukanya through on-board desalination (Pampackal, 2019) upholding its ‘Neighbourhood First Policy’. India maintains that it “will continue to maintain essential supplies to our friendly neighbour Maldives in the spirit of our long-standing bilateral partnership.” (Moorthy, 2020) .

IV. TRENDS IN THE RELATIONS

India and the Maldives enjoy a warm and multi-faceted relationship that ranges from cultural, commercial, historic, linguistics and ethnic links. In 1965, when the Maldives gained independence from the British, India was one of the first nations to establish diplomatic ties and grant recognition. With the inception of diplomatic links, frequent high-level visits by the leaders of the two nations helped to further cement the historical links between the two

countries. President Yameen visited India thrice during his tenure. Recently President Solih visited India after assuming office in 2018 which was reciprocated by the visit of Prime Minister Modi in June 2019. Frequent ministerial-level visits have also contributed to boosting the relationship. Former External Affairs Minister of India Sushma Swaraj visited the Island nation in 2014, Mr. J.P. Nadda, Ex-Health Minister also visited the Maldives in 2015 on behalf of the Indian Prime Minister during the 50th Independence Day celebration. The current External Affairs Minister of Government of India Dr. S. Jaishankar has been on a state visit to the Maldives in September 2019. Along with bilateral engagements, both countries have worked together cordially on several multilateral forums. India and the Maldives are among the founders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SAARC which was realized in 1985. Together they are also the members of the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth of Nations and the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). For India, the Island country holds great geostrategic and geopolitical interests. As a result, closer economic, cultural, defense and military ties have been witnessed between the two nations. To safeguard its strategic interest in the Indian Ocean Region, India plays a significant role in maintaining the Island nation's security more specifically forging alliances with the later to secure freedom of navigation and to enhance the maritime security of the region.

India has also invested much in the development of the Island nation. Major Indian companies like the TATA group, GMR, Suzlon, etc. have undertaken major development projects in the Maldives ranging from housing, tourism, renewable energy, waste management, education, etc. The Government of India has constructed the state-of-the-art Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH), Faculty of Engineering Technology (FET) and Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies under the capacity-building assistance program in the Maldives. The Government of India has also reconstructed and renovated several mosques, educational institutes of the Maldives. India also provides scholarships to the Maldivian students under various schemes like the ICCR scholarship, SAARC Chair Fellowship, ITEC training and scholarship, Medical scholarships, etc. The Technology Adaption Program financed by the Government of India (US\$ 5.3million) executed by the NIIT and EEEEC provided computer training to the teachers and students of the Maldives.

India has also supported the Island nation by providing humanitarian assistance to the latter's times of crisis. During the 2004 Asian Tsunami crisis, India was the first nation to send medical and food relief to the Maldives and provided it with a financial aid of US\$ 100 million. In 2007 another US\$ 100 million was provided to the Maldives. During the 2014 Maldivian water crisis, India airlifted hundreds of tons of fresh water as a relief to the people

of the Maldives. The recent global pandemic of Covid-19 marked no difference in India's humanitarian support towards its junior partner by providing immediate medical relief. Thus, India has emerged itself as a dependable and trusted ally of the Maldives.

During the Presidency of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, the relations were friendly. He prioritized the development of rural Maldives while maintaining the principle of non-alignment. In 1988, when the Gayoom government faced a possible coup threat India responded with its military swiftly to restore peace and order. However, in the latter part of his tenure, relations with India began to deteriorate as democratic movements began to take an upswing in the Maldives. Gayoom began to play China against India fearing that the later will not support him in the face of democratic protest. China also took benefit of the situation and made inroads in the region where it has immense strategic interests. His era also saw China undertaking several infrastructure developments projects in the Maldives.

The beginning of multi-party democracy in the Maldives and the assumption of power by President Nasheed saw improvement in ties with India. His Presidency was a mixed bag for the India-Maldives relations. Initially, much to India's dismay, Nasheed tried to be cozy with the Chinese by signing two agreements with China for the supply of military hardware and training. His Presidency also opened opportunities for the Chinese to invest in the tourism industry. But later the government of Nasheed adopted 'India first policy'. He declared that the Maldives will not participate in any defense exercise or adopt any domestic policy and not allow anyone to use Maldivian waters to build deep seaports and airports that violates India's interest. Thus, assuring India that the Maldives would not undertake any action that affects India's strategic interest. Under his tenure, India and the Maldivian navies began to conduct joint naval drills. India installed surveillance radars in 26 atolls. Indian navy also provided training to the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF).

The tenure of President Waheed was marked by a clear anti-India and pro-China stance undertaken by the Government of Maldives. The Waheed government not only suspended the GMR contract under Chinese influence but also criticized India alleging its interference in the Maldives domestic affairs. His Presidency marked a significant decline of Indian influence over the Island nation and a sharp rise of Chinese dominance. Much to India's discomfort the Waheed government in 2012 also finalized a military aid agreement with Chinese. It also hinted about its willingness to have China as a member of SAARC. Thus, the Presidency of Waheed marked a downward slide in the relationship.

The Presidency of Yameen was marked by the strategic and economic offensive to fulfill the necessities of the Maldives. He was aware of the economic conditions of his country and as a result, made his approach multipronged and not just relying solely on India. Immediately after he assumed office, he visited India, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia to bring investments and recover the already declining Maldivian economy. He tried to re-develop the deteriorating ties with India. He made several bilateral visits to India for improving ties. The relationship with China was further cemented with Chinese companies investing heavily in the infrastructural development of the Maldives. In 2014 when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the Maldives, the later showed interest in the Chinese call for joining the maritime Silk Route (part of the broader Belt and Road Initiative). The Chinese President also assured for greater cooperation and investment in the development of Maldives tourism, energy, transport communication, etc. Under Yameen, China and the Maldives signed the Free Trade Agreement in 2017. Yameen has also tried to build closer links with the Islamic world. He tried to warm up to the Saudis for greater economic help. The Saudis provide the Maldives with cheap oil. The Saudis have also shown interest in infrastructural development projects in the Island nation.

The political turmoil that hit the Island nation before the Presidential election of 2018 brought about unprecedented chaos in the democratic functioning of the Maldives and much to everyone's surprise marked the victory of the unified opposition candidate Ibrahim Solih. The assumption of office by Solih garnered positive hopes in India and the West and marked the victory of democracy in the Maldives.

Relations under Modi & Solih

Under the 'Neighbourhood First Policy,' the present NDA government has laid much emphasis on improving relations with its immediate neighbours which was reflected when the leaders of the SAARC nations were invited for the swearing-in ceremony of the first NDA government in 2014. The Indian Prime Minister regarded the Maldives as a valued partner with whom India has a shared strategic, economic and development goals. In 2016, President Yameen too stressed on 'India First policy'. But, Indian efforts to rebuild the lost momentum were stalled due to Yameen's closer proximity to China and religious affinity towards Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. When Solih took over as President of the Maldives, dimensions began to change. PM Modi was among the first leaders to congratulate the newly elected Maldivian President. PM Modi attendance to the swearing-in ceremony in 2018 reflected Indian interest and importance for the Maldives. This also raised hopes for re-initiation of all the development projects in which India has invested but

was stalled by the Yameen regime. Experts believe that the Solih government would try to rebuild the traditionally close partnership with India. In 2019 when the Indian Prime Minister visited the Island nation several MoUs were signed ranging from socio-economic development to cooperation in sectors of renewable energy, fisheries, education, health, tourism and community infrastructure building. India also extended financial assistance of US\$ 800 million for the overall development of the nation. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitments to rebuild the ties on mutual trust and cooperation. During the 6th round of Joint Commission Meeting (2019) that was attended by the Foreign Minister of both nations, the emphasis was laid on maritime security ranging from anti-piracy operations to controlling drug trafficking and reviewing other areas of cooperation. Both leaders cherished the convergence of 'Neighbourhood First Policy' (of India) with 'India First Policy' (of the Maldives).

V. CHINA AS A FACTOR

Since 2011 Chinese influence over the Maldives has increased significantly. The tenures of Waheed and Yameen were highly responsible for growing ties with China which didn't have even a diplomatic mission in the Maldives until 2011. However, it was Maumoon Gayoom who brought China into the region by trying to play it against India in the face of a democratic upsurge. He visited China in 1984 and then in 2006 and facilitated China's participation in infrastructural development projects in the Maldives. The strategic importance of the Maldives is well known and from 2011 it has become an arena of competition between India and China. The Waheed government cancelled the proposed development of the Male airport by GMR an Indian company and handed it to the Chinese. Regular exchanges of leaders continued between the two countries. China provided the Maldives with US\$ 500 million in assistance for infrastructural development. In 2012 a military aid agreement was finalized by the two nations.

During Yameen's tenure, Beijing made heavy investments in the Maldives. This included the development of the Male airport and construction of a bridge between Male and Hulhule. Tourism contributes most to the Maldivian economy and here too China has left India behind in terms of the number of tourists visiting the island nation. Yameen even assured China of the Maldives participation in the maritime silk route (part of Belt and Road Initiative) and support to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) when President Xi Jinping visited the island nation in 2014. His tenure marked increase Chinese investment in areas of tourism, power, and infrastructural development. China has also developed the tourist islands of Feydhoo and

Finolhu. In 2017 the Free Trade Agreement was also finalized when Yameen visited China.

The significance of islands as a strategic asset date back to the days of European imperialism. Major colonial powers like Britain, France, Spain, Portuguese, etc. have retained significant control over islands to protect vital trade routes and key strategic chokepoints. Even during World War II, the islands of Hawaii and Okinawa remained key assets for the allied powers in the South Pacific theatre. Therefore, as the IOR becomes increasingly important in terms of geopolitics and geo-security, the role of these island nations located in the IOR region is also set to increase. Furthermore, today these islands are independent nations with sovereign foreign policy and possess the ability to shape the regional security environment with their choices.

For both India and China, the Maldives provides an important naval and airbase in terms of securing major sea lanes of trade and communication lines in the Indian Ocean. The Maldives location between the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Hormuz which are important global trade routes adds to its strategic importance. For India, the Indian sub-continent is its backyard and any move by her neighbours towards any major power is seen with suspicion by the security establishments in New Delhi. As experts argue a big and powerful country must be adjusting, accommodative, sensitive, and generous when dealing with the smaller partners, Delhi's habit to intervene in the domestic affairs of these neighbouring countries no longer serves its purpose with a growing sense of sovereignty in these states and further complicates India's relations with her neighbours. The same is true in the case of the Maldives, a country with a weak economy requires greater assistance from all major powers for its overall development. It may be assumed that Yameen may have agreed to join the Belt and Road Initiative to address the issue of the declining economy of his country but the negative reactions that it received from India might have created a negative impression in the mind of the Maldivian policymakers. To safeguard its interest in the region, New Delhi at times forgets to respect the sovereignty of its junior neighbours. New Delhi must make a distinction between the former's economic needs and its traditional security alliance with it. On the other hand, India's opposition to Chinese influence in the region may be attributed to India's fear that China wants to encircle India and an increasing Chinese presence is a threat to its interests in the region.

The victory of Solih in the recent Presidential elections has raised renewed hopes in India for change of policy in the Maldives towards China. It aims to regain the lost ground and bring back its influence over the island nation

in terms of economic and strategic clout that it once had. However, the situation has changed with time and India will have to rethink its policy of engagement with the Maldives given the nature of Chinese presence. India can no longer unilaterally take any interventionist action as it could during the 1988 coup crisis in the Maldives and any such attempt would face the opposition of China and could emerge as yet another possible point of coercion between the two Asian Giants. India is also worried about the increasing debt that is making the Maldives vulnerable to Chinese pressure. At present, the Maldives is burdened under 60% of Chinese debt i.e. almost 10% of its GDP which is expected to rise to 121% by 2020. India can take this opportunity to gain back her lost ground by financially helping the Maldives in coming out of the Chinese debt.

On August 2020, the External Affairs Minister Jaishankar in a video meeting with his Maldivian counterpart extended a financial commitment of US\$ 100 million as a grant and US\$ 400 million as a line of credit for the development of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCB) that includes the construction of high visibility sea bridge connecting Male with the islands of Vilimale, Thilafushi and Gulhifalhu islands. This funding is part of the financial package announced by the Indian Prime Minister during his first state visit to the Maldives in 2018. Once completed the project will be three times bigger than the Sinimale sea-bridge constructed by the Chinese (at a higher rate), connecting Male with the island of Hulhule. An 'air bubble agreement' has also been in place for quarantine-free transportation between the two countries. All these developments are in line with the Maldives diplomatic reorientation of India and the Indian Ocean (security) first policy. This is also a setback for the revisionist China post the Galwan valley incident. Furthermore, Chinese policy of corrupt infrastructure debt-trap policy has raised alarms among the policymakers of the Maldives. Male is due to pay more than US\$700 million by 2022.

Under the Solih regime, security and economic partnerships with India are set to touch new heights. India successfully acquired the \$300 million Gulhifalhu port project. India launched Operation Sanjeevani to help the island nation with medical assistance and testing facilities during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. India also continued its supply of food materials and essential commodities to Male despite being one of the worst-affected nations. As China continues to lose friends due to its 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy and the outbreak of the Pandemic, India's soft power diplomacy and neighborhood first policy is set to further consolidated India's image as a trusted partner in the region.

However, it may also be argued that the Chinese presence in the region also has its positive side. Increased investment by both China and India will help in the development of the Indian Ocean rim and would promote greater trade and connectivity. As 21st-century is marked by the onslaught of globalization, so greater cooperation and interdependence will help to promote stronger multilateral and bilateral relations among the major powers of the region and more importantly benefit the India-Maldives relationship which has deep-rooted cultural, historic, and economic engagements as well as evolving interconnected security networks. President Solih's (Newly elected President of the Maldives) policy of 'India First' compliments Modi's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'. Both countries have again reinitiated the relationship based on mutual trust, transparency, understanding, and sensitivity.

VI. AREAS OF COOPERATION

a. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Infrastructural development has been a core area of cooperation between the two countries with India largely investing in the development of educational institutions, state-of-the-art medical facilities, telecommunications, etc. Cooperation in the field of health began as early as 1986. In 1992, the Maldives Institute of Technical Education (now called the Maldives Polytechnic) was set up by India. The Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) was built by India in 1995 for a cost of US\$ 425 million later refurbished in 2011 (MEA, 2012). In 1996, India established the Faculty of Engineering Technology (FET) in Male. The School of Hotel and Catering Services was established by India in Kaafu (renamed to India-Maldives Friendship Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism Studies) was handed over to the Maldives in 2014. However, much to India's upset in 2014 China replaced GMR, an Indian company in upgrading Male airport and construction of a US\$ 400 million bridge link between two islands (Shukla, 2018). In 2019 MoU was signed for capacity building in customs between the Central Board of Indirect Taxes, India, and Maldives Customs Service. For the development of cricket in the Maldives, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is conducting training programs in the Maldives. India has undertaken the task of constructing a world-class cricket stadium in Hulhumale. India and the Maldives also agreed to harness the benefits of regional and sub-regional communication facilities, renewable energy, and sustainable development. Under renewable energy pact, India provided the Maldives with LED lamps and streetlights for its capital city Male.

b. TRADE AND COMMERCE

Bilateral trade agreement between the two nations was formalized in 1981 however the volume of trade continues to be feeble and much in India's favour. Between 1999-2000 bilateral trades stood at US\$7.8 million and between 2011-2012 the volume stood at US\$144.52 million. The total trade increased to US\$228.82 million in 2015, US\$277.1 in 2016, US\$289.80 in 2017 and US\$288.99 in 2018. India continues to be the third-largest trading partner of the Maldives. In 2008 India extended a standby credit facility of US\$100 million to the Maldives of which US\$50 million was for imports from India and the rest as budgetary support (MEA, 2012). In 2010 Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM) extended a \$40 million line of credit for construction of houses. In 2011 a new standby credit of US\$100 million was extended to the Maldives with an additional loan of US\$51 million (CIA, 2013). In 2008 the total grant in aid and loan to the Maldives accounted for 18.7%. Till 2011, India Inc. had committed an investment of \$950 million. Major Indian firms like TATA, GMR, Suzlon, etc. had invested heavily in the Maldives. TATA group since 2001 has made investments worth \$2 million per annum mostly in tourism sector building resorts like Taj Vivanta Coral Reef Resort and Taj Exotic Resort and Spa. Sriram group has invested in education projects. Suzlon and Bommidala groups have invested in the renewable energy sector of the Island country. In 2009, an MoU was signed between the Suzlon Energy and Government of Maldives for setting up of 25MW wind farm in Southern Maldives. The Bommidala group also undertook the project of setting up a 24MW Solar power project in 2010. Indian public sector banks like the SBI has also invested in the housing sector of the country. In 2018 India provided an overall development assistance package of US\$1.4 billion to the Maldives and a currency swap agreement was signed in July 2019 for US\$400 million (Embassy of India, 2019). In 2019 when Modi embarked on the first state visit to the Maldives, MoUs were signed for cooperation on hydrology and health. An agreement on US\$800 million Line of Credit was also signed for the sustainable social and economic development of the Maldives which included water and sanitation in many islands of the Maldives, development of the city of Addu as an urban city and support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Finance Corporation. India also provided financial aid of US\$ 5.5 million for High Impact Community Development Projects and an additional cash grant of US\$ 6.9 million for socio-economic development projects in the Maldives.

Table1: India-Maldives Trade Data (in US \$)

FISCAL YEAR (Jan-Dec)	IMPORT TO INDIA (in US \$)	EXPORT FROM INDIA (in US \$)
2002	0.3	31.6
2003	0.4	42.3
2004	0.6	47.6
2005	2.0	67.6
2006	3.1	68.7
2007	4.2	89.7
2008	4.0	127.9
2009	3.6	79.9
2010	31.4	100.1
2011	18.9	124.6
2012	6.3	122.4
2013	12.3	154.0
2014	2.9	170.6
2015	3.0	225.82
2016	1.6	275.5
2017	2.86	286.94
2018	2.81	286.18

Source : Indian Development Cooperation Research (IDCR) Program at the Centre for Policy Research and Maldives Customs Service statistical data

c. SECURITY & DEFENCE

Security cooperation between the two countries began with Indian Air Force led 'Operation Cactus' in 1988. The Maldivian Government headed by President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in 1988 faced a possible coup attempt by the Sri Lankan Tamil militant group named People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and backed by a Maldivian businessman Abdullah Luthufi (Pampackal, 2019). The Government of Maldives sought international cooperation to fight this possible threat of a coup. The Indian Government came forward to the rescue of the Island Nation with a swift military action that helped to restore order and democracy in the Maldives. 300 paratroopers were dropped in the island of Hulhule and additional forces were sent by air and sea. The militants were successful in fleeing with 27 hostages but

the Indian forces with the US help was successful in capturing the terrorist and rescue the hostages. It marked India's security leadership role in the Indian Ocean. US support also envisaged India's leadership in the South Asian region. This prompt action by the Indian government asserted its positive role in helping its neighbours at times of difficulties and as a dependable power in maintaining the security of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). 'India has adopted a very flexible and accommodating approach in meeting Maldivian requirements of defence training and equipment.' (Embassy of India, 2019). India is also aware of the geostrategic importance that the Maldives holds in the Indian Ocean Region. Most of India's Oil and Coal imports from the Gulf and African countries are channelled through the Indian Ocean Region and a good strategic partnership with the Maldives will provide India with the opportunity to use the deep seaports for safeguarding its interest and providing security to its vital channel of communication. The beginning of the 21st-century saw the finalizing of security agreements that ranged from maritime security to protection of the environment. The period is also marked by an increased Chinese presence in the region. In 2006 rumours spread about Male leasing an island to Beijing (Poplin, 2014). India also ramped up its defence cooperation by providing the Maldives with a 260 tonnes fast attack craft for maritime security and setting up radar systems for surveillance of the atolls. Since 2009 Indian Navy Southern command has been engaged in patrolling to secure the atolls of Maldives thus bringing the archipelago more within Indian security purview. Both the countries also signed agreements to station two DHRUV light helicopters for security assistance of the Maldives. 'India provides the largest number of training opportunities for the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements.' (Embassy of India, 2019).

Defence cooperation included training of MNDF in India, the supply of equipment, and joint military drills to enhance maritime security and anti-piracy surveillance. The Coast Guards of both India and Maldives regularly hold joint drills code-named 'DOSTI' since 1991. In 2012, Sri Lankan Coast Guard was made part of the joint exercise thus evolving it from a bilateral to a trilateral drill. The objective behind holding such drills is to further cement friendship, inter-operability, trust and cooperation among the forces of these nations. The Trilateral Cooperation on Maritime Security (TMCS) agreement was signed by India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives in 2013 to address the issues of maritime search and rescue operations and enhanced security cooperation. The regular meeting by the National Security Advisors (or 'TROIKA') of these three nations further boost cooperation. The 2014 edition of 'DOSTI' was aimed at Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR), Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Marine Pollution Response (POLRES),

and Anti-piracy operations. In 2009 India and the Maldives finalized a comprehensive agreement under which the former would provide training to Maldivian forces and allowed the stationing of Indian aircraft and naval ships in the Island nation.

From 2009, an annual bilateral military training exercise was conducted between the forces of the two nations code-named 'EKUVERIN' to enhance military interoperability and cooperation. The 10th edition of the military drill was held in 2019 in Pune, Maharashtra, India focused on anti-terrorism practices. The same year also saw the signing of an agreement for joint patrol by the naval forces in the Indian Ocean. India provided MNDF with light helicopters for air patrol and installed radars in 26 atolls which were linked with the Indian Coast Guard command. India also provides security support to the Maldives through regular patrol of the Indian Ocean region by the Indian Navy. The tenure of Nasheed marked significant progress in bilateral security cooperation.

The tenures of Waheed and Yameen saw a significant decline in the defence cooperation as the Maldives began to show a significant tilt towards the Chinese. In 2015 when the then Foreign Minister of India Late Sushma Swaraj visited the Maldives stressing her governments 'Neighbourhood First Policy', Yameen complimented it with 'India First Policy'. She participated in the India-Maldives Joint Commission that expanded its scope to include defence and security issues. Such an expansion was aimed towards dealing with the threat of radicalism as well as combating the growing menace of drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism in the region. Both countries also institute counter-terrorism techniques to curb any sea-borne attack against each other. In 2016 a breakthrough happened in the defence sector whereby defence secretaries of both the nations were vested with the task of furthering defence cooperation. Moreover, it stressed heightened cooperation and surveillance activities by the forces as well as on the sharing of information. But the rapprochement did not last long due to India favouring Indonesia over the Maldives in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2018 and the State of Emergency that was declared in the Maldives before the Presidential election of 2018.

In 2019 during Prime Minister Modi's visit, both countries agreed on Sharing of information on white shipping between the Indian Navy and the Maldives National Defence Force. The Leaders also inaugurated a composite training facility and a coastal surveillance radar system for the MNDF in Maafilefushi. During Foreign Minister of India S. Jaishankar's visit for the 6th round of Joint Commission Meeting in late 2019, an agreement was signed for financial intelligence and sharing of legal assistance on criminal matters.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to combating terrorism and maritime security. The Foreign Ministers of both countries recognized the tuning of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' with the Maldives 'India First Policy'. Therefore, India is one of the key security provider to the Island nation and is expected to heightened such cooperation in days to come owing to its own larger interest in the Indian Ocean Region and stability of the Maldives.

d. HUMANITARIAN ASPECT

On the humanitarian side, India has always stood behind the island nation providing it with financial and medical relief and aids. India's heightened participation in providing humanitarian support began with the Asian Tsunami of 2004 when the atolls of the Maldives were devastated by the gushing tides of more than 20 meters. India provided food and medical aid despite its major southern states suffering from the same natural devastation. Again in 2014, the Maldives faced a severe shortage of fresh water when its only desalination facility collapsed. India initially responded to the nation's help by supplying 35 tonnes of fresh water from the on-board desalination facility of INS Sukanya. Meanwhile, two C-17 Globe Master and three IL-76 aircraft were deployed to airlift 153 tonnes of bottled water. By 7th December another 210 tonnes of water was airlifted. An oil tanker INS Deepak was also dispatched with an additional 900 tonnes of fresh water. India's prompt response earned it the title of 'first responder' to the crisis of its neighbours. In 2016, pollutant dispersant was made available to the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF) Coast Guard, and a plan to facilitate oil spill control equipment is under consideration of the Indian Coast Guard. The recent pandemic of Covid-19 continues to enrich the history of humanitarian relations that both the countries share. India, despite being one of the major victims of the pandemic has not hesitated in providing the junior partner with an immediate medical supply of 6.2 tonnes. Even during the lock-down period, India ensured that the Maldives gets its supplies of essential commodities from India on time. Indian even sent a defence medical team for assisting the doctors of the pandemic hit Island nation. India has also activated the currency swap agreement of US\$ 150 million to ease the junior partner in this time of crisis. India thus is successful in maintaining its track record of swift response to its friend Maldives call for help reasserted its strategic importance as the first responder to the crises in the Indian Ocean Region (Pampackal, 2019). It further cemented India's role as a dependable ally in the Indian Ocean Region.

e. TOURISM & CULTURAL ASPECT

Tourism is another major aspect of the relationship between the two nations. Tourism forms the core of the Maldivian economy. It accounts for

17% of the island nation's GDP, 25% of government revenue, and 60% of foreign exchange earnings. Tourism in the Maldives is based on 'resort island' i.e. a particular resort company leasing a complete island for its visitors. The Maldives is famous for its clear lagoons, sandy beaches, coral reefs, serene environment, and many other attractions. Big Indian hoteliers like the Taj, Oberoi, etc. have invested in Maldivian tourism by opening resorts. Every year many Indian honeymooners choose the island nation as their possible destination. In 2018, 66955 (sixty-six thousand nine hundred fifty-five) Indian tourists had visited the archipelago nation and marked a significant rise by more than 85% in 2019 (Tourism Update). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report, India stands next only to China in terms of the outbound tourist market, and the Maldives being close to India geographically contributes significantly to these numbers. Indian airlines like GoAir, Indigo, and Spicejet operates direct flights to Male from major Indian cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, Kochi, etc. Maldivian Aero Service also operates regular flights to Mumbai, Chennai, and Thiruvananthapuram. Tourism industry experts believe that if numbers of Indian tourists visiting increases at such a high rate India is expected to become the number one tourist market for the Maldives by 2023. In June 2019, when Indian PM visited the Maldives both countries signed the MoU for launching passenger-cum-cargo ferry services from Kochi and Male.

Cultural links have been strengthened with India undertaking restoration projects of Hukuru Miskiy mosque, Dharumavantha Rasgefaanu Mosque and Fenfushi Mosque. Indian film industry Bollywood is immensely popular in the Maldives. In 2010, the High Commission of India in collaboration with the Government of Maldives has organized the India-Maldives Friendship Festival (INMAFF). The Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Male to further boost the cultural ties. The presence of a large Indian community also contributes immensely to the existing cultural links.

f. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Though the India-Maldives relationship has regained track under the current regime of President Solih, India cannot blindfold itself from the influence that China still possesses in the region. A strong Indian presence and to counter the Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean Region would require a greater involvement with the Maldives and a renewed approach towards other partners in the region. India needs to emphasize more on soft power diplomacy through people-to-people contact, cultural engagements, involving Indian diaspora besides stronger economic, connectivity and infrastructural development. India will also have to ensure the maritime

security of the Island nation by providing modern defence equipment and technologies and help the Maldives financially to get out from the Chinese debt trap. India will have to reassess its policies and try to accommodate the junior partner more generously and sensitively to keep the later within its security ambit and to move towards a stable relationship uninterrupted by external powers.

VII. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Indo-Maldives relations brings us to the conclusion that the Maldives location at the backyard of India makes it a country with immense geostrategic and geopolitical importance and any politico-economic and security development is bound to involve India's scrutiny. India will have to be accommodative and generous to the needs of its junior partner to have overarching relations with the island nation and to secure its interest. A fumbling India will invite external players to embroil the already complex region further. While maintenance of democracy in Male is a major concern for New Delhi but to achieve that goal India will have to be cautious of its approaches. An over interference in the domestic affairs of the Maldives will further drag the former out of India's ambit of influence. In India, the Maldives find a dependable ally that can ensure its security from external threats. India will have to use this positive will to further boost its relationship with Male. India's diplomatic might is cheered globally and to maintain its hold over the Maldives, will require India to use this tool of conducting foreign policy cautiously and appropriately.

It is a fact that Chinese influence over the island nation has grown subsequently since 2011 and virtually China has surpassed India in terms of the number of tourists visiting every year and also investments made for development in Male. But this has also made the Maldives fall into Chinese debt-trap which is expected to stand at 121% in 2020. This is a high opportunity for India to uphold its 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and stand behind the nation more so when the new regime under President Solih is seeking Indian help to come out of the debt-trap and regain the declining influence. If required India will have to increase the financial and political assistance that it already provides and use its soft-power diplomacy to regain the faith of the Maldivian people. The Maldives too will have to stand on its 'India First Policy' and ensure that neither its domestic policy nor economic compulsions become an issue of threat to India's interest in the region.

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