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राश्वे वानदति

RETHINKING INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

THE ECONOMICS SOCIETY

SHRI RAM COLLEGE OF COMMERCE



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PRESENTS

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FOREWORD

KISHAN S RANA

Former Diplomat, Author and Teacher

We might debate the transformation in today's international relations as being "disruptive." Historically, each age has seen its times as unique. We see today that globalisation, interdependence, the entry of multiple new non-state actors and urgent issues with global impact affect our lives, regardless of where we live. Climate change that knows no borders, even threatens the human race, is one vivid example.

In contemporary times, how one country deals with another is also complexified. Take our relations with Bangladesh, Nepal or Sri Lanka. In each bilateral relationship, direct cooperation and conversation between capitals is influenced by relations with other states, like China, Japan, the US or others. Thus, bilateral relations have become triangular, or quadrilateral, or assume even more complicated shapes. Multilateral diplomacy is similarly fluid and heterogeneous. Welcome to the "VUCA" world!

That acronym refers to four elements that inform world relations: volatility (sudden, rapid change); uncertainty (lack of predictability, surprise); complexity (no clear cause-and-effect chain, multiple forces) and ambiguity (mixed meanings, difficult interpretations). Often, the protagonists themselves do not know which way an action they initiate may go. All this describes the current environment in which foreign policy and diplomatic actions to implement policy are obliged to operate.

India faces other unique problems, rooted in the way we work.

Firstly, we do not have a unified, explicit statement of foreign policy objectives. Of course, the speeches of our leaders, and official statements provide a broad framework, but we do not distill that into clear objectives, which ideally should be debated across the country before incorporation as 'policy pillars.'

More importantly, even accepting that a collection of objectives can be distilled from our official documents, we do not project this further by crafting out of those pillars a 'master plan.' Detailed actions need to be set out, designating agencies and timelines, to implement a cascaded strategy-plan-action schema.

Secondly, many countries publish carefully argued statements on foreign affairs, covering both strategy as described above, and narrower statements on specific issues. Often called 'White Papers,' issued then for some decades. This should not be confused with the annual reports which all ministries place before the Parliament. Those reports are useful, even if couched in stilted language; they principally record events of the preceding year, but reveal little by way of policy.

Thirdly, we are now in a paradigm where foreign policy is too important to be left to governments. Independent research institutes and think tanks produce their own forward-looking analysis, which helps governments to frame policy and its implementation. Indian think tanks do produce some foreign affairs related documents, but need to publish comprehensive 'Blue Papers.' We must establish a coalition of think tanks, including independent scholars, to undertake a joint foreign policy project that must go beyond 'strategy' – often an overused word – to actionable ideas. Without the latter, we are left with empty words.

What is India's first foreign policy priority? Perhaps, the Ministry of External Affairs and the entire diplomatic establishment might ask: How can one contribute to our "priority of priorities?" That is a story for another day.

I congratulate the Economics Society, SRCC, for taking up an important theme in this publication. It fills me with great pride to witness the youth of this country be the torchbearers of a more strategic India tomorrow.



NORTH AMERICA



CANADA

The Long Road to Recovery

KETAN MEHTA

Research Fellow, Observer Research Foundation

In 2015, the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited Toronto, where he addressed a large gathering of the Indian diaspora. Three years later, Modi's Canadian counterpart, Justin Trudeau, came to India for a state visit, stirring hopes for multidimensional co-operation between the two countries. While the prospects of this visit seemed bright at first, the enthusiasm eventually waned as Trudeau attracted negative attention for various reasons, including his apparent proximity to Khalistan sympathisers.

A CHEQUERED HISTORY

Since India's independence, Canada has recognised the country as a major power in Asia. Canada's association with the British Commonwealth, its federal democratic character and its rich ethnic diversity laid the foundation for bilateral relations between India and Canada. Ottawa believed that enhanced ties with India would allow Canada to extend its reach to other Afro-Asian countries and pursue its foreign policy with relative autonomy. It further sought to position itself as a "bridge" between the US and India.

During the Cold War period, the personal relationship between Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru and his Canadian counterpart, Louis St. Laurent and later Lester Pearson, helped in the development of some strategic understanding between the two sides. During this period, India became the largest recipient of Canadian external assistance. Under the Colombo Plan, Canada provided grants to India's civil nuclear programme, which it believed would highlight the importance of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Moreover, Canada's assistance was aimed at furthering bilateral co-operation by encouraging mutually beneficial research and industrial activities in both countries. However, Canada's status as a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was at odds with India's

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) membership and its aim to maintain strategic neutrality between the two Cold War blocs.

Fault lines first emerged in 1948 when Canada supported a plebiscite, followed by a ceasefire in the Indian state of Kashmir, a position that was against India's interests. Differences over other issues of international importance further deepened the gulf between India and Canada.

Moreover, while Canada was sympathetic to the US position on Vietnam in the International Control Commission established by the Geneva Conference in 1954, India was more sensitive to the interests of the Communist bloc. Thus, despite considerable opportunities in areas of trade and people-to-people ties, Canada could not foster closer relations with India owing to the latter's non-aligned status, which limited its outreach towards the Western bloc countries.

The 1970s was a particularly difficult period for India–Canada relations. In the east, New Delhi became preoccupied with the emerging security dynamic in erstwhile East Pakistan, which led to the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. India was seen as being proximate to the Soviet Union in view of the emerging strategic realities in South Asia, while Pakistan successfully secured closer military co-operation with the US. On the other hand, despite reports of atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan, Ottawa exercised restraint in condemning the actions of the state. Western alliances seemed more preoccupied with confronting Communism, while India preferred socialist self-reliance, given its experience with colonialism.

In the 1980s, India's relevance in Canada's foreign policy rose as Punjab accounted for a significant number of immigrants to Canada, a dynamic that was encour-

aged by the Liberal government policy to make family reunification the basis for immigration. Moved by India's concerns, Canada sought to repair ties by keeping a check on immigrant group activities in its provinces. Later in 1997, both sides decided to create a bilateral Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (JWGCT) to coordinate against Khalistan separatist groups, following the bilateral extradition treaty signed in 1987.

Despite some progress on the economic front, Canada's bureaucratic view on India's nuclear weapons, combined with an increasingly sophisticated political constituency, greatly hindered the growth of their bilateral relationship. At the same time, India's desire to preserve its strategic autonomy in the bilateral relationship allowed China to gain traction in Asian trade. Consequently, Canada began to prioritise economic engagement with China over India.

Over the years, Ottawa's restricted understanding of India's worldview and diplomacy has obstructed the development of deeper ties. In its dealings with India, Canada has placed greater emphasis on issues of human rights and democratic values. In 2002, following the Gujarat riots, Canada officially suspended relations with the state.

CANADA'S EFFORTS TO RE-ENGAGE WITH INDIA

In 2000, under the leadership of Jean Chrétien and with John Manley as foreign minister, Canada sought broader economic partnership with India, eventually removing all economic sanctions in 2001. However, India's relevance for Canada plummeted for a while, during the US-led war effort against the Taliban regime in 2001.

With a change of guard in Ottawa, PM Paul Martin (2003–06) announced the 'International Policy Statement' that identified India as an emerging economy with which Canada sought to broaden co-operation. Following this, the Stephen Harper government, which assumed power in 2006, conceived a radically accelerated comprehensive strategy to enhance engagement with India. During Harper's tenure, there were nineteen ministerial-level visits from Canada to India, including Harper's state visits in 2009 and 2014.

Under the new administration, Ottawa placed greater emphasis on foreign direct investments (FDI), technology transfers, trade agreements and leveraging diaspora links for expanding ties with India.

In 2010, India's then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Canada to attend the G-20 summit. During this visit, India and Canada achieved a major breakthrough in the area of civil nuclear energy. On the sidelines of the G-20 summit, the two reached an unprecedented agreement on civil nuclear co-operation. Singh described the signing of the agreement as "breaking new ground in the history of our co-operation in this sector." This was a watershed in bilateral relations since India's

reluctance to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was one of the foremost reasons for the widening gulf between New Delhi and Ottawa.

Following this, Harper's government instituted significant changes in Canada's India policy, placing the latter at the heart of its Indo-Pacific outlook. Ministers from Harper's government attended the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and both countries announced 2011 to be the "Year of India in Canada."

In 2015, PM Modi visited Canada and signed multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) in areas including space, railways, civil aviation and science and technology. In the course of the visit, Saskatchewan's Cameco industries reached an agreement to supply 3,000 tonnes of uranium to India. At a joint press conference with his Canadian counterpart, Modi declared, "The agreement on the procurement of uranium from Canada for our civilian nuclear power plants launches a new era of bilateral cooperation and a new level of mutual trust and confidence."

TRUDEAU'S INDIA POLICY

Under the leadership of Justin Trudeau, Canada's Liberal party emerged victorious in the 2015 federal elections. Trudeau's assumption to the Prime Ministership was seen by many analysts as detrimental to the future of Indo-Canada relationship, since under the previous Liberal governments, it had pursued a humanitarian agenda at the cost of the bilateral relationship. However, the emerging realities in Asia demanded a new strategic landscape, e.g. China's growing economic profile and apprehensions regarding its assertive behaviour in the South China Sea, and the developing conception of the 'Indo-Pacific' realm. Thus, the Trudeau administration gave due importance to Asia, recognising "the rapid emergence of the global South and Asia and the need to integrate these countries into the world's economic and political system."

Canada eventually ratified the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement and showed interest in strengthening its ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. While Canada has engaged with China on issues ranging from extradition, free trade and cyber-security co-operation, it does not accord the same treatment to its relations with India.

Despite India's growing apprehensions regarding Trudeau and his affiliates, the visit did result in positive developments. New initiatives were launched in areas such as intellectual property rights, environmental issues, sustainable development and women's health and empowerment. Emphasis on enhancing people-to-people ties was evident, as both sides announced a collaboration between the Gateway House, one of India's well-known think tanks, and Canada's Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI).

STRENGTHENING BILATERAL RELATIONS: KEY CHALLENGES

Successive governments in both India and Canada have sought to leverage diaspora ties to deepen the bilateral relationship, especially in the economic arena. However, engaging the Indian diaspora in Canada seems a challenging ordeal for New Delhi, which wants to limit the influence of Canada-based Khalistan sympathisers.

The early Sikh immigrants to Canada sought to politically organise themselves, reacting to the anti-immigrant sentiments and discrimination they faced in the country. Social, economic and political developments in India that affected the interests of the Canadian Sikh community further fuelled their political drive: the declaration of Emergency in 1975, the rise of Sikh militancy in Punjab in the 1980s, Operation Blue Star in the Golden Temple (Amritsar) in 1983, and the 1984 riots that resulted in the deaths of almost 3,000 Sikhs.

Such events have also reflected Canada's political discourse. The emergence of strong secessionist sentiments further created schisms within the community. While moderates view India favourably and oppose secessionist sentiments, the fundamentalist groups, such as the Babbar Khalsa, vehemently advocate for the Khalistan cause.

In 2010, for instance, Liberal MPs Sukh Dhaliwal and Andrew Kania introduced a petition in the House of Commons asking Ottawa to consider the 1984 riots as an act of genocide and discuss the issue with New Delhi. Members of other political parties have made similar demands. In 2012, the New Democratic Party (NDP) argued that Canada must seek answers from India on behalf of its citizens. In 2017, Harinder Malhi of the Liberal Party moved a private motion in the Ontario assembly, describing the 1984 riots as genocide.

India's concerns about the presence of radical elements within the Canadian Sikh diaspora are rooted in the troubled history of its northern state of Punjab. Between the 1980s and 1990s, the Khalistan movement in Punjab threatened India's territorial integrity and communal harmony. The situation in Punjab further deteriorated when Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a controversial figure who advocated for the Khalistan cause, took control of the Golden Temple in 1984. Consequently, the state responded by using military action to evict Bhindranwale and suppress his overarching agenda of creating a separate Sikh homeland.

While Sikh militancy has largely died down in India, concerns remain about the revival of the Khalistan movement. Amongst a small but highly motivated section of the Canadian Sikh diaspora, the movement has been heavily internalised. Such fundamentalists have maintained strong separatist sentiments, seeking inspiration from Sikh history and garnering support by publicising the apparent human rights excesses committed by security forces during the troubled years. Such activities

have contributed greatly to the Indo–Canada rift and India has shared its concerns with Canada on several occasions.

TOWARDS A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC ARRANGEMENT

China plays a significant role in forming Canada's economic policies. However, this has not prevented Ottawa from including India in its economic strategy for Asia. India's growing economy offers opportunities for a G-7 country such as Canada, e.g. the emergence of a significant middle-class consumer population, improvement in the business climate, a booming service sector and a robust demand for natural resources. India's image has also changed, and the country is viewed less as a struggling economy and more as a rising power. However, India still has to overcome structural impediments such as complex labour laws, market protectionism, and bureaucratic regulations. Canada, being an advanced and resource-rich economy, offers a great opportunity for trade in energy and agricultural commodities. Thus, despite their tumultuous political history, India remains for Canada a viable option for robust economic partnership.

In 2015, bilateral trade between India and Canada amounted to \$6 billion annually, and Indian investment in Canada was valued at over \$4 billion. From 2002 till 2017, total FDI from Canada was close to \$920 million. It further probed the possibility of a CEPA. Economic modelling estimates presented by the group suggests that significant gains could be achieved through the elimination of trade barriers. According to the Canadian estimation, gains are valued at US\$6 billion at the current GDP levels for each country.

The CEPA negotiation commenced in 2010, and the most recent round was held in 2017 in New Delhi. The issues discussed included those related to e-commerce, cross-border trade, telecommunications, and technical barriers to trade. However, while the CEPA negotiations continue, there has been a delay in the FIPPA discussions, due to differences between India and Canada on issues such as the Investor-State Dispute Settlement.

Energy is another area of emerging co-operation for the two countries. During the second 'India–Canada Ministerial Energy Dialogue,' the Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan, said, "India and Canada share common values and ideals and believe in long term sustained partnerships. Our energy co-operation is steadily growing, but the potential is much higher." Amongst Indian investors, there has been an increased interest in Canada's energy sector. For instance, in 2014, the Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. acquired ten percent in an LNG project at Lelu Island, British Columbia. In 2015, Cameco closed a deal to supply 3,000 tonnes of uranium to India. Additionally, India's decision to expand its nuclear power generation creates a new opportunity for firms involved in Canada's energy sector.

The infrastructure and transport sectors, too, are potential areas of co-operation and investment. India's ambitious 'smart cities' initiative creates opportunities for Canadian firms such as Bombardier and SNC Lavalin, which have experience in undertaking infrastructure projects in various Indian cities. Moreover, India's rapid urbanisation will boost the demand for construction companies, town planners and architects. Canada's less restrictive immigration policy has also attracted the interest of Indian information technology (IT) professionals, in times of tighter US visa regulations, who are seeking opportunities in Canadian cities including Toronto.

Despite these opportunities, however, certain challenges remain. While India–Canada economic relations have made some progress, as is reflected in the upward trajectory of the bilateral trade figures and the continuation of the CEPA negotiations, Canada remains an insignificant trading partner for India. In 2017, compared to other North American countries, Indian exports to Canada stood at just over \$2 billion, behind the US and Mexico. However, imports from Canada were valued at more than \$4.5 billion in 2017, ahead of Mexico.

CONCLUSION

India-Canada relations have struggled to prosper, despite the two countries sharing various complementarities

such as their democratic character and association in the Commonwealth. Starting with ideological differences in the Cold War period and later, Canada's inability to take into consideration India's strategic realities, the differences have festered between the two sides. India's Canada policy, on the other hand, has partly been informed by the presence of Khalistan sympathisers who espouse anti-India sentiments. Canada's criticism of New Delhi has dented India's interest in engaging Canada as a strategic partner. These criticisms have come at various levels, including provincial legislatures, involving past events such as the military action in Amritsar's Golden Temple and the 1984 riots.

Even so, India's economic potential, including the investment opportunities it offers, has led Canada to periodically review the economic dimension of this bilateral relationship in its India policy. For India to overcome the longstanding hiatus in its relations with Canada, it must divert its attention away from politically contentious issues. New Delhi should also take into consideration that past events affecting the Sikh diaspora in Canada have gradually become part of the political discourse there.

It is, therefore, useful to develop a new framework of co-operation that is more pragmatic and emphasises on mutually beneficial areas, such as trade, where opportunities lie and much work remains to be done.



USA

The Ambivalent Friend

ANUDHII SUNDARAM, SAILESH BUCHASIA & YUGAM BAJAJ
Undergraduate Students, Shri Ram College of Commerce

India's independence in 1947 coincided with the onset of the Cold War era. This period was marked by a series of political, economic, and military confrontations between the US and USSR. Both the superpowers threatened to divide the world into two camps- the Eastern and the Western alliances. The same period also witnessed other developments like the establishment of the United Nations to foster peace among nations, the creation of nuclear weapons, the emergence of communist China and the beginning of decolonisation. Thus, India's foreign policy, post independence, was largely driven by the need to survive and sustain itself in dynamic international politics, and need to survive largely affected India's relations with the US in the initial years.

The major focus of India's foreign policy during Nehru's administration was to protect its territorial integrity, preserve its sovereignty and promote rapid economic development. To achieve these objectives, India used the strategy of non-alignment. The US was not happy about India's decision, especially after Pakistan had allied with the US. The US also resented the growing partnership between India and the Soviet Union, and as a result, Indo-American relations were uneasy during this period. Despite unstable relations, US assisted India with food exports during widespread famines in the late 1960s. The Green Revolution which was the solution to the mid-sixties crisis was largely stimulated by the US. The Indian government adopted a new strategy for agriculture in order to ensure food sufficiency. The US was also our main ally in lending material and moral assistance at the time of the devastating Chinese invasion in 1962.

As Pakistan continued to foster its alliance with China and the US, India developed stronger ties with USSR. India even signed the 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship' with the Soviet Union in 1970 to counter the existing

US-China-Pakistan nexus. However, the dissolution of the socialist bloc in 1991 sowed the seed for a fresh start to Indo-American relations. Post the financial crisis of 1991, India realised the need to exist within the US hegemony to reap the benefits of liberalisation and globalisation. Thus, India adopted the bandwagon strategy, in which countries extracted benefits by operating within the hegemony, instead of opposing it. By the end of the 20th century, the relations between the US and India had become stable and both nations were working towards entering into long-standing partnerships in various realms.

In the 21st century, the first step towards bolstering Indo-US ties was taken by the then US President, Bill Clinton. His visit to India in 2000, after a long interval of twenty years, opened new avenues of co-operation between the countries. He signed the 'Joint Statement on Energy and Environment' and even addressed the Indian Parliament in New Delhi. Since then, Indo-American relations have thrived in many realms of partnership like defence, science and technology, counterterrorism and others, laying down a foundation of mutual respect and support.

Under the Bush administration, the 'US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement' was perhaps the first milestone. India, which was not a part of the non-proliferation regime and had previously faced US-led nuclear sanctions, essentially gained recognition as a nuclear weapons state after the signing of this Treaty in 2006. This landmark agreement under the Bush administration is still looked back to as a watershed moment in Indo-American relations. Besides, on the defense front, the 'General Security Of Military Information Agreement' (GSOMIA), was also signed by India and the US in 2002. The agreement enabled the sharing of military intelligence between the two countries and required each country to protect the others' classified

information.

Over the years under the Obama Administration, Indo-American relations improved significantly. In 2010, Barack Obama participated in the US-India Business Council and Entrepreneurship Summit in Mumbai and also held a town hall meeting with Mumbai students. In his visit, he hailed the Indo-American relationship as “one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.” Bilateral trade also increased manifold during this period as the US realised India’s potential to emerge as a dominant power in the international arena. Under the Modi government, Indo-US ties have witnessed new highs and lows. In 2014, Modi received a gala welcome by the Indian-American community in New York’s Madison Square Garden, in his very first visit as the Prime Minister of India. His massive Indian support base in the US manifested his power and influence and profoundly impacted bilateral talks with Obama. This visit enabled India to attract American businesses to the ‘Make in India’ project that aims to make India a manufacturing hub. Thereafter, Obama visited India as the Chief Guest for the Republic Day celebrations in 2015 and his visit culminated with the first ever bilateral dialogue on the UN and multilateral issues. On the defence front, the ‘Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement’ (LEMOA), was signed by the two countries on 29th August 2016. The LEMOA permits the military of either country to use the others’ bases for re-supplying or carrying out repairs.

In recent years, two new factors have emerged in the Indo-US relations. These factors relate to the technological dimension and the role of the Indian-American diaspora. Today, the US absorbs about 65% of India’s total exports in the software sector, 35% of the technical staff of Boeing is estimated to be of Indian origin, 300,000 Indians work in Silicon Valley and 15% of all high-tech start-ups are by Indian-Americans. Evidently, convergence of interests has brought India and US closer. However, dynamism in international politics often poses a threat to diplomatic ties, and this threat has become recurrent, especially under the Trump administration.

India’s relations with the US since 2016 have been as unsteady as Trump’s impetuosity and recklessness. Presidents Trump’s administration of an ‘America First’ view lies upon a promise to use non-restrictive economic and military hard power. There is an evident scorn for multilateralism and this has had major ramifications for its major partners. India, being one of the key partners has also suffered immensely. The restrictions imposed on the grant of H-1B visas has adversely affected India as a very large share of H-1B visa holders in the US are Indians. This has particularly affected the Indian information technology sector where thousands of techies have been rendered jobless.

Besides, in the recent years, the US has accused India of indulging in unfair trade practices and with the trade war between the US and China escalating to new

heights, the situation isn’t that rosy for India. President Trump’s ‘America First’ policy has not only barred China, but has also restricted India’s access to US markets. A major implication of this policy can be seen in the forex market. The US has imposed high tariffs on cheap Chinese products, severely affecting the exports from China. As US imports decline, US dollar appreciates. Consequently, the risk of devaluation of Chinese yuan to maintain exports increases further, creating a speculative tendency for the US dollar. As the dollar price rises, the balance sheets of Indian firms holding dollar denominated liabilities weaken. The value of trade deficit increases and the need to finance the same leads to increase in loans taken by the government. This severely affects the credibility of the Indian Government and the economy as a whole, which compels the foreign investors to withdraw their investments. However, as the Chinese exports decline, firms have an incentive to leave China and relocate, investing in potential markets like India and Indonesia. Thus, India can capitalise on this situation if it allocates more resources to build proper infrastructure to draw foreign investors.

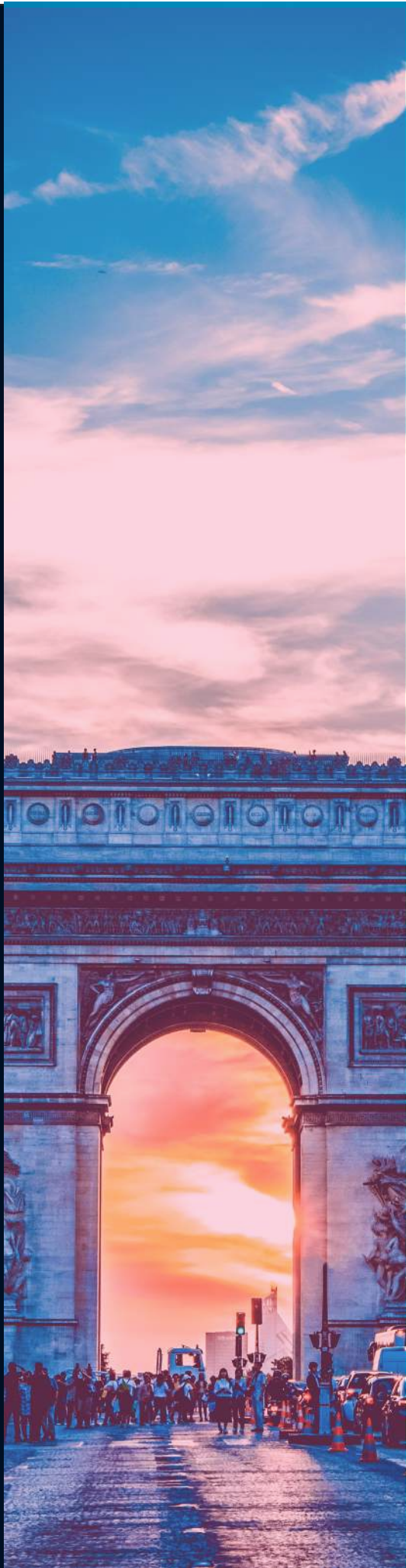
Despite benefits accruing to India from this trade war, Indo-American relations are still at stake. In September, 2019, India and the US failed to announce a limited trade deal in New York during the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump. Due to prevailing differences over the package including access for medical devices such as stents and knee implants, information and communications technology (ICT) products and dairy products with the removal of price caps. Trade opportunities between the US and India are “historic” although there is a “re-examining of trading relationships” based on a look at new trading rules, the Governor of Arkansas said in a recent interview.

Despite such uncertainties, contrary to many expectations, Trump has pursued a set of policies that are not entirely at odds with Indian interests. These include a stronger military presence and role in the Indo-Pacific, more support for defence technology sharing with the likes of India, and economic policies that sometimes inadvertently benefit India such as greater scrutiny of Chinese economic activity. Washington’s recently toughened stance on Pakistan is also a welcome development for Indo-American relations. New Delhi has long been annoyed by US military support to Pakistan, inspite of growing Sino-Pakistani affinity, Pakistan’s alleged support for terrorism against India and its obstruction to peace-building efforts in Afghanistan. Recently, however, the Trump administration has signaled a change in the status quo by suspending military aid to Pakistan. Besides, Trump has also recognised India’s political power on the world stage by using ‘Howdy Modi’ as a celebration of the Indian community in the US. President Trump also hailed the sacrosanctity of both the American and Indian Constitutions, focusing on the commonality in the first three words of the Constitutions, “We The People.” Perhaps, it wouldn’t be wrong to say that the Indian community in the US has

shaped the contours of diplomacy between India and US better than the elected officials in India have.

Overall, it can be deduced that the Indo-US strategic relationship has the calibre of becoming the 'the defining partnership' within this century and given how far this bond has travelled in the past few years, this does not seem like an exaggeration. Despite the challenges

facing the bilateral relationship we cannot deny the fact that US acts as an indispensable partner in India's economic transformation and the realisation of its aspiration to play a larger role on the global stage. The relationship between the two nations indeed serves as an umbrella for a multitude of issues and sectors having a multidimensional character and multifaceted scope.



EUROPE



FRANCE

The French Connection

SNEHIL RELAN
Undergraduate Student, Shri Ram College of Commerce

“The shifts in stance and refusal to share details by a government that came to power on the promise of rooting out corruption and bringing in transparency is inexplicable.” (Live Mint, 2019)

Rafale – a word that reminds one that the relationship between France and India has been beneficial for both countries over the years and is at its peak at the moment. With Brexit underway France has an opportunity to substitute Britain - New Delhi’s “Gateway to Europe.”

With France betting on India’s strategic, diplomatic and economic emergence, it started giving more importance to the Indo-France relations since 1980. Supporting India’s requests in several strategic matters like a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (France was the first P-5 country to support this), access to civil nuclear co-operation and better participation in the decisions taken at the international fora (like the expanded G8 and G20), the sense of understanding is pretty evident.

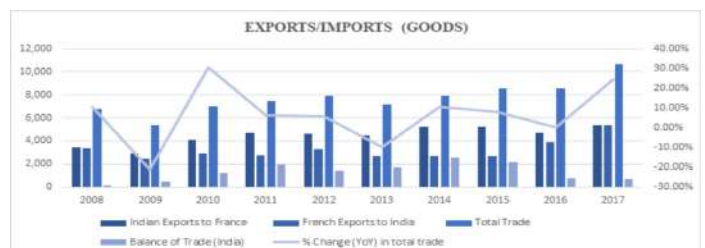
The two countries also signed fourteen agreements for increasing cooperation in the areas of renewable energy, development of smart city, nuclear energy, environment and sustainable development, railways, prevention of drugs among others, during the visit the French President, Emmanuel Macron, to India from 9th to 12th March 2018. The two nations had also signed a strategic partnership agreement in 1998. Similar views on multilateralism for addressing international challenges have also led to increased partnerships and better cooperation between India and France.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

During PM Modi’s visit to France on 25th and 26th August, 2019, both sides acknowledged that there has

been positive progress in the development of bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries, reaffirming that the Indo-France Administrative Economic and Trade Committee (AETC) provides an appropriate framework to assess and find ways to further promote bilateral trade and investment as well as to speed up the resolution of market access issues to the benefit of economic operators. It was also decided to jointly strengthen work on solving trade and investment issues of concern to the French and Indian companies. Furthermore, the two countries support economic development through open and secure cyberspace, in the digital world.

Till date, the two countries have been of huge benefit to each other which is evident from the following data:



Source: French Ministry of Economy, Finance & Industry (Data rounded off to nearest million €)

The positive Balance of Trade (India) for consecutive years and the positive Percentage Change (Year on Year) in total trade (except in 2009 and 2013), largely due to fewer restrictions imposed by France on India in terms of exports, highlight the importance of the Indo-France relations. In the past few years, only a small number of Indian goods have been denied entry in France, that, too, due to the presence of banned ingredients in food items, depicting mutual trust and understanding. Additionally, a large number of exports from France to India further deepens the mutual benefit. France is also the ninth largest foreign investor in India with the presence

of nearly a thousand French companies, employing almost three lakh people in the country.

Coming to the current economic scenario in India and considering the economic slowdown, nothing can be said as of now about the FDI inflow from France in the near future. However, recent announcements by Nirmla Sitharaman regarding exports and the corporate-tax cut (in addition to the on-going initiative, 'Make in India') are supposedly expected to improve the forex/FDI inflow and therefore, expecting an increase in French investment wouldn't be wrong.

DEFENCE & SECURITY COOPERATION

Starting in the 1950s with India acquiring the Ouragan aircraft, and followed by the Mystères, Jaguar (Anglo-French), Mirage 2000, Indo-France relations (in the defence and security segment) have only deepened over time.

The Rafale Deal and the Joint Strategic Vision of Indo-France Co-operation in the Indian Ocean Region have been two of the most significant agreements between the two countries concerning defence and security.

Although Rafale has raised numerous issues in India, the French President has been quite satisfied with the deal - there's no reason for him to not be. The deal has deepened the relations and has led to India expecting more French investment for India's indigenous defence manufacturing base. Looking at the second agreement, as both the nations understand and acknowledge issues such as maritime traffic, the Joint Strategic Vision recognizes the strategic importance of India and France in the Indian Ocean (with France recognizing India as its preferred partner in the Indian Ocean Region after the Cold War).

Being the first country with which India initiated a Strategic Dialogue after the 1998 nuclear tests, France refused to impose bilateral sanctions on India, displaying a greater understanding of India's security compulsions compared to other countries.

The Industrial Way Forward Agreement was a deal between the two countries for the construction of six nuclear power reactors in India in Jaitapur, Maharashtra, and the progress in negotiations between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and Export Declaration Form have led to the countries expressing satisfaction, thereby, opening doors for more such deals in the future.

In addition to these, the countries witness regular meetings of top-level personnel of defence forces and frequent defence exercises. All this has contributed to a discussion between the two regarding issues such as

co-development of military platforms, maritime cooperation, regional security situation and transfer of critical technology for various defence projects. The two nations strongly condemn terrorism and have called upon various countries to work together towards rooting out terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks and their financing channels and halting the cross-border movement of terrorists.

SOCIO-CULTURAL COOPERATION

With the Modi Government investing huge amounts on the erection of statues, it's evident that the BJP Government considers tourism to be an integral part of economic and cultural growth. Leaders of the two nations have appreciated the strong potential of Indo-France co-operation in the field of culture and aim to realise it through participation in each other's major cultural events. A 'Plan of Action' will be developed by the end of 2019 to enhance co-produced projects, distribution, and training in the fields of cinema, video games and virtual reality.

The two countries have already decided a few future collaborations:

1. The 2020 edition of Livre Paris (the Paris international book fair) - Country of Honour: India
2. The National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi will hold the first exhibition in India in January 2020
3. India will organize Namasté France, in 2021-2022

A bilateral partnership agreement (on migration and mobility), aimed at facilitating student and professional mobility between the two countries was also signed between India and France.

COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

The rising issue of climate change all across the world is well known and is quite alarming. With a lot of activist groups trying to bring about a change, the two nations have also decided to contribute their bit towards combating climate change. Urging all stakeholders to contribute to the success of the Climate Action Summit (convened by the United Nations Secretary General on 23rd September, 2019) and to encourage the global efforts towards combating climate change, the two nations acknowledged the need for multi-level action – local, national, regional and global.

Under the framework of the G7 Summit in Biarritz and the Climate Action Summit, France and India supported new initiatives, aimed towards lowering GHGs (greenhouse gases) through financial flows alignment with the Paris Agreement objectives and supporting the transition towards lower emissions by high emitting indus-

tries. The two nations have also committed to working together towards the reduction of HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons) and promotion of improved energy efficiency standards in the refrigeration sector.

CONCLUSION

India and France have shared a mutually beneficial and developing relationship over the years. Ever since the deal in the 1950s, the relations have only improved. The two nations have not only worked towards individual development but also towards the development of a major part of the world, which is evident from policies aimed at tackling issues like terrorism and climate change.

The nations have been quite tactful while implementing various policies. Ease in commuting for students between the two countries, youth-exchange programs

and hosting of various cultural events have developed socio-cultural relations between the two countries, thereby increasing economic growth and co-operation.

Having said this, the two segments that have gained the most out of this relationship are undoubtedly the economic and defence sector. Better co-operation has led to the relaxation of norms of exports - imports and the facts stated above make it pretty clear that the relationship has been very beneficial for both the economies. The defence sector has been making use of the relationship since the 1950s and is at its peak at the moment, with India planning to set up defence equipment manufacturing factories with the help of France.

The New Delhi-Paris relationship is mutually beneficial, especially with Britain exiting the European Union, and therefore, is expected to offer great returns in the future.



AFRICA



AFRICA

On the Prowl

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“Proud, Courageous, Bold and on the Prowl, ready to take on the future and seize every opportunity,” depicted the logo of the 3rd India-Africa Summit, comprising one-half of an African lion and one-half of an Asiatic lion on an overlapping map of Africa and India. The recent formalisation of high-level cooperation between India and Africa has long been in the making, for the two have traced a similar evolutionary trajectory. They are both old civilisations with rich heritage and cultural roots. Ideologically, they supported non-alignment as they emerged as independent nations in the bipolar world order.

From life on the banks of the Indus to the reign of Cleopatra in Egypt, India and Africa have progressed as geographical entities marked by ethnic differences but have still been able to reach an equilibrium in their own trysts with destiny. Subdued over the course of post-medieval history due to the greedy exploitation by merchant navy companies under the garb of modernisation, Africa suffered extensively and acutely due to colonisation, with India being a close second. The road to escape from the clutches of foreign occupation was not easy. India still came out united despite the havoc wreaked by the Partition while Africa today is home to more than fifty four countries with widespread differences and clashes of strategic interests. The colonial imprint is difficult to lose; while a section is still Francophone, and another is under kingship, a few have carved out better democratic processes. However, the overall democratic quotient has been low. To this divisive spectrum of nations, the African Union headquartered in Addis Ababa has driven home consistent satisfactory conclusions.

Today, African nations exist at the bottom of all major indices of human development and economic progress, and deadly disease outbreaks have replaced a culture of protracted genocide and ethnic strife. The delayed integration of African nations into the modern world or-

der is evidenced by the fact that South Africa could only achieve independence at the fag-end of 20th century, as late as 1995. However, way before that, Indo-African relations had concretised on the common platform of fostering greater economic space for the development of these third-world countries and out of the natural bonhomie that Prime Minister Nehru had struck with the leaders of Egypt and Morocco. The socio-economic situation that plagues Africa reckons well with India and its own struggle with reacting to widespread poverty and the lack of basic resources. An easy and strategic manner of bringing economic development that is quicker and more directed is to capitalise over the need of global capitalists - basically, create a demand unlike any other. Africa, despite its diplomatic differences, still enjoys the wide reserves of natural resources and the capital inflow due to those resources.

While India and Africa maybe natural allies, the fact that Africa today has multilateral forums with China, India, and the European Union is testimony to the fact that the aspirational powers of the world want to strike a note in this continent, making a case for their hegemony and rising importance in global decision-making. China works around its antics through the means of capital infusion and its wide military prowess, but India invests where it matters the most - education and healthcare. It is common knowledge that after the great schools of the West, it's from India that most of the African leaders have graduated and this helps in synthesising Indian cultural beliefs and values into the manner in which these leaders and in turn, their countries choose to function.

The pompous and grand India-Africa Forum Summit, 2015 was a major breakthrough after a long lull between the two partners. Graced by delegations from all African nations and thirty heads of States, the Summit portrayed the convergence of Indian and African inter-

ests. With over \$10 billion announced in concessional credit during the Forum, the development expanse and striking economic differences between India and Africa were on display. Even still, the mere potential of the relations between the two drove home a crucial point - lions can prowl together. Faced with similar threats from the global economic order and rising instability, India and Africa need each other more than ever to ensure stable economic growth and fair trade rules and representation. On its part, India has made up for the acute lack of engagement with its African partners. Presidential/Vice-Presidential visits to the continent have been a regular feature and the Prime Minister has also achieved a lot during his visits to a host of countries, beyond South Africa.

While countries have engineered fall of governments and strife in the continent (a strategy that can never help cement foreign relations), India has been steadfast in its commitment to democratic principles during its engagement with national governments, even when dictators have mostly ruled in Africa. Mahindra's investments in the transport sector, Airtel's strides in tele-communications and the Solar Mamas project, besides the relations that Indians in the UN Peacekeeping Force have helped forge, are some interventions by India to raise the bar of human potential. The approach of India, with respect to Africa, is in reaction to African demands rather than an imposition of its own idea of what Africa needs. Such an attitudinal difference has helped India maintain cordial relations with the tribe leaders-turned- Heads of State in the subcontinent.

However, once you head back to the negotiating table, India doesn't have much in terms of economic and military power as compared to China, in order to help overcome Africa's severe underdevelopment. The progress of commitments made during IAFS 2015 has been particularly slow, cooling down the momentum. India's inability to execute its commitments in time has been the major road-block facing designs to capture the world stage. China is well on its way to develop cities in Africa, while India's specific interventions are still clogged in the quagmire of approvals, bureaucracy and tenders. This issue is also compounded by India's lack of foreign service presence in the continent. Foreign service hierarchy is in tandem with the significance attached by the nation to countries/forums and India has not seemed to accord enough importance to the mutually beneficial foreign relations that can be fostered between India and Africa. India's reaction to the Ebola outbreak was not to the best of its potential and hence, India lost the

opportunity to mend many broken ends with nations in Western Africa. There is a lot that the Indian political class has to undertake to enhance foreign relations with the continent, starting with restraining from secluding African nations racially and discriminating against people of African origin.

For a distant viewer, Africa's underutilisation of resources speaks volumes about the role of strategy in developing the nature and quantum of that potential. Today, Africa's multifarious engagement with a host of countries is due to its need to balance the gains it accrues out of these relationships and make the most for itself and its people. The deep-seated executive corruption in the continent has given way to greater devolution and democratic aspirations - echoed by Mugabe's fall in Zimbabwe. Rwanda has set itself on the track of development, after the genocide that eclipsed the 21st century. While the threat of authoritarian leaders remains and doubts over their election persist, India's foreign policy has never factored in the internal politics of the partner-country over the negotiating table.

Between 1950-90, India worked regularly with Africa to voice the concerns of the LDCs (Least-Developed Countries). Post-1990, India's economic growth has put it in a separate bracket from the African countries. However, India understands the process to bring about the overall development amidst the widespread threat of poverty, malnutrition and resource-inefficiency. This internalisation of African problems have helped the two countries voice out a spirited defense in trade forums and economic decision-making bodies. There's a huge tourism industry that the nations can develop and invest in, to create legible funds for local trade and popularise the culture. Much like India, Africa has been relegated to a state of sympathy by global NGOs who have destroyed the outlook of the world to the numerous opportunities in the continent; only jungle safaris and despair are associated with Africa.

Indian community in the continent is quite active and widespread, as trade linkages have predated the slavery trade lines. Gandhi's India is closely intertwined to African aspirations for freedom and self-sustenance, an ideal that has arisen out of Gandhi's experiments in Africa and his successors like Mandela. There's a striking aspect to Afro-Indian relationships; it is a mutually-beneficial friendship, seeped deep into an aspiration for a world order that respects equanimity and is not buoyed by dogmatism.



MIDDLE EAST



BAHRAIN

Building Strategic Partnerships

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One cannot predict how the new direction of Indian foreign policy will open gateways for India in terms of greater economic interdependence, cooperation and political capital and we must not incline towards this assumption either. Therefore, we must begin with the admission of a single fact - while we cannot decree that the Indian foreign policy under the new regime is changing for the better or the worse, we can safely admit that foreign policy in India has certainly evolved and perhaps, even taken a new path.

India's relations with the established hegemon, that is, the United States, as well as with rising powers such as China, is a matter of debate and analysis among many policy pundits and analysts. In recent times, India has invested in its relationships with Israel, African nations as well as the Middle Eastern countries. The latter has been briefly discussed in Indian policy circles but is a major development in the history of Indian policy. This is with reference to the relations between India and Bahrain. While most nations, Eastern and Western alike, have vested interests in the Persian Gulf, it may be interesting to analyse what strategic and geopolitical advantages convinced the Modi regime to develop relations with Bahrain, a move pursued by the US in the past.

In April, 1981, India and Bahrain signed an economic and technical cooperation agreement, following which the instrument of ratification was exchanged in 1983 (Ahmad and Bhatnagar, 2010). The India-Bahrain Joint Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC), set up in 2007, paved the way for financial cooperation through the avoidance of double taxation, cultural exchange and informational technology to name a few (Ahmad and Bhatnagar, 2010). The two nations at the time had common economic and trade agendas. Both were looking for better relations with

the World Trade Organization for enhancing technical cooperation in standardisation of intellectual property rights (Ahmad and Bhatnagar, 2010). Indeed, India and Bahrain have always enjoyed healthy relations but yet again the questions arises - What accounts for India's sudden interest in Bahrain in 2019?

This is an integral question since India-Bahrain relations were largely dormant when Prime Minister Modi first came to power in 2014. As of 2019, India has moved to pay special attention to Bahrain in light of recent developments. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first Indian chief executive to visit Bahrain (Livemint, 2019). Comprehensive talks between Prime Minister Modi and his Bahraini counterpart Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa in August, 2019 have given a major boost to the entire spectrum of bilateral relations (Government of India, 2019). A total of three MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding) have been signed in the fields of space technology, renewable energy and cultural exchange (Government of India, 2019).

It is already understood that India and Bahrain have enjoyed immense cooperation in economic, trade and energy sectors in the past. It is not unnatural for them to seek further cooperation in these areas for the sake of mutual interest, especially when the two sides are relatively free of suspicion and cynicism. However, as has been mentioned, there is definitely a catch in the need to gain Bahrain's and the Gulf's support on international forums very specifically against terrorism given the rising tensions between India and Pakistan.

There is another area of co-operation which hints at the strategic interests being pursued by India - India and Bahrain have reaffirmed their condemnation of terrorism in all forms and manifestations (Government of India, 2019). The two countries emphasized the need

for concentrated action through early adoption of the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. This emphasizes on the sanctioning of terrorist organizations or members found to support such organizations by the United Nations (Government of India, 2019). They also expressed the need to 'bring perpetrators of acts of terrorism to justice' (Government of India, 2019). This was supplemented by the need to pursue UNSC (United Nations Security Council) reforms to make them more 'representative' and effective in tackling global challenges' (Government of India, 2019). These agreements offer an insight into why the Modi regime has made efforts to accelerate its cooperation with Bahrain.

The Indian government has always been very vocal of its zero tolerance policy on terror and the perpetrators of terror, with most of these allegations being targeted towards Pakistan. In his latest, addressal in Texas as of September 22, 2019, Modi made the Indian stance crystal clear- "These people have put their hatred for India at the centre of their political agenda. These are people who want unrest. These are people who support terrorism and nurture terrorism" (Bloomberg Quint, 2019).

The reference was to the 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai. While Pakistan's name was not taken explicitly, the implicit intention was clear. We see the emergence of a stone cold anti-terror stance in India-Bahrain relations even though they have predominantly been concerned with trade, energy and finance in the past. The same pattern has repeated itself in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. The shift of focal points in India-Bahrain bilateral agreements expose a greater pattern of Indian agenda vis-a-vis the dynamics in the greater Gulf. It seems that India is adamant in ensuring that everyone is on the same page as itself - zero tolerance towards terrorism and its perpetrators.

It is understood that the stakes, given the dispute over Kashmir and the recent actions by the Indian government are very high and Gulf support in favour of India will bring massive benefits. Indian apprehension is understandable given the past wherein the Gulf has been soft on Pakistan and the Gulf's unease with India's close ties with the Soviet Union in the 1980s (Ahmad and Bhatnagar, 2019). The events in the 1990s worsened the power dynamics, as the Saudis perceived Indian overtures to new Central Asian Republics as more in tune with Iran. This further incentivized Saudi friendship with Pakistan. However, at present relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are turbulent whereas India has concentrated efforts into fostering better cooperation with the Gulf countries.

The Indian government's crackdown on Kashmir, it seems has made it more urgent for India to cultivate Gulf support. This is to ensure that Gulf countries overcome their religious differences with the Hindu-centric Modi regime, not solely on regional panels but also in international forums. This is especially pertinent at

present, given the fact that Pakistan has made it very clear that it will respond to the Indian government's refusal to cooperate with equal hostility, even the possibility of a nuclear war as stated by Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan (The Economic Times, 2019). Furthermore, historically, Pakistan has followed a trend of rushing to the Gulf for help and this pattern repeated itself when it rushed to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia to set up a special committee to discuss Kashmir after India moved to exercise full sovereignty over the region (Anadolu Agency, 2019).

India seems keen on taking advantage of a shift in ideology in the Gulf and specifically in Riyadh, the axis power within the Gulf. With the accession of King Salman, there have been considerable internal changes within theocratic states in the Gulf and these changes have manifested themselves in Bahrain as well (The Arab Weekly, 2019). There has been a greater emphasis on economic growth through cooperation in trade and information technology with many South Asian countries, specifically India and China. One may say that King Salman's accession is the beginning of a change, one that prioritises economic efficiency and growth over theocratic orthodoxy. Pakistan has always been able to appeal to the Gulf's Islamic Community or the 'Ummah' and the Gulf has come forth to help on religious principle. Now, India is moving to make itself an asset to the Gulf, which increases the stakes for the Gulf if and when they choose to support Pakistan in any Indo-Pakistan dispute.

There are several examples of India evolving into an asset. As of 2017, India was the Emirates' largest trading partner while Saudi investment in India doubled. India's efforts to improve relations with Bahrain just reflect that it wants to leave no stone unturned.

Gulf support is important for India in another sense. The first being Indian apprehension to China's investment in the Gulf. Secondly, the notion that India is working on building stronger alliances because it is unlikely that India would rely as much on the United States now as it did on the Soviet Union in the 1980s. There are many reasons for this - India's growing strength and competitiveness, Trump's 'America First' policy and of course, the rise of China. However, these matters are beyond the scope of this paper.

The Indian foreign policy is aligning with a realist trajectory, wherein the states are seeking to maximise their own interests with their nature being highly conflictual. It may not be the case when we consider India's relations with states such as Canada, but it does fall into place when we consider India-Pakistan relations and their history of disputes and conflicts. It is but natural that India will move to strengthen its alliances and influence, purely because it perceives Pakistan as a threat not just to its power but also to its peace. It also seems natural that Pakistan would move to do the same and will in the future probably work on improving its rela-

tionship with China and even the Gulf. This competition for the sake of power, reputation and territory at the cost of cooperation is precisely what Thucydides warned us of in the Peloponnesian war and this is precisely what Xi Jinping seems to be repeating (quite ironically) even in 2019 (Karpowicz and Julian, 2010; Global, 2017).

The India-Bahrain relations reflect competition for in-

fluence through alliances and foreign support. It also raises the question of whether the rising powers are now redirecting their focus towards the Gulf instead of the West. The aim, thus, becomes to encourage delving into varying perspectives of the changing power dynamics in international politics in general and national politics specifically, with this paper merely serving as a stimulant to the readers.



IRAN

Fueling Up for the Future

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In recent times, one of the most arduous tasks that Indian foreign policy makers have been faced with is to creatively balance their relations with Iran, even as they consciously look to enhance their proximity with United States, the global superpower. The recent advisory from the Trump Administration to cease oil imports from Iran is definitely not good news for India.

Iran was one of the first countries with which India signed a Friendship Treaty in March, 1950. However, the friendship did not really take root for the next couple of decades. Until the 1970's, India was more aligned towards the Soviet Union and invested in ensuring the success of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which India was an original signatory. It was only after Pakistan's crushing defeat in 1971 that the balance of power in South Asia decisively swung towards India. In the following years, the Indian Prime Minister and the Shah of Iran carried out exchange visits. But the process was hampered as a result of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the subsequent decade-long war which was waged between Iran and Iraq.

By the turn of the millennium, both countries realized the importance of maintaining very strong socio-cultural, economic and political ties. Iran is crucial to India's regional aspirations as it seeks to strike a balance against China's increasing influence in South Asia. On the other hand, Iran seeks to meet its requirements of metals, minerals, software and technology by virtue of its relationship with India. The volume of trade between the two currently stands at around \$13 billion, with a treaty to avoid double taxation in place. Both countries are also on the same page in defending themselves from the scourge of terrorism. Iran is wary of the increasing hold of ISIS while India is continuously engaged in taking effective steps to combat terrorism within its territory.

Moreover, India has a very large population of Shias, second only to Iran, and the community has ancestral ties to Iran. Quite evidently, Iran has come to symbolise the aspirations of Shias worldwide. It is but natural, therefore, that there is strong support for the Iranian viewpoint amongst the Shia clergy. Interestingly, it is not just the Shias who look up to Iran and the Iranian clergy for spiritual guidance, but the economically significant Parsi population of India, too, has its pilgrimage centres in Iran. Today, a growing number of Iranian students are enrolled in Indian colleges, particularly in Pune and Bengaluru, while Lucknow remains a major centre of Shiite culture and Persian study in the country. Despite strong convergence on multiple fronts, Iran's relations with the US have also affected Indo-Iran relations in recent times. With pressure being posed on India to reassess its ties with Iran through the prism of the US, the growing bonhomie has taken a predictable hit. Having said so, India is certainly not giving up its efforts to salvage the relationship and persuading the US to exempt it from the sanctions. Although India remains optimistic to get the waiver, it must deal with the immediate pressure on India to withdraw its oil imports from Iran.

For long, Iran has played a significant role in ensuring India's energy security. India's rising energy consumption needs have led it to maintain its status as one of the world's largest importers of oil. In 2018 alone, India imported more than 84% of its crude oil from countries including Saudi Arabia and Iraq. India has been the second largest purchaser of Iranian crude after China. It imported 27.2 million tons of oil worth over \$11 billion in 2017-2018 and Iran accounted for nearly 17% of India's total crude imports. However, in recent months, India has gone out of its way to cooperate with the US and in the process has brought down the import of oil from Iran to almost zero, even though the country has historic and cultural ties with Iran. The US sanctions

against Iran have led to a surge in Indian oil imports from US and Venezuela.

Iran is not likely to bow down easily in the face of relentless US pressure to stop countries from carrying out trade (with Iran) and thereby cripple the Iranian economy. It is ready to cause consternation in the global maritime trade and threatens to disrupt access to the Persian Gulf waters, which passes through the narrow Strait of Hormuz. The disruption of oil and gas production or its transportation through the Strait of Hormuz would lead to a big spurt in the prices of oil and gas, and will potentially result in a major global economic crisis. Iran has also been in the news in recent times for its attempt to set up a uranium enrichment facility. From the Indian point of view, another nuclear state in the neighbourhood does not serve its interests.

However, given the massive geo-political importance of Iran to India - as the gateway to Eurasia, its growing role in West Asia and Afghanistan and the cultural convergence - it becomes difficult for India to abandon Iran under US pressure. Regionally, India needs Iran for its connectivity projects - International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and Chabahar Port - and for supporting peace initiatives in Afghanistan as well as in Central Asia.

With India not having access to Gilgit-Baltistan, a region of Kashmir under Pakistani control, Chabahar Port offers the only access route to Afghanistan and Central Asia. India has already committed over \$500 million to develop the port. Both countries are eyeing the tourism opportunity this route will offer, as travel time will be only 72 hours, and will come at a fraction of the travel cost by air. Iran is offering stapled visas and e-visas to boost tourism. However, India is mindful of not making excessive investments in Chabahar given that it may upset the US, Israel and even Saudi Arabia. At the same time, India's growing closeness with these countries - United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia - has led Iran to hedge itself by inviting Pakistan to participate in Chabahar's development, while also expressing an interest to connect Gwadar and Chabahar ports.

In another positive development from the standpoint of Indo-Iranian relations, Iran is working overtime to

conclude a preferential trade agreement with India that will enable the two countries to cut tariffs on the respective country's products and engage in barter trade in the face of sanctions imposed by the US. Once the agreement is in place, Iran hopes that it can import Indian goods in return for goods that India might import from Iran, bypassing the need to make payments in hard currency. However, it remains to be seen if this can enable India to restart crude oil imports from Iran without inviting the ire of the US.

For India, cordial relations with Iran is imperative for its sustained growth and development as well as to counter China's increasing influence in South Asia and its proximity to Pakistan. It is important to note that Iran is the largest producer of zinc in the world. India is making a conscious decision, like many countries of the world, to move away from fossil fuels to battery operated cars, where zinc is needed. Thus, India cannot afford to lose the energy security provided by Iran at present and in the future.

The international community should realize that the isolation of Iran cannot bring any peace or development in the Gulf region. India must strive to mitigate hostility in US-Iran relations, which will benefit the international community and the region in particular. President Trump may also see this as a way to avoid a devastating conflict in the Gulf, since a fruitful deal with Iran may serve as an image makeover for Trump at a time when he is facing impeachment charges. The 'Howdy Modi' event and PM Modi's recent visit to the US can be seen as a reflection of the bonhomie shared by two of the world's greatest democracies. Given his excellent rapport with President Donald Trump, Mr. Modi should use his diplomatic acumen and the experience of the new Foreign Minister, Mr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to convince the US and Iran to come to the negotiating table at a neutral venue. India may even seek help from countries like Japan, which have friendly relations with Saudi Arabia on one hand and Iran on the other, and also understand the importance of working together in pursuit of peace. This will reassure Iran that India values its friendship and is interested in the welfare of Iranians, and could well lead to a win-win situation for all stakeholders.



ISRAEL

Deciphering the Burgeoning Relations

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It has been twenty-seven years since New Delhi and Tel Aviv established diplomatic ties in January, 1991. Today, India and Israel are on the cusp of a paradigm shift in foreign, business and economic ties. Even as Tel Aviv remains a valued partner for New Delhi in sectors like defence and agriculture, the next decade of diplomatic engagement could be defined in new frontiers of co-operation such as science and technology, research and development, agriculture and emerging areas like homeland security and life sciences, all of which promise increased economic content in our existing political relationship.

FROM ACCEPTANCE TO ASSOCIATION

India formally recognized Israel on 17th September, 1950. Soon after, the Jewish Agency, which is now the largest Jewish non-profit organisation, established an immigration office in Bombay, which was later converted into a trade office and subsequently into a consulate. Official embassies were opened in 1992 when full diplomatic relations were established.

Political relations between the two countries have drastically improved as can be seen in increased interactions and high-level visits between the two countries. From not having full diplomatic relations three decades ago to tweets like, “Yeh dosti hum nahi todenge” on Friendship Day now, this evolution clearly showcases the positive turn their relationship has taken.

Even though their relationship has always been on a growing trajectory, the real push came under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who refers to his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, as a “good and true friend.” This transformation is a result of India’s ruling party, Bhartiya Janta Party’s (BJP) tilting in favour of Israel on grounds of common ideology - the Hindu-nationalism finds common cause with the eth-

no-nationalism of the Zionist State.

An example of this is India’s unprecedented stance during the Palestine vote in the United Nations in June 2019. For years, India has backed Palestine and its people. However, during a vote granting consultative status to Palestine in the United Nations, India voted against them and voted in favour of Israel instead. India received a positive reaction from Israel for this move through Israel’s statement, “together, the two countries should continue to act against terror organisations that intend harm.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Israel in 2017, making him the first Indian Prime Minister to do so. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, visited India in 2018, marking an important milestone in the Indo-Israeli alliance.

FURTHERING IN EVERY SPHERE

Since the upgradation of relations in 1992, defence and agriculture have been the main pillars of bilateral engagement. However, in recent years, ties have been expanded to areas such as science and technology, education and homeland security. The future vision of co-operation is of a strong and technologically adept partnership, which befits the two leading knowledge economies.

Economic and commercial relations have gone up from \$200 million in 1992 to \$5.19 billion in 2011. Earlier, trade primarily consisted of diamonds. Now, even though trade in diamonds constitutes a sizable portion, it has diversified to various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, information and technology among others. India has a balance of trade surplus with Israel as almost 75% of the bilateral trade in goods and services flow from India to Israel.

There has been an increase in direct investments by both countries. Recently, Israeli companies have invested in Indian pharmaceuticals, energy, renewable energy, telecom, real estate, water technologies and are also setting up production units in India in the same sectors, giving an impetus to growth and development in these fields. Even though we don't have official data on India's investments in Israel, there has been significant investments by Indian companies in sectors such as drip irrigation, waste-water treatment, pharma and information technology.

India and Israel have also signed an agreement for co-operation in agriculture, called the 'Bilateral Action Plan for 2015-18,' which is currently operational. Under this plan, twenty six Centres of Excellence focusing on agriculture have been set up in different Indian states such as Haryana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, with the help of Israel. India has benefited from Israeli expertise and technologies in horticulture mechanisation, protected cultivation, orchard and canopy management, nursery and post-harvest management and micro-irrigation. Israeli drip irrigation technologies and products are now widely used in India. The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 'Co-operation in Water Resources Management.' 'A Declaration of Intent' was also signed by both parties during Israeli President, Rivlin's visit to India in November, 2016.

Israel has slowly and steadily become one of the most important partners for India in the defence sector. India imports several important technologies, weapons and infrastructure from Israel. There are regular exchanges between the armed forces and defence personnel, which helps them to develop and hone their skills with the help of joint training drills. Three Indian ships, namely, destroyer INS Mumbai, frigate INS Trishul and tanker INS Aditya, made a goodwill visit at the Haifa port in May, 2017 to mark twenty-five years of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In February, 2014, India and Israel signed three important agreements on 'Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters,' 'Co-operation in Homeland and Public Security,' and 'Protection of Classified Material'. Under 'Co-operation in Homeland Security', four working groups in the areas of border management, internal security and public safety, police modernisation and capacity building for combating crime, crime prevention and cyber-crime were established. There is ongoing collaboration on counter-terrorism issues, including steps

such as, a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism which held its last meeting in Jerusalem in July, 2015.

Both countries signed a 'Science and Technology Co-operation Agreement' in 1993. In addition, under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 'Industrial Research and Development Initiative' signed in 2005, fund was set up to promote joint industrial research and development and provide aid to some specific projects. Currently, both countries are working towards replacing the India-Israel fund for Industrial Research and Development (IRD) with an Industrial Research and Development Technological Innovation Fund. In 2013, Karnataka State Government signed an MoU with Israel's Innovation Authority- MATIMOP, the Israeli Industry Center for Research and Development, to partner for joint development. Under the program, industries may seek financial support for funding joint research and development projects, involving at least one small/medium scale company of Karnataka and one Israeli company.

Electronics has emerged as another area in which both countries have started to collaborate. This joint action is enabled through an annual cyber round table involving academicians and businessmen from both sides. The governments are also exploring more opportunities in this field on which they can work together. ISRO and the Israel Space Agency revived contacts in 2014 and the two sides are currently mapping out areas of collaboration too.

THE PATH AHEAD

In a holistic view, Indo-Israeli rapport has been changing for the better, even if it is at a slow pace. In the post FTA world, there lies immense scope for growth and development in the realm of trade. Truly, efforts need to be made so that the relationship is equally beneficial for both countries and the fear of lopsided trade is discarded. In the interest of their domestic markets, necessary steps must be taken for protection in the form of non-tariff barriers. However, the policy of in-ordinate non-tariff barriers and exorbitant tariff rates must be boycotted by both the countries to further blossom the rapport.

As India hopes for the accelerated growth of its economy, it needs extrinsic support from all countries and Israel is one nation which can truly transform into a reliable and sustainable trade partner.



ASIA



RUSSIA A Platinum Alliance

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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

The 70 years old diplomatic relationship between India and Russia has witnessed its own crests and troughs. Relations between the two are famously quoted for their mutual trust and co-operation. This strategic partnership was one of the most influential factors in helping India become a self-sufficient economy. Post independence, Soviet Union had invested heavily in potential growth sectors namely infrastructure, mining and energy production which led to a period of industrial boom for all the heavy machinery sectors in the country.

The 'Treaty of Peace and Friendship' of 1971 with Russia is regarded as the foundation for India to enter into the geopolitical arena and to make a resounding statement for all power playing nations trying to curb India's development. This treaty was followed by the India-Pakistan War of 1972, also considered as India's finest show of military and political leadership. In reality, it was Soviet intervention that thwarted a scenario which could have led to multiple pincer movements by the US and British navies against India. This heroic show of nuclear strength by the Soviet Union and the clinical precision of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Forces prevented this mighty alliance from moving into an alternate vicious cycle of strategic losses and economic disasters.

Coming to the early nineties, the relations saw a dramatic diplomatic turn wherein India extended technical credit loans and food credit loans to USSR. Additionally, India had gifted 20,000 tonnes of rice to the USSR in 1991, with the basic idea of aiding its allies in times of adversity. After Soviet Union's dissolution, Russia and India entered into the 'Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation' in January, 1993 and a bilateral 'Military-Technical Co-operation Agreement' in 1994.

The signing of the 'Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership' in October, 2000, under the Putin leadership, provided additional impetus to bilateral ties and contributed towards better co-operation in almost all areas of this relationship. During President Dmitry Medvedev's 2010 visit, this rudimentary relationship was elevated to the symbolic status of a 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.' Twenty consecutive Annual India-Russia Summits have been held since 2000, and this in-turn has strengthened the middle ground relationship between the two nations. Today, India has become the centre of political attention due to its healthy relations with Russia, the US and other regional organizations like SAARC.

Establishing institutional dialogue channels like the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Co-operation (IRIGC-TEC), co-chaired by the External Affairs Minister of India and the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and the Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Co-operation (IRIGC-MTC), co-chaired by the Defence Ministers of both the countries has helped in identifying priorities and reviewing co-operation on a regular basis.

With treaties and partnerships on the right track, Russian and Indian companies have also been co-operating in oil and gas exploration in Vietnam and have been discussing co-operation in the Roopar Nuclear Power Project in Bangladesh.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

The Modi government and Putin's administration follow synergetic atmospheres in terms. A harmonious relation between the two nations has been acknowledged and praised by the world leaders. In a recent visit

to Vladivostok for the 20th Annual Summit which took place on the 4th and 5th of September, 2019, both the Russian and Indian delegations had discussions on mutual existence and partnership, global peace and correlative interests in different sectors. Additionally, fifteen agreements were signed between these two nations which included trade and investment, defence, infrastructure, oil and gas, coal and LNG related agreements.

Russian inclination towards 'Make in India,' deliberation about laudable work done by the Intergovernmental Commission, dialogues over trade barrier removal for smoother and sustainable trade growth were some of the broader topics that were pondered over during this meeting. Sources claim that this meeting will have a major impact on education, defence and trade sectors in both nations. These would help diplomatic brand building which comes handy in developing untapped parts of the economies. With continuous Russian aid, India plans to stabilise the macro-level political conundrum prevalent in the SAARC region. Both contingents had a fair amount of discussion on the importance of no outsider influence in the internal matter of any nation (targeting Pakistan government's claims about Kashmir).

Furthermore, the signing of the Memorandum of Intent to open a full-fledged maritime route between Russia's eastern port city, Vladivostok and Chennai on India's eastern seaboard holds great significance. Connecting the two busy ports is a vital step towards giving impetus to co-operation between India and Russia's Far East. A vibrant sea route will also help in improving trade relations between the two nations. India's presence in the Indo-Pacific will have an unprecedented impact on the Beijing Government, which holds a deeply contested patch of the ocean - the South China Sea.

TRADE AND ECONOMICS

Intensifying trade relations between these nations has been the primary goal to achieve. Back in December, 2014, these two countries had set a target of \$30 billion bilateral trade by 2025. To compliment this target, the Modi government has recently provided \$1 billion line of credit for Russia's Far East due to the immense potential in the less developed, yet resource rich region. Due to such massive investments in trade, this target was achieved before hand and a new target of \$50 billion was set for the year 2025. All the trade agreements signed this year have been done with the aim of achieving the set target by 2020 itself. The Russian Ministry of Economic Development had introduced 'Single Window Service' in October, 2018 for hassle free investment by Indian companies to achieve mutual trade and investment targets.

In FY 2018-19, total bilateral trade between the two nations stood at \$8.3 billion. Though, there was a fall in total investment trade in comparison to FY 2017-18,

through the five year structured plan brought into the picture by the mutual agreement of both administrations this year, all the required compensatory measures will be taken to route Russian Foreign Direct Investment into the Indian economy. The key sectors identified for heavy investments include pharmaceuticals, mining, gems and jewellery, fertilizers, chemicals, agriculture and food processing industries. In addition, both the governments have laid out a roadmap for exploring and exploiting each other's oil and natural gas resources for judicious and sustainable use.

NUCLEAR RELATIONS

Russia stands as an indispensable partner in the nuclear energy sphere and recognizes India as an advanced nuclear resource country. Since the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, India has realized the importance of nuclear energy and considers it to be the near future source of energy to meet its energy requirements. This has again brought them into a mutually beneficial relationship.

Under the 'Strategic Vision' document signed in 2014, Rosatom is helping India in building six units of nuclear reactors near Kudankulam, situated on the sea coast in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district. The before mentioned maritime route will facilitate in building nuclear power plants at a faster pace, thus fast forwarding the nuclear growth prospects for India.

CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CO-OPERATION

Regular cultural initiatives are undertaken to promote people-to-people contact between the people of India and Russia. Back in 2015, the then President of India, Dr. Pranab Mukherjee, had inaugurated the year of Indian Culture 'Namaste Russia' in Moscow. Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre at the Embassy of India, Moscow (JNCC) maintains close co-operation with leading Russian institutions, including the Institute of Philosophy (Moscow); Russian State University for Humanities(-Moscow); Institute of Oriental Studies(Moscow), thus keeping up with the cultural habits of the Indians over there. Both sides have commended and complimented the successful practice of holding reciprocal festivals of the Russian culture in India and of the Indian culture in Russia. Furthermore, it has been decided that Russia will be the Partner Country in the 50th International Film Festival to be held in Goa from 20th to 28th November, 2019.

India has readily agreed to help Russia in settling Arctic Council woes, thus taking steps towards improving the climate change effect on the worst hit Arctic region. Additionally, both these nations are determined to take counteractions against pressing issues like terrorism, drug trafficking, information security threats, cross-border organized crimes and extremism by enhancing the functionality of SCO Regional Anti-terrorist structure.

DEFENCE

Both sides comprehend the fact that military and military-technical fields hold an important part in this Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership. They have decided to speed up a new structured military layout partnership plan for financial period 2020-30. Further, they have decided to strengthen defence co-operation by jointly producing military equipment, components and spare parts and other arms and defence-oriented products under 'Make in India'. Finally, preparation for a multi layered structure for co-operation on reciprocal logistical support for armies has commenced.

All the intended steps for further strengthening defence will surely improve the co-operative partnership between Russia and India and will eventually lead to fruitful collaborations with other governments around the world. The all-in-all movement towards global peace by strengthening military power might sound ironic, but in reality, is the need of the hour.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

India and Russia have already delved into the most significant working sectors and have created a mutually beneficial partnership. But with an escalation of global issues and a change in internal dynamics, both these economies should look into their own untapped markets and plan to use those resources for getting an edge over other competitive administrations around the globe. Moreover, this tie should essentially narrow down the co-operation gap between younger generations and their cultural sphere without which a sustainable strategic partnership in the coming future is not possible.

Larger initiatives for mutual growth, exploration into third country resources, taking progressive actions against climate change and solving grave concerns over global peace will be their primary focus in the years ahead and both the countries intend to address these issues by 2025.



TAJIKISTAN Time to Step Up

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Distance can be both absolute and perceived. This is why Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, though nearer to New Delhi than Mumbai, is perceived to be much farther away. The Indian foreign policy is too obsessed with either its neighbours, Pakistan and China, or the traditional global powers, the US and Russia, to spare a thought for the rest of the world. Add to this India's historical tendency of avoiding a solid stance (for good or bad reasons) on most global issues, unless it is directly affected by them as a corollary of its non-aligned strategy. This has resulted in the "missing middle" in Indian strategic thinking. Simply put, since Independence, for reasons ranging from resource crunch to an overly reactionary foreign policy, India has underperformed vis-à-vis its engagements with countries of strategic importance to it. India's Tajikistan strategy should help its foreign policy make the decisive leap from Non-Alignment to Strategic Autonomy.

Now, for the first time, an economically strong India facilitated by an increasing multilateral order has started looking beyond the obvious. One result of this is India's increased engagement with what it calls its "Extended Neighbourhood", otherwise known as the Central Asian Republics (CARs) who gained independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. One of the CARs, Tajikistan, is a close but little-known ally of India since the days of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. How India engages with and in Tajikistan will be its first litmus test as it prepares to present itself as another pillar in geopolitics rather than an implicit sidekick to a superpower as it was for most of the Cold War.

To start with, the India-Tajikistan relationship is not new. Parts of India and Tajikistan were a single political entity under the Kushana empire. The ancient Silk Route played a major role in cultural exchanges and contributed to the spread of Buddhism from India. Under the Mughal rule, Central Asian art and architecture

gained prominence in India. Around 450 Hindi words are a part of the Tajiki language. Today, Indian culture, especially Bollywood and fashion, is popular in Tajikistan. The bilateral relationship received a boost in 2012 as the two countries upgraded their ties to a "Strategic Partnership."

Notwithstanding temptations, India-Tajikistan engagement should not be seen from the lens of a South-South partnership. Tajikistan's GDP of \$7 billion and a population of 9 million are minuscule when compared to India's \$2.5 trillion and 1.3 billion, respectively.

Without coming across as condescending, India has to play the role of a big brother. An extension of the Gujral Doctrine (which was conceived keeping in mind India's South Asian neighbours) to Tajikistan may be of help here: working towards the development of Tajikistan without expecting a quid pro quo. India has done that by providing development assistance to Tajikistan (almost completely as grants) mainly targeted towards development of power generation and education. Tajikistan is one of the primary beneficiaries of the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) programme, India's flagship bilateral assistance initiative.

All this begs the question, why Tajikistan? Firstly, its strategic location. Tajikistan is only twenty kilometres from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir across the Wakhan corridor. In fact, it is at this narrow corridor that India, Pakistan, China, Afghanistan and Tajikistan seemingly converge, making it tactically significant. Second, in a potential pullout of US troops from Afghanistan, Tajikistan serves (and has served, in the case of Northern Alliance) as an important base to fight back a Talibani offensive. Third, a region fraught with extremism, lack of trade and connectivity, underdevelopment and influential global powers serves as a platform for India to finally live up to its long-standing ambition of being a

major player in shaping international politics.

During the first decade of this century, India spent \$70 million to rebuild the Ayni Air Base, just ten kilometres from Dushanbe. This was done following the recommendations of the Subramanian Committee, formed to look into the intelligence failure during Kargil War. A substantial Indian military presence in Tajikistan sandwiches Pakistan in a hypothetical conflict, whose air defence is underprepared for an attack from its northern side. Most Pakistani air bases are located near its India border to confront situations similar to the Balakot air strike.

However, till now, India has been denied permission to station fighter aircraft at Ayni. Russia is largely responsible for the defence of Tajikistan, and its nod is necessary for any military engagement in the country. Though there is no end to speculation, Russia might be withholding its assent because of a perceived shift in India's foreign policy towards the US. Moreover, Russia will not want to upset its recent bonhomie with China, who is the other major power in the CARs, by allowing Indian military presence. A potential Russia-China cartel (to divide power and resources between themselves) in the CARs will put a stop to all Indian ambitions in the region.

The other Indian military 'outpost' in Tajikistan is Farkhor, near the Afghanistan border. Farkhor served as an important base for Indian military and medical assistance to the Northern Alliance, under Ahmad Shah Massoud, till the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001. It is currently used to transport Indian relief and reconstruction material to Afghanistan. It has no active combat squadron, leaving India underprepared for a blow-out in Afghanistan, which seems more likely than ever because of a reluctant US.

As in the case of Syria, a US pullout from Afghanistan seems to be a matter of when rather than if. Last time a major power pulled out of Afghanistan (Soviet Union), a brutal civil war was followed by the rise of the Taliban. A strong Taliban might lead to spiraling out of extremist activity in CARs, a situation which all countries in the region will want to avoid. Hence, it is in the interest of all major powers to support (militarily and financially) the democratically elected government of Afghanistan.

As the next chapter in the great game unfolds, Tajikistan will become a first line of defence against the Afghanistan problem from spreading across the region. Tajikistan, during the previous offensive against Taliban almost two decades ago, hosted American, French, and German troops. With unconfirmed but reported deployment of Chinese army and an omnipresent Russia, all competing for strategic assets and economic interests in this "resource-rich but people-poor country," India has to weave through a web of competing national interests. How India handles Tajikistan will test India's capability in balancing its national interests without being either too confrontational or submissive. All this

needs to be done without trivialising the importance of Tajikistan itself, who must not feel like a puppet in a game of great powers.

There are some positive externalities for India. To avoid over reliance on a single superpower, smaller countries tend to engage with multiple countries to extract economic benefits out of everyone. For instance, Mongolia, completely landlocked between China and Russia, officially has a "Third Neighbour Policy" under which it engages with other regional and global powers like the USA and India to diversify its economic interests and prevent a Sino-Russian hegemony. Add to this India's soft power appeal and Tajikistan is more than willing to partner with India on multiple fronts. A stronger Taliban might compel and the recent boost to Indo-Russian ties (including India's firm stance on the S-400 purchase and investments in Russia Far East) might conduce Russia to rethink its position on Indian military presence in Tajikistan.

Multilateral orders are not only characterised by competition and conflict but also by collaboration. India's work on the Chabahar Port in Iran and the INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor) along with partner countries (primarily Russia) will help boost connectivity in the area. As a footnote, connectivity problems can no longer be an excuse for a lack of engagement with CARs because of an increase in air transport, elucidated by the fact that Switzerland, another landlocked country in Europe, is a larger trade partner of Tajikistan than India. China, Russia, India, Pakistan and Tajikistan are all members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). With Iran and Afghanistan as observer states (and potential future full membership), the SCO is a readymade forum to work on common problems of economic underdevelopment and terrorism plaguing the region. It can also serve as a dispute resolution mechanism for all regional players. To bring about closer co-operation with the Chinese, the 'India-China Plus One' initiative, where the two Asian giants undertake joint developmental projects in underdeveloped nations, can be extended to Tajikistan. After all, a more developed and stable Tajikistan is in the interests of all.

As an American politician once put it, "there are no permanent friends, and no permanent enemies, only permanent interests." This static-yet-dynamic understanding of international relations is needed in an era of "issue-based alliances," as Indian Foreign Minister, S. Jaishankar, once defined multilateral world order politics. While Taliban and Pakistan underline the urgency of a more proactive Tajikistan policy, India must not forget that trade and counter-terrorism are the common permanent interests which bind the two countries together. Hence, as mentioned earlier, it is important for India to engage with Tajikistan as Tajikistan. The last thing India wants is the image of an overly ambitious regional power willing to compromise on the interests of smaller partner nations - Nepali and Sri Lankan opening up towards China serve as constant reminders.

It is this balancing act of give and take with multiple players for multiple purposes which India needs to learn (and ultimately master) if it wants to be the Vishwa Guru that it aspires to be. Surely, as the South Asian tug-of-war experience with China tells us, none of this will be easy, especially with greater stakes and more players in the field. Setting aside the magnanimity of the task at hand, the first thing that India needs to do

is shed off the meekness of the past. Non-Alignment made India stay away from “worldly affairs,” for the fear of being pushed into a Cold War camp. Strategic Autonomy should make it engage with the world and get the Vishwa Guru to come out of Sannyasa.

Tajikistan should set the stage for a new world order which India shapes, influences, and finally leads.



TURKEY

What You Seek is Seeking You

PARTH CHOWDHARY & SAMUEL ELIAZER TOPPO

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We have had mighty rulers in the form of Turks, some of India's most potent adversaries. For one, Mohammad Ghori who came to India and entrusted the Indian sub-continent to Qutub-Uddin Aibak, was responsible for establishing the Delhi Sultanate. As Rumi, the poet said, "What you seek is seeking you," - so has been the power struggle for these countries. Be it their independence struggle or their efforts to rise to a level of importance in their respective regions.

Modern Indo-Turk relations grew during the Balkan War and the Khilafat Movement, when in 1912, the Turks assisted in medical missions led by Dr M. A. Ansari, a noble freedom fighter. Both countries share the same gravitas in their respective regions. To put it in other words, India and Turkey are similar peas belonging to different pods. Turkey's strength in the region is ebbing, with Saudi Arabia emerging as the de-facto leader of OPEC and the prevalent oil power not working in its favour. India faces the challenge of Pakistan emerging from the shadows, powered by the torch of China. But what does all this say about the bilateral relations between these two countries?

There are various parallels between the two countries' situations. The threat of Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) imposed on countries involved in trade with those that are not on friendly terms with the US is a significant play. Neither country gave in to the pressure that such a sanction posed and instead, went ahead and purchased the S400 missile systems from Russia. This shows their will to have independent identities - they seek to project themselves as non-followers of the herd behind a superpower. This gains further significance when seen in the light of the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO, an organisation over which US retains control. India also gives utmost importance to such a philosophy as there is a new breed of inward-looking nationalism gaining

ground. The current direction of thought tends to view help as weakness and boldness as strength. This is precisely why defence relations become increasingly important because of the correlation with interoperability between the systems such as S400, which they share. Yet we see some factors placing caps on how far these relations can grow. India being a non-Islamic state does not fall in line with Turkey's Islam tinted vision of the world. Turkey's stance on Kashmir, its inclination towards China and its role in Afghanistan are vital. President Erdogan's harsh statements in the context of Kashmir made at the UNGA have further pushed back ties. He declared that "eight million people are under siege." Such strong words left no option for the Indian government but to cancel Prime Minister Modi's scheduled trip to Turkey in the month post that. Additionally, the \$2.3 billion defence deal signed between the two countries was withdrawn.

CULTURE

Culture becomes the common thread that various international relations are hinged upon. India's relations with many neighbours are driven by cultural connect rather than other factors like trade and strategy. The culture of the Turks stands out in India through the architecture built by them under the Delhi Sultanate. Huge domes and minarets became symbolic of Indo-Islamic architecture and spread across India throughout history. They are considered reflective of Indian art as a whole.

Sufism, which in today's world is considered as a great counter-philosophy to the rise of radical Islamic movement, also originated from this Indo-Turkish connection. It forms an unbreakable string between Indian and Turkish culture and has deep roots in Indian history, with the school of thought flourishing during the Mughal regime. With the patronage of Mughals,

it formed a rendezvous point for Islam and Hinduism, where philosophies were openly discussed and shared. With the coming of modern times, the cultural vector has changed and has become a bilateral exchange. A very important aspect of Indian culture, Bollywood, is growing in popularity in Turkey. The Taj Express, a Bollywood musical group, was invited to an international theatre festival in Antalya in 2015 and again in 2016. The film festival in Kayseri in 2016 hosted eleven Indian films. Ankara University organised a photo exhibition with the theme '2000 Years of Indian Architecture' which showcased the various forms of Indian architecture inspired by Turkish and medieval Indian culture. Since the past has shown that the connect between people can often trump power politics, these ideas become relevant to foreign policy as well.

INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

Both the countries aim at rising as superpowers in their domains, which is necessary in the context of globally changing power dynamics. Turkey aims to make itself the leader of the Islamic world, with Erdogan explicitly acknowledging the same. India has seen a sharp rightward shift in its politics with 'nationalism' taking centre stage. Instead of following the norm blindly, both India and Turkey have had the courage to take up bold stances, as is evident from examples like neutrality in the Second World War and the recent S400 controversy. India had kept the Turks on their toes by supporting the Greek Cypriots at the UN, which compromises Turkish interests. It was a quid pro quo arrangement - India would not raise the invasion and occupation by Turkey of northern Cyprus, and Turkey would not raise the Kashmir issue at international forums. In 2016, The World Sufi Forum was inaugurated in New Delhi.

Turkey is also one of the top arms manufacturers in the world with the British Motor Corporation (Turkey), Aselsan, Turkish Aerospace Industry (TAI), Savunma Teknolojileri Mühendislik (STM) and Roketsan as a part of the Top 100 Defence Manufacturers list. TAI is also working on a 5th generation stealth fighter TAI TF-X, which is quite similar to the Indian counterpart, the AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft), currently being developed by HAL. It would be safe to say that Turkey is comparatively ahead of India in developing its 5th generation fighter aircraft, with friends in the European defence market such as BAE Systems (UK), SAAB (Sweden) and Eurojet (European Consortium) whereas India relies mostly on its indigenous capacity.

It is imperative to understand the role that both nations play in the larger scheme of things for each other. India forms a gateway for Turkey in the Indo-Asiatic region and also serves as a huge market. The aspect of Pakistan being a more natural partner for Turkey in the region remains unchallenged. For India, Turkey is the ticket to enter the Middle East and spread its dominance. But India sees the scope of Israel to serve as an alternative for Indian power in the region. Between Israel-Palestine and Turkey-Kurds, it becomes a choice of the more jus-

tifiable wrong. This competitive spirit, perhaps, helps facilitate co-operative activities in the larger picture.

TRADE

India-Turkey share a bilateral trade of \$8 billion as of 2018, which is targeted to reach \$10 billion in 2020. India has a slight advantage over Turkey in this with a favourable balance of trade of \$6 billion as of 2018. "The Indian outlook is quite optimistic, which aims to double the trade in the coming five years as well as quadruple the investments. India has \$500,000 as its investments in Turkey," said Sanjay Bhattacharya, the Indian Ambassador to Turkey.

India Turkey Joint Business Council (ITJBC), set up in 1983, has been a great initiative by both countries. Although it has not resulted in any major outcome, it still forms an important platform to induce trade relations and an entrepreneurial spirit beyond borders. The Free Trade Agreement being worked upon since 2008 is also an important aspect on which talks are being carried out. But as of now, there is no FTA as such which could help sectoral trade between India and Turkey.

KASHMIR AND KURDISTAN

In the past, relations existed between Turkey and the Indian subcontinent at large. The fact that India and Pakistan, earlier, served as a common party makes the role of Pakistan in Indo-Turkey ties especially crucial. Turkey shares a much friendlier bond with India's not so friendly neighbour, as financial aid was provided by the Muslims of northwestern British India to support the Turkish war of independence. The Islamic brethren forms the core of Turkey-Pakistan relations. So after partition, Pakistan and Turkey became natural partners. With the formation of The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Regional Co-operation for Development (RCD), where Pakistan and Turkey were partners, Indo-Turkey relations began to organically diverge. After 1980 when the Turkish economy opened up, Indian relations improved with the visit of Turkish Prime Minister Özal in 1986. Turkey also is a member of the Parliamentary Union of Countries in the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), which is an important aspect for India as it seeks to keep OIC countries on good terms.

It is clear that Indo-Turk relations have been progressive if not proactive, and it has helped India in many strategic issues. But when you take into account Pakistan, the dynamics of the relationship changes. In the future, in the case of any conflict, Turkey would naturally side with Pakistan. Ankara has markedly increased its defence co-operation with Islamabad. It is building four MILGEM medium-sized warships for the Pakistan Navy, in a deal estimated to be worth over \$1 billion. According to the deal, two ships would be built in Turkey and the other two in Pakistan under a technology transfer. The two countries last year also inked a \$1.5 billion deal for the supply of thirty Turkish attack helicopters - in the largest defence deal between the two sides.

The abrogation of Article 370 has received condemnation from few countries including China, Malaysia and Turkey. Turkey has always kept its stand unambiguous whenever Kashmir was concerned and has supported a plebiscite. Although it seems to be neutral but given India's clear logic of integrity, it becomes against India's stance. The invasion of Turkey on Syrian soil has resulted in an uproar throughout the world, which has caused a humanitarian crisis. Along with India, many other countries have also criticised Turkey for its action to go on a full-fledged war against Kurdish occupied region in Syria.

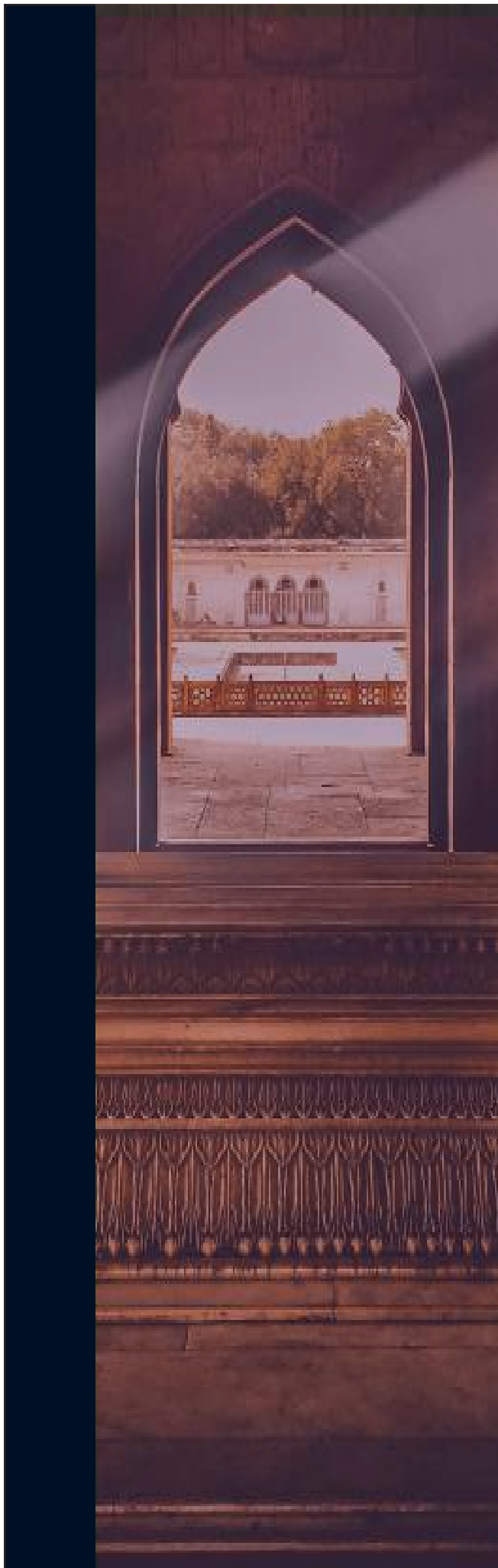
CONCLUSION

There has been a back and forth tussle between the countries to cement their positions. However, when President Trump's letter can be effective to the extent of halting the Turkish offensive on Kurds, it shows that the gap of oil power in India's Middle East approach actually indicates that there is a long way to go for India. Trade between the two might take a marginal hit due to these concerns but that is a less likely scenario. Even

if the worst-case scenario is supposed to occur, it will not have any major impact on India as the balance of trade is in its favour. As we see the India-Turkey bilateral meeting being cancelled by India, ITJBC meetings will get delayed and negotiations on FTA will stall, which would have been beneficial for both the countries and their economy. However, all these steps have taken place within the diplomatic ambit of things, showcasing a safer long run outcome.

Amidst all this chaos, another concern for Indian interests arises with the US pulling out of Syria. Turkish war on Kurds will result in a vacuum in Syria and might provide an opportunity for the ISIS to rise again in that region which has been the trend in the past. The uprising of ISIS modules in Syria would be a huge security concern for India given various incidents of Indian nationals joining ISIS.

Thus, a stronger Ankara-New Delhi alliance is a much needed play for India to counteract not the growing influence of China on Pakistan but also as a pathway to greater Indo-Islamic co-operation.



INDIAN SUBCONTINENT



INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

The 'Neighbourhood First' Policy

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India's South Asian regional neighbours have found the foremost place in India's foreign policy since Independence. There exists historical, socio-cultural, religious and familial ties between the people of the region. While partition vivisected the socio-cultural contiguity and territory that bound the people within the confines of the nation state, the ethno-linguistic contiguity has influenced India's policy. It is pertinent to mention here that India shares open borders with its neighbours and managing these borders has been a challenging task.

After the British withdrew from the Indian subcontinent, India carried forward a policy that was conceived during the British period with regard to its frontiers. Neighbours were considered crucial for a newly emergent India's stability. As India endeavoured to find a place commensurate with its national stature in the comity of the nation, it was equally apprehensive about the activities of regional powers in South Asia. It must be remembered that soon after Independence, India had to grapple with the ongoing Cold War that entered the subcontinent after Pakistan allied with the US. Pakistan also signed 'Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement' with US in 1954 to project itself as a robust partner against communism and sought modern arms, though the primary reason was to achieve military parity with India. India was extremely critical of the Cold War-induced bloc politics and adopted non-alignment as the defining parameter of its foreign policy, so as to maintain its independence in decision making when allying was the geopolitical norm. It however, continued to be concerned about regional powers' interest in the subcontinent and their strategic intent.

SECURING BORDERS AND STABILISING THE PERIPHERY

India signed two treaties of peace and friendship with Bhutan and Nepal, in 1949 and 1950 respectively, to ensure that India's security interest was not undermined by ruling regimes in those countries. Though the Hima-

layas stood as a natural frontier, China's occupation of Tibet brought new challenges to India's external security. Territorial integrity remained to be of paramount importance as India undertook the process of integrating the princely states and established a federal structure to manage its diversity, making secularism and democracy the core values of governance. India's obsession with security is evident from the fact that apart from Nepal and Bhutan, it signed Treaties of Peace and Friendship with Afghanistan in 1950 and with Bangladesh in 1972. It also offered Pakistan the same treaty. However, the security dilemma remained a persistent factor as many of its neighbours faced political turmoil while transitioning from countries with heterogeneous population to majoritarian nation states with the imposition of an official language and religion. It needs to be noted that except for India and Sri Lanka, other South Asian neighbours of India were not democratic in nature. Many of them looked at pro-democracy movements within their countries with suspicion. The political opposition in India's neighbourhood that yearned for democratic governance always looked towards India for inspiration. Many of those fighting to establish a democracy in their country had close ties with political leaders in India.

Exporting democracy had never been a part of the Indian foreign policy as India preferred co-option of regimes and at times pressed for accommodation of disparate interests to avoid political conflagration that would impinge on India's security. Whether it was the democratisation effort in Bhutan post 1954, facilitating a democratic transition in Nepal in the 1950s and later in 1990, or the signing of Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 that pushed for political accommodation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka through the 13th Amendment, India helped its neighbours attain a democratic structure. It helped ten million refugees escape from the former East Pakistan and supported Bangladesh's liberation from West Pakistan. It extended support to Sri Lanka to quell the JVP insurgency in 1974 and 1987. Its help in suppressing a coup in Maldives in 1988 when it intervened at the

request of the President of Maldives manifested India's quest for stability in its neighbourhood. Similarly, India's decision to block all trading points except for two in response to Nepal's approach to India helped usher a democratic era and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Nepal in 1990. However, India was wary of the instabilities that would have arisen in the neighbourhood because of overlapping of ethnic and familial ties. To prevent any uprising, India nudged constitutional accommodation of ethnic minorities, whether it was the Madhesis in Nepal, Tamils in Sri Lanka or Chakmas in Bangladesh. India also advised Nepal and Bhutan to resolve the Lhotsampa (Bhutanese people of Nepali origin who were expelled from Bhutan as illegal immigrants) crisis and was instrumental in the return of Chakma refugees following the 1997 Peace Accord between the Chakma leaders and Bangladesh.

Though India's approach towards its neighbours during the Cold War period drew criticism in the region, India was driven to pursue such a policy to prevent the intervention of any superpowers in the neighbourhood. India's foreign policy changed from a Nehruvian doctrine of accommodating diverse, elite interests in the immediate neighbourhood to an interventionist policy in the 1980s, described as the 'Indira doctrine' to 'beneficial bilateralism' of the Janata government. This was followed by Narasimha Rao's model of engaging with the thriving economies of South-East Asia, and the policy of non-reciprocity embodied by the Gujral doctrine. Later on, as India's stature changed due to robust economic growth, India's neighbourhood policy came to be defined as 'asymmetric responsibility', a combination of bilateralism, sub-regionalism and regionalism.

FROM SECURITY CENTRISM TO ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

It needs to be emphasised that in the post-Cold War

period, non-traditional security challenges emerged as a defining factor of natural defense policy challenges. Issues like terrorism, especially cross border and state enabled, emerged as a major threat to India's external and internal security. Co-operation was seen as the key to deal with this threat. Moreover, India's financial crisis of 1991 led to a radical change in its policy approach. India adopted the policy of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, and as a result of this, India's economy grew exponentially, allowing India to give an economic thrust to its foreign policy. Moreover, the nuclear test of 1998 saw the emergence of a powerful and strong India.

There was a transformation in India's outlook towards its neighbours from security centrism to economic partnership as India looked forward to build connectivity beyond its borders, while striving to develop its North Eastern states and address the issues of insurgency. Bilateral trade increased as neighbouring countries laid emphasis on economic integration and aid to neighbouring countries increased. To give a boost to aid and investment, India set three separate divisions within the MEA, i.e. Development Partnership Administration I, II and III to streamline projects, their funding and implementation. India also tried to engage border states in its neighbourhood policy. For example in 2011, when the then Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Bangladesh, he invited the Chief Ministers of the states bordering Bangladesh to accompany him in his Dhaka visit. There was an increase in cross-border trade and people-to-people connect not just across the Bangladesh border but the Nathula pass too, which was opened for trade. If one were to compare treaties India had signed earlier with its neighbours to recent agreements, for example, Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development which India signed with Bangladesh and Maldives in 2011, the economic thrust is very much visible.

Indian aid to the region in the last five years

Source: Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Lok Sabha Question...", op. cit.

Aid to Country	Grant Assistance (GA) Rs. Crore/ line of credit (LoC \$m)	Expenditure				
		2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Afghanistan	GA	585.31	723.52	880.44	263.02	365.96
Nepal	GA	381.37	303.26	309.94	332.72	376.62
	LoC	0.67	9.10	9.19	91.30	16.28
Myanmar	GA	164.86	104.34	117.07	123.62	223.55
	LoC	0	0	6.96	4.48	31.73
Sri Lanka	GA	420.80	499.70	403.80	99.16	77.89
	LoC	2.07	8.21	4.36	5.33	41.61
Maldives	GA	9.67	26.08	55.04	80.03	109.24
Bangladesh	GA	604.66	197.84	155.68	82.59	78.02
	LoC	13.12	13.68	69.63	91.30	40.11
Bhutan	GA	3926.79	4395.17	5368.46	3441.47	2475.87

CONCLUSION

The present government's policy of 'Neighbourhood First' has injected dynamism to India's neighbourhood policy. The decision to invite SAARC leaders to the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Modi in 2014 and inviting BIMSTEC leadership for the 2019 swearing in reflects a decisive turn in India's neighbourhood policy. Prime Minister Modi, in both his terms in office, took

his first foreign trip to the immediate neighbourhood, creating a sense of partnership. Focusing on the immediate neighbours has brought political, security and economic dividends for India. Taking into account the security challenges that India faces and India's quest for connectivity beyond borders, India's neighbourhood first policy has created a synergy of cooperation on the building blocks of mutual trust and partnership.



BANGLADESH

A Paradigm of Dètente to Entènte

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“Dhaka is now a free capital of a free country.”

16th December, 1971

The then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi’s rich baritone boomed across the country, marking the birth of a new nation in the Indian subcontinent. This momentous declaration came immediately after the surrender of the then West Pakistani forces in Dhaka, and India emerged as the first country to recognise Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign nation. Thus, it doesn’t require great wisdom to discern that besides just upholding diplomatic relations, Bangladesh has always been featured, in a significant measure, in India’s ‘neighbourhood first’ policy.

There have been a significant number of factors which have facilitated mutual reciprocity - shared history, culture, language, semantic and social ties, a commitment to the ethos of democracy and secular values, along with combating terror and initiating counter-terror mechanisms.

India shares a 4096 sq.km long border with Bangladesh, traversing through five Indian states namely, West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Assam. The congruity transcends the usual historical parallels of the struggle for freedom - where an undivided Bengal had been widely described as the ‘Cradle of Nationalism.’ These time tested and enduring fraternal and familial ties find perfect semblance in the multi-dimensional relationship that India and Bangladesh share under their current respective dispensations at all levels - social, economic and political. The factors that have effectively contributed to this edifice undoubtedly have their roots in the critical role played by India in Bangladesh’s liberation four decades ago.

As an immediate neighbour, located in the eastern-most fringes of the subcontinent, its geopolitical importance in the making of India’s foreign policy opens the flood-gates to a plethora of opportunities for co-operation and fruitful joint ventures. These provide convenient opportunities and incentives for both nations to prosper. It is interesting to note that more than fifty bilateral institutional mechanisms operate between the two nations, ranging over a variety of sectors that include arenas of security, power and energy, transport, science and technology, defence, rivers, and maritime affairs. The two nations are common members of SAARC, BIMSTEC, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Commonwealth of Nations. Bangladesh has its own high commission in New Delhi, and consulates in Mumbai and Kolkata, while India has a high commission in Dhaka and a consulate in Chittagong. A study conducted by PEW Research Centre published a survey titled, ‘How Asians View Each Other?’ in which interestingly, 70% of the Bangladeshis had explicitly expressed a favourable opinion of India and its citizens. This is a result of a five decade long diplomatic endeavour.

A FLASHBACK TO HISTORICAL INTRICACIES

The Radcliffe Boundary Commission had been the Britishers’ final divisive tactic at the autumn of colonial administration in the Indian subcontinent. It divided Bengal into East and West Bengal entirely on communal lines. East Bengal became one of the constituent elements of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, owing to its overwhelming Muslim population (exceeding 86%). In order to seal its authority over East Bengal, West Pakistan changed its name to East Pakistan in the early 1950s. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the charismatic leader of East Pakistan’s Awami League - widely referred to as ‘Bangabandhu’ - emerged as the architect of the liberation movement as genocide, perpetrated by West

Pakistan, ravaged the East. Rahman would later refer to it as an event that “resulted in the killing of about three million Bengalis and a refugee influx of about ten million into India.”

The Pakistan army, under the auspices of local Islamist collaborators, led the killing of three million people, raped over thirty thousand women, forcing approximately ten million to abandon their homes in one of the gravest battles in the history of the subcontinent in the early months of 1971.

On 27th March, 1971, the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, extended her full support to Bangladesh’s struggle for independence. The timeline coincided with the pitch of the ongoing Cold War and Mrs. Gandhi travelled to US and other West European countries with the aim of garnering public support for Bangladeshis engaged in war. US President Richard Nixon, who perceived Indians as “aggressors,” extended his support to Pakistan through US troops deployed in Vietnam. Gandhi took the bold measure of signing the ‘Indo-Soviet treaty of Peace, Friendship, Co-operation’ - a twenty year treaty of friendship and co-operation with the USSR. The Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, assured India that in case of American or Chinese military aggression, the Soviet Union would undertake severe counter measures.

India had mobilised the Border Security Force (BSF) under the joint command of the Mukti Bahini (guerrillas fighting for Bangladeshi freedom), and the combined strength was termed as the Mitro Bahini (Allied Forces). India provided military training to an estimated total of thirty-fifty thousand rebels and sponsored insurgent training camps bordering East Pakistan. However, many scholars have regarded this move to counter the large exodus of refugees to India, or seizing the opportunity to divide Pakistan and reduce its aspirations for hegemony over South East Asia. However, the credit for India’s relentless efforts in ensuring an emerging nation’s right to self-determination still remains due.

“For the people of Bangladesh, it was the end of a nightmare of terror and torture and a reassertion of their individuality and personality. For India it was a major victory of democratic socialism.” – V.P. Dutt

BILATERAL TIES BEYOND 1971

However, a significant turmoil rocked the bilateral relations between the two nations in the years immediately after 1972. A section of Bangladesh’s politicians were up in arms against the Friendship Treaty of 1972 between Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi. Rahman’s insistence on signing the Treaty perhaps stemmed from his motives to demonstrate that Bangladesh was truly sovereign and independent as a nation and his expectations of Indian assistance in case of any future political upheaval. For this, Article 9 of the ‘Indo-Bangladesh

Friendship Treaty’ provided for mutual consultation between the two signatories to “remove a threat if one of them is attacked.”

However, the clause does not limit this to an external attack. Thus, the invocation of this Treaty would allow the invitation of Indian troops in Bangladesh in the instance of any hostile capture of power, whether internal or external. Its direct impact was visible during the army coups and counter-coups of 3rd to 7th November, 1975, when there were reports of movements Indian troops along Bangladesh’s borders.

BANGLADESH’S DEPARTURE FROM SECULARISM AND ITS IMPACT ON BILATERAL TIES

A secular Bangladesh came under military rule following the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975. For the next three decades, Bangladesh bore testimony to successive military and pseudo-democracy rulers amending the Constitution to tailor their needs. General Ziaur Rahman had started the slow but steady “Islamisation” of the Constitution, followed by Muhammed Ershad in the 1980s.

India has been expressing explicit concern over the undermining of the multi-religious fabric of Bangladesh, with regular atrocities inflicted upon minorities. It is a far cry from ‘Bengali nationalism,’ where people overcame notions of religious difference to battle for liberation in 1971.

BILATERAL TIES TODAY

Ousting multiple notions of détente and entente, India and Bangladesh look at a steady stream of problems and prospects across multiple sectors.

The Water Tussle

One of the most discerning concerns in the Indo-Bangladesh relationship have been the sharing of the waters of the Ganga and its tributaries. The two nations have fifty-four rivers in common. In 1996, I.K. Gujral’s government, on receiving support from Sheikh Hasina’s (who came to power after two decades of military domination), enabled the nations to find a permanent solution to the Ganga water dispute with the signing of the historic thirty year treaty on sharing the Ganga river water.

The river water sharing at Farakka had been a thorn in the flesh of bilateral ties since the emergence of the nation of Bangladesh. The Farakka Barrage is a dam on the Bhagirathi river located in West Bengal, which had been built to divert the Ganges into the Hooghly during the dry season. It was meant to flush out accumulating silt, a regular problem at the Kolkata port on the Hooghly river in the 1950s and 1960s.

This factor escalated tensions between the nations as Bangladesh claimed 50% of the water between May and December every year, since the water flow to Bangladesh drastically drops during these months. Over one lakh hectare of land in Rangpur, its rice bowl, could not be cultivated for winter crops due to excessive withdrawal of water by India which led to the establishment of The Joint Committee on Sharing of Water in 1972 to ensure the implementation of the sharing of water resources.

Co-operation in the Defence Sector

It has been a challenge for India to wean off Chinese defence equipment, with 17% of Chinese arms exports in 2015 and 2016 going to Bangladesh. In April 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh led to the signing of four defence related agreements which also included a defence framework pact and MoUs between defence institutes. Mr. Modi has publicly expressed his admiration for Hasina's "zero tolerance policy" to terrorism. The Indo-Bangladesh land boundary agreement came into force with an exchange of Instruments of Ratification on June 2015. The 'Co-ordinated Border Management Plan', which had been signed in 2011, aims at revitalising the efforts of the Border Guarding Forces to check illegal smuggling of arms, border crimes and maintenance of peace and security across the border.

The maritime boundary dispute between India and Bangladesh has been settled as per Arbitration Award in 2014 to enhance maritime co-operation. Joint military exercises like exercise 'Sampriti' (Army) and exercise 'Milan' (Navy) also take place.

Today, over hundred Muktiyoddha (Bangladeshi freedom fighters) are treated in Indian armed forces hospitals each year.

Trade and Investment

Bangladesh continues to be India's biggest trade partner in South Asia. Bilateral trade in the last three years grew around 31.5% from \$7 billion to \$ 9.3 billion. The two nations have also been members of regional trade agreements which include the 'Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area' (SAFTA), 'SAARC Preferential Trade Agreement' (SAPTA), 'Asia Pacific Trade Agreement' (APTA). India has also granted duty free quota access to Bangladesh on all items except alcohol and tobacco. During Sheikh Hasina's visit in April 2017, thirteen agreements worth \$10 billion, ensuring Indian investment in the power and energy sector in Bangladesh were signed. Four border haats (local market), two each

in Tripura and Meghalaya, have been established for the benefit of communities living at the border.

India has had three lines of credit to Bangladesh in the last eight years amounting to \$8 billion. Russia is constructing Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant at Roopur, for which India has been training Bangladeshi scientists since the last two years.

In Power and Connectivity

Bangladesh and India are entwined in fuel and power links. Bangladesh already draws 1000 megawatt of power from the Indian Grid, with another five hundred megawatt to be added through the Behrampur-Bharamura inter-connection. The two nations have agreed on a power escalation scheme between Assam and Bihar, from which Bangladesh can draw 1000 megawatt of power supply through tapping points at Parbatipur. Further, ONGC Videsh Ltd has acquired two shallow water blocks. The Government of India has also been extending financial assistance for the 130 kilometers India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline for supply of diesel from West Bengal to Bangladesh.

SINO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

The growing proximity between Bangladesh and the People's Republic of China has been a cause of concern. This issue has been vividly pointed out in Bangladeshi scholar Rukshana Kibria's essay 'Strategic Implications of Bangladesh-China Relationships.' Sino-Bangladesh relations are primarily politico-military in nature and derive significance when studied in the context of Sino-Indian competition in South Asia. They have heightened India's concerns over arms smuggling, illegal migration and support for separatist groups as China, in 2005, offered nuclear power technology to Bangladesh. China has also been the largest provider of military hardware and training to Bangladeshi armed forces.

CONCLUSION

Ahead of the Prime Ministerial visits in early October, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. A. K. MOMEN, reportedly stated that Dhaka and New Delhi are enjoying "the best possible" terms or a "golden moment" in bilateral relations. At the same time, rising concerns over the National Register of Citizens in the Indian state of Assam conducted to identify illegal immigrants has raised concern in the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry. At such a juncture, the Indo-Bangladesh relations assume colossal ramifications for South East Asia at large.



MYANMAR

Defence and Diplomacy

DR. SAMPA KUNDU

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Based on common historical, cultural and religious roots, the amity between India and Myanmar has stood the trials of time. Through a range of bilateral co-operation agreements and regular dialogue on various issues of mutual interest, the relations between the two have only been strengthened over the years.

In the last week of August, the Indian Army handed over ten military-spec Tata Safari Storme SUVs to the Myanmar Army. Though this event received only a limited coverage on print and digital media, it holds substantial significance from the perspective of a growing defence partnership between New Delhi and Nay Pyi Taw.

According to a report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2017), India is one of the top five arms exporters to Myanmar along with China, Russia, Israel, and Ukraine. The defence co-operation between India and Myanmar has recently seen a notable improvement as both the countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the last week of July, 2019, to strengthen military ties in training, joint surveillance, maritime security, medical co-operation, infrastructure and environmental factors such as pollution. After the signing ceremony of this MoU, the Defence Ministry of India issued a statement mentioning Myanmar as “...a key pillar of India’s Act East Policy towards prioritizing relations with its East Asian neighbours”. The statement emphasised that the defence cooperation between India and Myanmar has seen steady improvements in the recent years. When the Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar’s Defence Services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, came to India to sign the MoU, he met the Chiefs of the Indian Armed Forces including the Chief of Air Staff Marshal, BS Dhanoa, Chief of Army, Staff General Bipin Rawat and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh.

Recent developments in India-Myanmar bilateral defence co-operation also included the finalisation of a \$37.9 million contract for the supply of indigenously built torpedoes (which has already been delivered by India to the Myanmar Navy) and another contract for transferring a Russian-made Kilo-class diesel-electric submarine to enhance the capability of the Myanmar Navy. This will be Myanmar Navy’s first submarine. INS Sindhuvir is currently undergoing modernisation in the port of Vishakhapatnam and is expected to be transferred to Myanmar shortly. The fact that Myanmar was seeking to acquire a submarine in order to be at par with its neighbours in Southeast Asia was pointed out by the country’s Deputy Defence Minister, Major General Myint Nwe in May, 2017. According to some reports and a survey conducted by the Singaporean Defence Ministry, many Southeast Asian countries have seen an upsurge in submarine acquisitions in recent years. The survey estimated an increase in the number of submarines in the region from 200 to 250 by 2025, with Vietnam having the largest number of Kilo-class submarines. Other countries having submarines in their possessions include Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Having said that, Myanmar, along with some other Southeast Asian countries, has the potential to attract Indian defence suppliers as the country is trying to mark its presence as a prominent defence supplier in the region.

JUSTIFYING NEW DELHI’S SUPPORT FOR NAY PYI TAW

Firstly, Myanmar is located between India and China. Hence, it is in India’s interest in view of the India-China conflict to appease the government of Myanmar since the country has increasingly been experiencing Chinese influence on its military, political and economical activities.

Secondly, in recent years, India has started positioning itself as an Indo-Pacific power and has enhanced its bilateral and multilateral relationships with almost every country in the region, including Southeast Asian countries that geographically sit at the centre of the Indo-Pacific. From this perspective, upgraded bilateral defence cooperation with Nay Pyi Taw seems to be a part of a rational foreign policy aimed at augmenting India's status as an important Indo-Pacific stakeholder. This also goes well with India's desire to look beyond South Asia. Thirdly, from security and economic perspectives, a good relationship with Myanmar is a necessity for New Delhi. Myanmar is Northeast India's gateway to South-East as well as East Asia. India's cross-country infrastructure and connectivity projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multimodal Transit and Transport Project as well as the internal security of Northeast India could have faced more trouble if India and Myanmar had not taken forward-looking steps to augment their defence and security ties.

These factors explain the initiation of the Joint Consultative Commission in July, 2018, by former Indian External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj and her counterpart from Myanmar, U Wunna Maung Lwin in New Delhi. In this meeting, India spoke about assisting Myanmar in upgrading and modernising its defence forces. The prominent outcomes of such realisation can be seen as New Delhi and Nay Pyi Taw have started a number of new bilateral defence exercises in recent times. In November, 2017, the first-ever India-Myanmar Bilateral Army Exercise (IMBAX) took place and, in March, 2018, the first India-Myanmar Naval Exercise (IMNEX) was conducted in the Bay of Bengal.

JUSTIFYING NAY PYI TAW'S SUPPORT FOR DELHI

From Myanmar's perspective, both countries need to continue their relationships for multiple reasons. Firstly, Myanmar and its leaders are continuously facing international criticism over its targeted violence towards the Rohingya community. In this context, a friendship

with India can give the leaders in Myanmar a sense of relief. To give Myanmar a comforting zone, one needs to remember that New Delhi chose not to condemn the atrocities done by the Myanmar military on the Rohingyas and has never criticised its de facto leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for her support to the Tatmadaw. Here, a similarity in Beijing and New Delhi's approaches towards the Rohingya refugee crisis in Rakhine state become prominent, though the underlying motives for the two capitals vary. Secondly, despite maintaining a cordial relationship with China, Nay Pyi Taw is well aware of the double games played by the Chinese. On one hand, China reassures Nay Pyi Taw about its intent of co-operating with Myanmar in curbing cross-border insurgency and on the other hand, it secretly provides aid to various insurgent groups like the Kokang Army, the Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army along the borders of China and Myanmar. In view of this, Myanmar tries to maintain a balance in its external relations with its neighbours in order to avoid over-dependence on Beijing. Thirdly, it seems rational for Nay Pyi Taw to keep its door open to all of its existing and future sources of foreign investment and development partners including India, Japan, Singapore, Australia and others in the region.

CONCLUSION

India's enhanced bilateral relationship with Myanmar is a reflection of today's realities which are different from those of the late 1980s, when New Delhi expressed support for the pro-democratic movements in Burma/Myanmar. New Delhi soon realised the importance of Myanmar's geostrategic position and slowly changed its approach in favour of Myanmar. The enhanced defence co-operation between Nay Pyi Taw and New Delhi is a necessity as well as an outcome of the changing geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, this partnership is expected to benefit Myanmar as well. Hence, one may conclude that the future of India-Myanmar defence partnership is bright so long as the undercurrents of national interests of both the countries are sustained well.



PAKISTAN

‘No First Use’ in Modern Times

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What would be India’s response if it comes across credible intelligence that Pakistan is preparing to launch nuclear-armed missiles as a means to escalate military hostilities? Would India wait for Pakistan to undertake a nuclear first- strike, possibly on a major population centre like the National Capital Region (NCR), killing a million or more, and then mobilise its second-strike forces as India’s Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) of 1999 proclaims? Or, would it undertake a pre-emptive strike – on Pakistani bases gearing up to strike targets in India?

This has been a troubling question repeatedly posed to the Indian security establishment. Hitherto, it has not provided a direct answer, preferring to reiterate the sanctity of the No-First-Use (NFU) posture underlying India’s nuclear doctrine and deterrent, as well as emphasising that the doctrine is more of a ‘declaratory’ political statement (in order to deter nuclear blackmail) than a war-fighting posture. Votaries of NFU believe that it aptly reflects India’s moral ethos of a peaceful nation that uses its nuclear weapons responsibly, even if the posture is inconsistent with the threat environment, denoted by two nuclear-armed rivals.

Pakistan, in fact, has been sceptical of India’s NFU posture from the outset and had decided against publicising its nuclear doctrine, thereby keeping its nuclear posture ambiguous and strike options open. Pakistan used this ambiguity optimally in the first decade of overt nuclearisation in South Asia (that is, since 1998) and made political gains from nuclear brinkmanship. However, the situation changed when the spotlight fell on Pakistan’s status as a hub of terrorism and clandestine nuclear trade.

Pakistan’s one-upmanship during the initial years of its nuclearisation had placed immense pressure on In-

dia’s NFU posture and had triggered demands for its revision. The recent remark by Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, indicating that NFU is not “cast in stone” and can be altered if the circumstances so demand, is the latest reflection on NFU-centric doctrine not being robust enough. He was echoing a pronouncement in the DND that the doctrine (or some of its elements) will be “a dynamic concept related to the strategic environment, technological imperatives and the needs of national security,” implying the imperativeness of review and upgradation. A closer look at the evolution of India’s nuclear postures in the last two decades, however, reveal the numerous doctrinal realignments and signalling exercises that India has initiated to adapt to the ever-transforming threat calculus, though short of altering the fundamental NFU-centric doctrinal framework.

NFU AS A STRATEGIC BURDEN

A foremost scepticism about India’s NFU posture is on its credibility and robustness when it equates with only one (China) of the nuclear rivals and creates a vacuum for the other (Pakistan) to exploit. Pakistan has been running a prolonged Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC) against India, which predates the 1998 tests and had for long denied the space for an Indian response by threatening to escalate to nuclear use if India crossed any of its ‘perceived’ thresholds. This skewed equation, in fact, had its genesis in the covert nuclearisation phase when General Zia-ul-Haq reportedly warned India during Operation Brasstacks (1987) that “if you cross the border by an inch, we will annihilate your cities.”

Besides citing India’s conventional military superiority as a rationale to keep its nuclear use options open. Many semi-official elucidations by Pakistan’s security establishment added to the deliberate ambiguity, so

much so that Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai's (a long time head of Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division) articulation in 2002 stating that the survival of Pakistani state should be seen as the most credible threshold for Pakistani's nuclear response appeared to be the saner of the lot. That such belligerent posturing had effectively deterred India is illustrated by its refusal to cross the Line of Control (LoC) during various crises of the initial years. The NFU became a self-restrainer, denying the space for escalation dominance. The efforts since 2001 were to unshackle itself from this condition, which led to the pursuit of new game-plans for military responses to the LIC without hitting the presumed redlines or initiating doctrinal revisions, resulting in concepts like the Cold Start, as well as technological options like the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD).

Pakistan, in turn, rapidly developed a solid fueled tactical ballistic missile system (Nasr) to counter the 'Cold Start' strategy and declared that it could target Indian forces crossing into Pakistani territory. Though New Delhi refused to get into a tactical equation despite having the capability for a technological riposte (Prahara). Nonetheless, it led to a postural shift in Pakistan's deterrence calculus as exemplified by its adoption of a second-strike capability in 2012, followed by projection of a full-spectrum deterrence. The latter entailed development of capabilities for all the threat environments: cruise missiles (Ra'ad and Babar) to tackle India's BMD systems, Nasr against the 'Cold Start' and a fledgling offensive force, including Shaheen-III to hit India's far-flung strategic zones.

The moot point is that while the nuclear deterrence spectrum witnessed evolution and maturity, the NFU loophole continued to be exploited until the surgical strikes of September, 2016 (following a terror attack at the Uri army camp), which became not just a demonstration of the new political leadership's resolve to 'cross the border' as a perceptible redline and call Pakistan's 'nuclear bluff,' but also undertake military operations under a nuclear overhang without jettisoning the doctrinal underpinnings of the NFU. Three years down the line, these political objectives were reinforced when the leadership repeated the feat with greater intensity, through air strikes on a terror camp in Balakot in February, 2019. More importantly, the aerial strikes were proof of India taking over the escalation mantle and signalling its resolve to advance up the ladder (towards missile strikes) in the event of continuing terror attacks.

With the recent Indian action in Jammu and Kashmir ruffling the Pakistani security establishment, which is seemingly girding its loins for a fresh offensive, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's statement was not just a reiteration of the political intent for cross-border military missions, but also a signalling exercise that no elements of India's nuclear doctrine, including NFU, will restrain it from moving up the escalation ladder if the situation so demands.

NUCLEAR POSTURE IS ALL ABOUT SIGNALLING

It was surprising for observers of the South Asian nuclear scene to see such a meticulously planned and resource-intensive initiative like the 'Cold Start' was disowned by the political leadership. Army officials involved in this exercise insist that the supposed 'Cold Start' was only one among a handful of proactive tactical strike plans that were to be employed if the political leadership decided to undertake military action in response to a terror strike. In fact, when elements of the 'Cold Start' were tested on the western frontier, Army officials were aware that their Pakistani counterparts were closely monitoring the exercises and dissecting its contours.

Considering that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government, despite promoting a proactive national security mission, has not sought to revive or institutionalise the 'Cold Start' plan, which was discarded by its predecessor, could be indicative of the fact that this project was a calculated signalling exercise intended to alarm Pakistan of the conventional campaigns that India could devise. While objectives like 'conquering and holding territory without hitting redlines' may sound ambitious even for such spectacular projects, one cannot rule out the possibility that the surgical strike of 2016 could have been among the models (of controlled sub-conventional assaults) that comprised the larger framework of the 'Cold Start.'

Another major signalling exercise was the Indian response to the Nasr episode. With Pakistan demonising the 'Cold Start' as a destabilising strategy and swiftly developing a tactical nuclear delivery capability to counter it, the Indian establishment was looking for a requisite response without affecting its doctrinal set-up and technological missions. The opening probably came when Pakistan declared that it might use tactical nuclear weapons against the Indian forces even if it was on its own soil. In the discussions that followed, it was at the initiative of the then Foreign Secretary, Ranjan Mathai, that a decision was taken to use unofficial channels to signal India's approach towards Nasr and the tactical nuclear space. Shyam Saran, as Chairman of India's National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), an advisory body without any official or statutory standing, fitted the bill. Through two different articulations, Saran clarified that India will not differentiate between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons and therefore, will consider any such use against its forces or territory as a first-strike, which, implicitly, could invite a massive retaliation involving nuclear weapons.

The doctrinal debates were sealed for a brief period, until the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) declared in its 2014 Lok Sabha election manifesto its intent to "study in detail India's nuclear doctrine, and revise and update it, to make it relevant to the challenges of current times," without, however, making any explicit reference to NFU.

Two years later, in November 2016, the then Defence Minister Manohar Parikkar's 'private thoughts' on "why should India tie itself to NFU?" were also passed off as a reflection of this thought process – the imperative of reviewing the doctrine periodically. While Defence Minister Singh's recent statement might be embodying such proclivities, the timing of the statement indicates that it could be more of signalling to Pakistan in the light of its sabre-rattling over the latest developments relating to Jammu and Kashmir. With the Pakistan PM warning of an impending war, he needed to be warned that the outcome may not be one of his choosing. By that standard, the Defence Minister's statement qualifies as potent signalling, on par with Saran's statements.

WHY A REVIEW-CUM-REVISION IS NEEDED

A theatre-specific posture

NFU as a postural option remains stressed by the unstable deterrence equations with Pakistan, unlike the case of the other dyad where China shares the same posture. A theatre-specific posturing, in place of a uniform posture for two characteristically different nuclear dyads, would signal to the adversary the operational flexibilities designed into India's doctrinal structures as well as the scope for their further recalibration if conditions demand so. The idea is to project the flexibility that India has in applying the NFU only for theatres where the rival state (China) also has a similar posture while keeping its options open for other theatres (Pakistan), where no such articulation exists or where other nuclear use preferences are indicated.

Though the larger plan is to convey the non-applicability of NFU against Pakistan in the event of a conventional stalemate or threat of nuclear use, this should not necessarily imply that India could resort to a default protocol of nuclear strike options after an escalatory Pakistani conventional surge, but, instead, only formalise its flexible response options. Whether this needs to be done as an interpretative or signalling exercise (Shyam Saran model) or pursued through a doctrinal revision publicised through a cabinet note/press release, is something the government could decide if and when it initiates such an exercise.

Reflect new strategic scenarios

Largely of the 1999 vintage, the DND is seen as falling short in many scenarios involving newer platforms like tactical nuclear weapons and missile defence, besides missing out on principles pertaining to counter-force or counter-value targeting choices. Though the Nasr element was tackled through interpretative manoeuvring, the doctrine needs to incorporate a clear guideline on tactical scenarios, particularly since it may involve an attack on the Indian troops in foreign territory as well

as a potential introduction of an Indian tactical system into the matrix. Considering that India has the technological capability to fight and dominate in the tactical domain, it would be unwise to evade a war-fighting space of lighter intensity and lesser destructive scope instead of galloping to a holocaustic endgame.

The fledgeling missile defence capability also needs rapid integration into the doctrinal space as the fundamental objective behind a nation-wide shield would be to defend against nuclear-tipped missiles of various hues. Though the technology is not yet fool-proof or operationally mature, the Ballistic Missile Defence systems are integral to all nuclear strike scenarios; be it pre-emptive, offensive, or retaliatory. If their primary task is to provide frontline defence against a first strike by protecting population centres and second-strike capabilities, the alternative scenario is of the incentives to strike first – as a pre-emptive or a conquest mission – against an adversary with the assurance that retaliation will be sufficiently countered. It is, hence, vital that the missile defence roles and objectives are well articulated in the nuclear doctrinal framework, when revised. This exercise should also facilitate the transfer of BMD assets from the Indian Air Force to the Strategic Forces Command in order to fully integrate them with the strategic mission.

CONCLUSION

The irony about nuclear doctrines is that the NFU posture, which is supposed to be an exemplar of peaceful intentions, has been scrutinised more often than the more belligerent versions. Nuclear doctrines and postures are dynamic processes that evolve with the security environment, and, hence, can neither be treated as sacrosanct policies nor equated with characteristics like 'responsibility', especially since only two of the nine nuclear-armed states adopt defensive postures like NFU.

India's doctrinal framework has also undergone notable changes from its original ideational framework, through both structural alterations as well as postural realignments. The revisions pertaining to biological and chemical attacks as well as the inclusion of attacks on Indian forces among the conditionalities for 'retaliation' are examples of how the core tenets have been revisited. The purported re-interpretation by a former National Security Advisor on the provision of non-use against non-nuclear weapon states and Shyam Saran's signalling endeavour are examples of how the strategic milieu will force enduring pressures on the doctrinal structures to transform and adapt.

Twenty years after the Indian nuclear doctrine was first drafted, the time is certainly ripe for a comprehensive review and suitable revisions.



SRI LANKA

The Elephant and the Lion

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Sri Lanka and India are close neighbours – not only by virtue of distance but also by a shared legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction along with strong economic, defence and political ties. Traditionally known as Ceylon, it gained a ‘Dominion status’ from the British Colonial State in 1948 and became the ‘Republic of Sri Lanka’ in 1972. Since then, it has evolved into a friend and ally of India, with relations between New Delhi and Colombo marked by high-level exchanges at regular intervals. This relationship has been tested time again, against the backdrop of ethnic tensions realising in a civil war, intervention by powerful states and domestic politics impacting bilateral relations.

Sri Lanka’s strategic location in the Indian Ocean, its proximity to the Malacca Strait and the rising importance of the Indo-Pacific in the geopolitical arena makes it an important player for several countries. It is a member of BIMSTEC and SAARC, and was one of the founding members of NAM with India.

THE CIVIL WAR AND INDIA’S INVOLVEMENT

Sri Lanka’s biggest ethnic groups were the Sinhalese and Tamils, with the former constituting the majority. Initially, the groups lived in harmony, with both of them coming together to form the Ceylon National Congress in 1919.

After independence, a law called the Ceylon Citizenship Act was passed, which discriminated against Tamil Indians in Sri Lanka. Thousands of workers were stripped of their citizenship and eventually deported, deepening the divide between Tamils and the Sinhalese.

In 1956, Prime Minister Bandaranaike passed a law called the ‘Sinhala Only Act,’ which replaced English with Sinhalese as the official language of the state. This was seen by Sri Lankan Tamilians as discriminatory and

insulting to their significance in Sri Lankan civil services, history and life. Many officials resigned due to their inability to speak Sinhalese. Riots followed, where many Tamilians lost their lives.

In the 1960s, the idea of a separate state for Tamilians, the “Tamil Eelam,” took root. Much of the country’s youth, including Velupillai Prabhakaran, joined the movement to protest discrimination against Tamil citizens, which also included the controversial ‘Policy of Standardisation’. It made it harder for Tamil students to gain admissions in universities. Even though it was removed in 1977, considering other forms of discrimination and suppression through national policy, it was too little, too late to stop what was to come next.

Chetti Thanabalasingam, a well known criminal from Jaffna, and Prabhakaran formed the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) in 1972. It eventually broke off from the central Tamil leadership and became an independent, militant group to be called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 1976. They carried out assassinations of political figures and destruction of public spaces to campaign for a separate area for Tamilians.

In July 1983, the LTTE carried out an attack on the Sri Lankan Army patrol, killing 13 people. This sparked anti-Tamil protests and massacres, starting in Colombo and eventually spreading to the entire state. Known as the ‘Black July’ incident, this was the start of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

The Sri Lankan military launched an offensive called ‘Vadamarachchi Operation’ in May-June 1987, to gain the Jaffna territory, where many LTTE leaders had been cornered. Indians, especially in the state of Tamil Nadu, showed great support for independence of fellow-Tamilians in Sri Lanka.

Through RAW, the national intelligence agency, India supported different pro-independence militant groups, including LTTE. Infact, many attribute the rise of the LTTE to resources, intel and training provided by RAW. On 5th June, 1987, when the Sri Lankan forces were close to defeating LTTE, the Indian Air Force airdropped relief packages consisting of food and medicines in Jaffna, giving important support at a critical time. Although the operation was a success, Prabhakaran escaped and the general populace began to look at India with mistrust.

Following this incident, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardene signed the 'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord' on 29th July, 1987. It made many concessions to Tamilians, including the grant of official status to Tamil language. This was enacted as the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution. India also set up the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to help Sri Lanka combat Tamil insurgency. The LTTE and IPKF soon got into a full-scale conflict which made India an unfavourable presence in addition to increasing Sinhalese opposition to Indian presence in the state and claims of human rights abuses by the IPKF. It was Prime Minister V.P. Singh who finally ordered the withdrawal of the IPKF in 1990, after hundreds of casualties on both sides.

The LTTE, lead by Prabhakaran, carried out the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on 21st May, 1991, as it feared him to be pro-Tamilian and wanted to ensure that his second tenure did not cause trouble for them in Sri Lanka through measures like a re-instated IPKF. The Supreme Court of India ruled that the assassination motivated by Prabhakaran's personal animosity towards Gandhi and had been planned in various stages, starting from 1987.

After India's exit, the war continued due to a host of reasons and peace was ultimately declared in 2009. It had catastrophic impacts in terms of loss to life and property for all parties involved. However, both India and Sri Lanka made the decision to move towards the future with principles of mutual respect, peace and co-operation.

DEVELOPING ECONOMIC TIES

After the war, India committed itself to rebuilding Sri Lanka, and provided assistance in three phases. India provided immediate relief and assistance, including 2.5 lakh family relief packs, medicines worth Rs. 225 million, an emergency-field hospital in Pulmoddai which treated over 50,000 displaced people from March to September 2009, shelter material; assistance by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research to help revive agricultural output; the reconstruction and development assistance for construction of houses; reconstruction of two northern railway lines, from Omanthai to Kankasanthrai and Medawachchiya to Talaimannar; reconstruction of the damaged southern railway corridor from Colombo/Galle to Matara; rehabilitation of

Kankasanthrai Harbour; construction of a Cultural Centre in Jaffna; renovation of Alfred Duraiappa Stadium in Jaffna; technical assistance to the ten-year presidential initiative to steer Sri Lanka towards a Trilingual Society by 2020; scholarship for the Sri Lankan students; setting up vocational training centres at Hatton, Puttalam, Batticaloa and Nuwara Eliya.

The main framework for bilateral trade has been provided by the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) that was signed in 1998 and entered into force in March 2000. This is reflected in the respective obligations of the two countries under the ISFTA, where India agreed to open more tariff lines upfront and within a shorter time span of three years as against smaller and more staggered openings by Sri Lanka which was provided a longer time of eight years. This builds on the Gujral Doctrine, which theorises that India, as a bigger power in the South-Eastern region, must give one-sided concessions to its smaller neighbours and keep cordial relations with them.

CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement), which is yet to be signed between the countries, seeks to build on the momentum generated by the FTA. The investments are in diverse areas including petroleum, retail, IT, financial services, real estate, telecommunication, hospitality & tourism, banking and food-processing (tea & fruit juices), metal industries, tires, cement, glass manufacturing, and infrastructure development (railway, power, water supply).

ROW YOUR BOAT, GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM

Given the proximity of the territorial waters of both the countries, with fishing being an important source of livelihood, incidents of straying of fishermen are common, especially in the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar. Indian boats had a free run of the Bay of Bengal, Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar until 1974 and 1976 when treaties were signed between the two countries to demarcate the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). Regardless, incidents of fishermen straying and their subsequent arrests have been rampant.

Due to gradual depletion and overuse of fishing resources in the Indian shelf, many traditional fishermen wander into Sri Lankan waters. These are hand-to-mouth eaters, and thus prefer to take the risk of arrest than return empty-handed. Sri Lankan fishermen did not have the same tools as the Indians initially, which further encouraged them to fish in foreign territory and exploit opportunities available to them.

India and Sri Lanka have agreed to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Fisheries between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of India and Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development of Sri Lanka as the mechanism to help find a permanent solution to the fishermen issue.

A resolution of the fishermen's problems, their periodic

arrests, impounding of their vessels – on both the Indian and Sri Lankan sides – may not be possible through coercive measures and maritime deployments of the Indian Coast Guard and Navy and Sri Lankan Navy alone. The underlying causes of fishermen trespassing the sea boundary have to be attended to. Alternate means of livelihood must be made available to ensure any desperation on the fishermen's part is curtailed.

THE DRAGON, THE LION AND THE ELEPHANT

Considering Prime Minister Modi's "Neighbourhood First" Policy, India has tried to strengthen its ties with Sri Lanka on all fronts, with Modi visiting the country after his victory in May. He was the first foreign leader to visit after the horrific Easter Sunday terror attacks. India had forewarned Sri Lanka about the attacks. However, inaction on their part could not prevent the tragedy.

Beijing's ambitions to become a super power have manifested into financial and political support for Asian countries. The 'Belt and Road' Initiative, in particular, lays down the path for Chinese intervention and influence across Asia and Europe. As the time for developing nations to grow came, many countries like Sri Lanka gave priority to investments by China over the historical precedence of their motives. Even if they wanted India to help instead, the country could not match China's might.

India was the first to be offered the option of developing the Hambantota port but it had to turn the offer down as it could not muster the necessary finances for the gargantuan project. The port has now been handed over to China on a 99-year lease in a controversial \$1.2 billion debt equity swap. India has been offered a lease on the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, 220 kilometres from Colombo, which has been dubbed the 'world's emptiest airport'. No international flights land there.

Chinese companies have already invested \$15 billion in infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka. India was able to pledge only \$2.6 billion for development projects. In 2017, India agreed to refurbish and use 99 oil tanks in the Trincomalee harbour. In March this year, China agreed to extend a loan of \$989 million for the construction of a road that will connect the tea-growing areas in the central region to ports in the south.

Delhi is not the only one concerned about Beijing's growing footprint on the island. The U.S. and the G7 countries have also expressed their concerns to the Colombo government. Before the Indian Prime Minister's

visit to the capital, there was an agreement between India and Japan to develop the East Container Terminal (ECT) of the Colombo port. India and Japan will hold a 49 per cent stake in the ECT with the Sri Lanka Ports Authority holding the rest.

This is also an inclination towards joining hands to counter China's influence in the maritime arena, especially in Sri Lanka. Indian naval ships recently participated in a military exercise in the South China Sea alongside Japanese, US and Philippine naval vessels to make their presence known.

The fear of Sri Lanka entering into a debt-trap at the mercy of China has come to light. Countries like Japan and the US, along with India, are trying their best to ensure that a strong opposing force exists in the Indian Ocean. A trilateral maritime security cooperation agreement was signed by India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives to improve surveillance, anti-piracy operations and reducing maritime pollution in Indian Ocean Region.

THE WAY FORWARD

The time for bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and India is crucial, in the backdrop of their shared history, development and growth in both countries and growing concerns of threats to domestic sovereignty by China. Essential economic and trade agreements, like the CEPA, must be signed, and greater integration and alignment of developmental assistance and investment opportunities must be made. Cultural ties, which are already very strong due to southern kinship and the prominence of Buddhism in both countries, must be made stronger through people-to-people connect and encourage existing initiatives like scholarships for students, playing sports like cricket, promotion of tourism and high-level meets. New Delhi should leverage all and any soft diplomatic potential to counter China's chequebook diplomacy.

New Delhi needs Sri Lanka's support to emerge as a 'Blue Water Navy' in the Indo-Pacific and in attaining the status of a net security provider in the Indian Ocean. India will also need Colombo's support in pursuing a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as membership and support for various causes in other global platforms. Therefore, the two countries should recognize the legitimacy of concerns and operate in a way which is mutually beneficial. Thus, the Modi government must make an active effort to strengthen Delhi-Colombo ties in order to ensure the co-operation of a strategic ally and counter any other presence in the Indian Ocean.



EAST ASIA



CHINA

A Match Made in Heaven

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Rapid economic growth in China has been accompanied by two opposing opinions in the form of a 'Chinese threat' and 'Chinese development'. China's growing size, political complexion and modernisation of the military is identified as a matter of concern to foreign national interests as well as a potential threat in the minds of many, while the rest perceive them as possible benefits. In June, 2003, the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, not only acknowledged the "economic transformation of China" but also envisaged comprehensive bilateral ties with the nation. At a time when the 'China threat' theory was escalating, Vajpayee offered the narrative of the two neighbours being "developing countries" and leaders of "cutting-edge technologies" and the knowledge economy.

Today, India foresees a multipolar Asia, where both major as well as minor powers have an equal say in decision making. However, China's rise in Asia is not only posing a threat to the stability of the regional power structure but also eroding India's strategic moves. An India-China partnership is an economic marriage made in heaven but will face many hurdles on its way to shape Asia's future and the Indo-Pacific power balance.

Tensions have extended beyond the border. In the world of business, the \$62 billion investment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), India's decision to ban China from investing in its power grids and a heated space race between the two nations takes the contest for regional dominance to even greater heights. However, as long as China's relationship with the United States remains adversarial, China will embrace India - but not without the assurance that it will not adopt a confrontational position in times to come.

Since late 2017, the dynamic between India and China has appeared to change. Both countries are strengthening their economic and diplomatic ties following the

protracted military standoff at Doklam in 2017, when India positioned troops to restrict China from constructing a road in the territory claimed by its ally, Bhutan. This has invariably made Indo-China relations quite contextual, where foreign policy behaviour is determined more by the regional and international context than by domestic forces.

Therefore, the inference that the possibility of an India-China confrontation is remote and not guaranteed. China's foreign policy under Xi Jinping features a long-term territorial appetite, both land and maritime. The growing power asymmetry and military projection in the maritime domain has driven their relationship to an intensely competitive ground. These intense global conditions appear to be enduring and continue to raise the question of whether the bonhomie and stability of Indo-China relations since 2018 reinforced recently after the Narendra Modi-Xi Jinping informal meeting in Wuhan is a long standing one or not. How far will this amount to a 'compromised context' in India-China relations? As India is amassing power and capitalizing on its strategic interests to improve its position as an emerging global power, it forms an indispensable portion of the Chinese stratagem of global engagement.

BOUNDARY DISPUTES

China's territorial claims have been a matter of dispute since the 1950s. While China has affably resolved boundary disputes with twelve out of fourteen neighbouring countries, it is yet to fix its boundary disputes with India and Bhutan and also its two maritime controversies in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Given that the resolution of China's remaining disputes is mostly doubtful, China's boundary dispute with India is a subject of deliberation and it remains to be seen whether China plans to devise its 'boundary diplomacy' with a country as large and strong as India.

India is working on a number of massive infrastructural projects so that it can mobilise tanks and troops to its borders. Some would be forgiven to wrongly assume that it is another chapter in the country's ongoing dispute with Pakistan. Instead, as a retired Indian general put it, we need to be ready in case the Chinese attack in the far eastern region of Arunachal Pradesh. China has another name for the region - Southern Tibet, and India wants to ensure that this name never becomes official. A rather watchful China urged India to have a "measured attitude" to the border dispute before constructing infrastructure in the region.

With both Modi and Xi deciding to issue strategic guidance to their militaries to bolster communication and set up trust and harmony, the two nations indicated their resolve to maintain stability at the borders. Hence, this is a match made in heaven, instead of potential world configuration of war.

DOKLAM CONTROVERSY

The Doklam border stand-off was no regular chapter in India-China relations. With the potential to amplify into war, it examined their diplomatic nerve. Fortunately, diplomacy was at the conflict's core and both sides successfully averted any escalation. India stood proud that their Army successfully faced the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for seventy three days, something that few Asian militaries could perhaps do.

For New Delhi, it was vital to stop the PLA from constructing roads in the Doklam trijunction zone, which terms a disputed region, without triggering a war. The Doklam tension zone has been cleverly promulgated by China to disclose that Beijing can complicate the India-China boundary dispute whenever it wants. For Beijing, its attempt to inject a factor of strategic complexity into a politically stable India-Bhutan relationship was successful. Furthermore, Beijing sought to test India's diplomatic calibre and military vigilance in the face of a territorial threat. The resolution of this incident thus showcased the complexity of India-China relations and how small-scale incidents can spiral without political will.

BRI AND AIIB

India has conveyed bold reservations about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) from the beginning, boycotting both the China-sponsored Belt and Road Forums that were held in 2017 and 2019. The primary objection is the controversial China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that runs through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, neglecting New Delhi's sensitivity pertaining to this disputed territory.

As reported widely in the media, India's ambassador to China, Vikram Misri, claimed that "no country can participate in an initiative that ignores its core concerns on

sovereignty and territorial integrity." India has shaken hands with the US and several other nations in voicing concerns about BRI projects that have left smaller economies trapped in debt to China. India has persistently questioned the legitimacy of the BRI, arguing that, "such initiatives must be based on universally recognised international norms, including good governance, the rule of law, openness, transparency, and equality." China is trying to establish cordial relations with nations amidst the US-China trade war and growing scepticism about the BRI. Without India's participation in the project, China's BRI is less likely to become a Pan-Asian initiative.

These contradictory standpoints on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRI depicts New Delhi's sometimes co-operative and sometimes opposing stance with China. The primary difference between the two responses lies in the fact that the AIIB is a multilateral institution that advocates universal values and promotes internationalism, while the BRI is a unilateral Chinese-government scheme to gain international dominance through infrastructure investments across the globe. Indeed, India's vision of a regional security architecture is pillared on principles of globalism that supplements India's traditional ethos of Vasudhiva Kutumbakam ("The world is one family"). The two primary objectives of India's dealings with China have been to deter Beijing's protectionist approach within the global order and to reform global financial institutions to promote emerging economies. Given these guiding principles, India has chosen to take part in some Chinese economic initiatives, such as the AIIB but not others such as the BRI. However, it should be noted that both the nations have mutually agreed on the principle that differences need not become disputes.

NAVAL FORCES

China seeks to reinforce its offshore defence capabilities by signing military and semi-military pacts. Consequently, India is also seeking to extend its outreach over the Pacific. Naval co-operation with like-minded countries like Japan, France and the United States is a priority in India's maritime strategy. This boldness of conducting vigorous maritime activities has reinstated a sense of solidarity among India's neighbours in the face of rapid Chinese developments.

India has realized that it has limited resources to match China's assertiveness, making its outreach beyond the Pacific, extremely crucial. Regionally, a multipolar Asia would solidify India's maritime stake. India's advocacy of inclusivity does not refuse China its space in the Indo-Pacific. It should be demanded that China recognise the interests of its neighbourhood and be both accountable and transparent about its actions. Both countries do not have a disputed maritime zone, however, China is concerned about India's commercial presence in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, India has been unsettled

by continuous Chinese submarine adventures across the Sri Lankan coast. China's construction of maritime infrastructure across the Indian Ocean through its maritime silk road has also raised eyebrows.

ON MAZHOOB AZHAR

As China grows, it is also facing considerable setbacks. Consequently, taking a step back and rethinking some of its strategic and diplomatic engagements might prove to be beneficial. Time and again, China has showcased its intentions of having India on its side in an attempt to revise the global order.

In 2018, the Chinese ambassador to India, Luo Zhaohui, said, "from the global perspective, in recent years, the developing countries represented by China and India have emerged as a group, contributing to the ongoing 'rise of the East' in the transforming world. As neighbouring major emerging countries, we should co-ordinate our positions and also explore ways to be with each other." What perhaps substantiates such statements are supplementary actions, such as China's recent declaration of finally lifting its technical hold on declaring Masood Azhar, Chief of the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, as a terrorist at the United Nations. This is certainly a diplomatic triumph for India. Notwithstanding the pressure that was building on China for safeguarding an internationally ill-famed terrorist and the continuous effort put in by India at major international discussions, the declaration has finally resolved a serious contention.

CONCLUSION

This is an opportune stage for India to move beyond the recognised asymmetries and concentrate on conquering a hegemonic China by strengthening relations with like-minded countries. Both India and China have always, independently, tried to have stable and mutually beneficial ties with the United States. China's primary quest has always lied in stabilizing its trade and economic relationship, while India's interest is to quickly convince Washington of its emergence as a leading power, secure high-end technologies and strengthen the defence partnership.

From India's perspective, if the US departs from Asia, Xi Jinping's proposition of an 'Asia for Asians' would remain merely a nomenclature, making Asia a China-commanded region. New Delhi should not delay in expanding its compass of influence under Modi's charge, especially when the United States is by and large on its side.

India's foreign policy under Modi 2.0 could become much more decisive and impactful. What makes China jittery is primarily the increased attention that India has recently reaped under the leadership of Modi. While China has never considered India to be a major threat or competitor, it is still obliged to advocate better trade and investment co-operation and to see India as a multilateral economic partner. It has started acknowledging India's importance by including it as a full member of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) and welcoming India as a founder member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the new Development Bank (NDB).

However, geopolitical compulsions in Indo-China relations are likely to persist. Given the current geopolitical scenario, which might be heading towards greater polarization, India is most likely to benefit by not explicitly aligning with either China or the United States. India needs the Quadrilateral Consultative Forum (comprising India, Japan, US and Australia) as much as it needs a peaceful border with China in order to better position its interests both within and beyond China-US backed institutions without subscribing to either of their respective visions. India should continue being a component of the 'Beijing Consensus' framework, popularly known as the Chinese Economic Model, that aims to introduce an alternative model of economic growth for developing countries without discounting the 'Washington Consensus.' For China, too, a stable neighbourhood is crucial as it navigates its relationship with an openly adversarial US under President Trump.

The record shows that a leadership-centric discourse has been in place between India and China. For almost two decades after 1947, India-China relations were mostly personality-centric, with both, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mao Zedong having a dominant role in moulding the relationship trajectory. Today, with Xi Jinping continuing his term endlessly and Narendra Modi securing his stand in India, the leadership-centric approach has made its return. This signifies that the immediate future of the two nations' relations hinges on the leaders' personal understanding. Both countries therefore have a tactical opening for improving their relations, but within limitations.

India and China would be completing 70 years of diplomatic ties in 2020. Let's see if, in the time to come, India can stand by its predecessors' conviction (going back to Rajiv Gandhi in 1988) that economic compact can be bracketed from strategic confrontations, and ultimately help soften the strategic carve.



INDONESIA

Bridging the Gap over the Indo-Pacific

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On 5th September, 2019, the Indian Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar, visited Indonesia to meet his counterpart Retno Marsudi, just a little over a year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country. That visit was itself preceded by the Indonesian President, Joko Widodo's visit to India in December, 2016. Repeated visits by the leadership of both countries indicate the deepening of relations between the two neighbouring nations that move beyond the nostalgia of shared historical and cultural ties.

Since his first year in office, Modi has paid increased strategic attention to Southeast Asia as a part of his 'Act East Policy', a successor of Narasimha Rao's 'Look East' approach in 1991. Indonesia is a key ASEAN member which currently finds itself under the spotlight, as both nations are realising the favourability of a deeper co-operation, underlined by common interests and similar governance.

Co-operation between India and Indonesia has always been a result of geography. Indonesia's location and naval forces allow efficient work with India to ensure security in the sea lanes of communications between Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Together, the two countries control the entry point to the Indian Ocean from the Bay of Bengal to the Strait of Malacca.

Even historically, the long-standing connect between the two nations, which began 2000 years ago with Indian traders reaching the Indonesian islands in the early 1st century, was courtesy the shared maritime borders. Following this, the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, and finally Islam over the following centuries has happened alongside a constant trade in commodities and ideas between the subcontinent and the island nation. Having gained independence around the same time, interestingly, both were champions of the Non-Alignment Movement in the 1950s. A situation of peaceful coexistence has persisted steadily till 2005, until both

countries signed a 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' in 2005, marking the beginning of annual strategic dialogue.

It was clear that shared history and goodwill are necessary, but not sufficient conditions for a productive relationship.

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Today, the world's largest and third largest democracy are progressing on similar lines. Both have seen massive multicultural state building, economic plentitude for new middle-classes and face a troubling political present. Headed by pragmatic and popular statesmen, India and Indonesia have both faced one of their most momentous electoral decisions in 2019, as they navigate the future of secularism. The Indonesia that President Sukarno built was arguably one where religion was the bedrock of society, not the state. Today, a shift towards conservative Islam is evident. Many would argue for similar parallels in India's trajectory.

Inflation in Indonesia has hurt the middle class in recent years, while the poor has been kept partially afloat by a well-structured subsidy system and monetary injections in rural areas through a Village Fund program. In some regions, villages are slowly showing signs of closing the gap with distant urban cities. In India, however, mild urban inflation and agricultural deflation has brought down the prices of produce, leading to widespread distress, systemic poverty and mass farmer suicides as the rural-urban gap widens.

The opposition in Indonesia strongly debates the utility of the government's massive infrastructural drive and mounting national debt. In India too, the distress caused by government policies like demonetisation and the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) are often discussed.

Recently, both countries have identified common interests in addressing the rise of China, as it makes advances in the maritime domain, and are realizing that co-operation can help structure a favourable balance of power in the region. In December 2016, Indonesian President, Joko Widodo visited India with a promise to elevate ties and deepen cooperation in the economy, defence and maritime security.

Following their meeting, the leaders of both countries stressed on the “importance of resolving disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law,” taking aim at China’s aggressive stance on the South China Sea. Even though both Indonesia and India are not directly involved in the dispute, there exists a shared concern about China’s territorial expansionism and reluctance to abide by global norms. For India, the concern is about the security of the sea lanes of communication in the larger Indo-Pacific area. While Indonesia is not a territorial claimant in the South China Sea, part of its exclusive economic zone near Natuna Islands overlaps with Chinese capacious claim in the region.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONS

President Widodo’s visit to India in 2016 was followed by a similar visit by Prime Minister Modi to the island nation in June 2018. For the first time, this meet laid down targets for both nations as a series of fifteen agreements were signed between the two nations, including agreements on trade, maritime cooperation and defence. Most importantly, the countries elevated their bilateral ties to that of a ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.’

While details of the agreements were not disclosed, six broad areas were discussed in the meeting, which included (1) enhancing trade and investment cooperation, (2) promoting sustainable development marine resources, (3) expanding cooperation in disaster risk management, (4) fostering tourism and cultural exchanges, (5) promoting maritime safety and security and (6) strengthening academic, science and technological cooperation.

Despite being neighbours and sharing multiple historical and cultural links, the two nations have largely been distant, which is exemplified by the lack of direct air connectivity. The two countries have agreed to improve connectivity, especially between the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Aceh Province of Indonesia in order to advance economic engagements with the North Sumatra region. A Joint Task Force on Andaman-Aceh has been established, which constitutes officials from both countries and envisions the joint development of the region to promote not only trade, but also cruise and eco-tourism. Two successive India Indonesia Infrastructure Forums (IITF) have also been hosted with elaborate plans for regional connectivity in terms of economic, infrastructural and energy links.

Perhaps the launch of direct air services between the two countries following President Widodo’s visit is a signal that finally, the two nations are set for a launch.

DEFENCE & TRADE

India has faced the threat of terrorist activities and movements for decades now, and with the rise of extremist ideologies, Indonesia is no stranger to this threat either. In the light of a string of attacks in Indonesia from 2016, the two governments have agreed on wide-ranging counter-terrorism cooperation, including a strengthening of intelligence cooperation mechanisms.

Terrorist organizations continue to find new avenues of growth and have now started operating through families by recruiting wives and children in Indonesia. Growing concern has obviously led to a call for a massive push in counter-terrorism. Eliminating terrorists’ safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting networks and preventing cross-border infiltration should remain a top priority. India and Indonesia have put in place a ‘Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty’ along with an instrument of extradition to deal with terror operatives and facilitate the exchange of intelligence.

In the past few months, 800 ISIS members have also returned to Indonesia following the end of the crisis in Syria and Iraq. All of them are being put through de-radicalisation courses to help them return to mainstream life. Such efforts, especially if it proves to be successful, can be useful for the Indian intelligence in its counter-terrorism efforts, and a partnership can be nothing, but fruitful if joint efforts are made in this direction with structured information sharing. Both countries have also taken common stances on various international platforms, like in calling all countries to implement the UNSC Resolution 1267 (banning militant groups and leaders) and other resolutions designating terrorist entities, when China blocked India’s move to get Jaish-e-Mohammad Chief, Masood Azhar to be designated a global terrorist. It would not hurt for India to have a little more international support for its agendas.

The ministers of both India and Indonesia have also begun to lay emphasis on defence industry. A ‘Defence Cooperation Agreement’ was signed last year, allowing for regular meetings and staff talks between armies, navies and air forces, along with the joint production of equipment and submarine training for Indonesia. There have already been an increased number of co-ordinated patrol exercises and visits from both sides.

Both nations have stepped forward with the hope that there would be a collaboration on things like component supply chains in radar and sonar production with Indonesia’s advantage, while using India’s technical advances in the production of long-range missiles. Long discussions have been held about the potential opportunities in technology transfers, purchase of maritime equipment, expansion of commercial agreements be-

tween shipbuilders, and cooperating in military aerospace programs.

While a lot has been said, in reality it has been a much heavier lift in practice. As seen in India-ASEAN ties as a whole, there is still quite an obvious gap between rhetoric and reality in India-Indonesia defence ties as well.

In fact, India's strategic vision, articulated as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) aligns well with President Widodo's aim to reinvigorate Indonesia through his Global Maritime Fulcrum.

The most recent development in India-Indonesia relations, however, has been in the realm of trade. In 2016, trade between the two countries amounted to \$12.9 billion. The following year, there was a 28.7% rise to \$18.13 billion. This positive growth figure is contrasted by India's dismal trade deficit of over \$10 billion in 2017. As of FY19, trade stands at \$21.13 billion, with Indonesia being India's second-largest trade partner in the ASEAN region after Singapore.

In this year's G20 Summit, during the summer, both countries have set an ambitious target of \$50 billion for bilateral trade by 2025. Many doubts have been raised about the feasibility of this goal, but it is not impossible. India has already asked for a reduction in import quota restrictions in the auto sector and the speeding of the process of getting trade regulatory certificates. It is important to note that Indonesia's emission standards are not commensurate with global emission norms, which can prove to be just what India needs as it struggles with a slowdown in the sector and the enforcement of a mandatory shift to improved emission norms.

Looking at the resource and production patterns of both countries, there is a massive scope to cooperate and increase advantages in the global halal food industry, engineering products, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, healthcare, IT services from India and palm oil, coal and natural resource value-added processing from Indonesia's side. Now the challenge for both governments is to mobilize this potential and bring on ground the mighty growth and cooperation target that they have set for themselves.

THE PURSUIT OF SABANG ISLAND

In all of India and Indonesia's budding relations, the most interesting has to be India's attempt to seek access to the strategic island of Sabang at the northern tip of Sumatra, close to the Malacca Strait.

Now, why has India been interested in this particular island? Sabang, is in fact, 90 nautical miles away from the southernmost tip of the Andaman & Nicobar islands, and flanks the northern end of the Malacca Strait which is host to a number of crowded and critical sea lanes for the passage of goods. As per 2016 data, 16 million barrels of crude oil and other petroleum products transited the Strait every day.



Interest towards this island is in fact not new, and began as early as Prime Minister Modi's first year in office. During Modi's visit to Indonesia in June 2018, he pledged Indian assistance in the development of infrastructure in Sabang. The two leaders have also set up a joint task force for the development of the strategic port and economic zone, against the backdrop of growing anxiety about China's "string of pearls" in and around the Indian Ocean.

Access to Sabang would grant the Indian Navy a well-positioned logistics and resupply node to sustain operations in the eastern Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait. A massive boost to the Navy's ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies, provide disaster relief and conduct anti-piracy patrols are only some of the expected benefits. The advantages to trade and commerce are honestly, too many to list.

India has also agreed to build a deep-sea port in the area, giving India a bigger foothold in the region while enhancing its maritime links with Southeast Asia. If invested well, Sabang can become Chabahar's counterpart in the East.

CONCLUSION

For decades, Indian leaders have paid little attention to the countries of the East - a policy decision that has perhaps had heavy costs for the country. Many Southeast Asian nations have made immense progress towards development, leaving India (and the subcontinent) with a lot to learn. With this in mind, Prime Minister Modi's 'Act East Policy' is a welcome policy.

A partnership with Indonesia, in particular, is one that India needs at this point in its growth trajectory. As India attempts to expand its international presence and soft power, tapping into two millennia old relations with a maritime neighbour is an avenue one cannot forget.

While the signs of deepening relations in the coming years are evident, there are challenges ahead. India's continued lack of nuanced understanding of how Southeast Asian nations operate and India's own changes and complications with regards to its China policy can curtail a strong partnership.

With targets set and all work laid out, let's hope that India soon manages to make its mark in the Indo-Pacific seas.



JAPAN

The Tokyo-New Delhi Camaraderie

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Japan and India are poles apart. The former, Asia's most prosperous democracy, is a developed economy plagued by low growth and an aging population. The latter on the other hand is the world's largest democracy and a developing economy grappling with the issue of unemployed youth.

Despite the present economic and demographic differences, the past has seen Japan as one of India's closest companions. Though this friendship has primarily flourished because of the idea that 'the enemy's enemy is a friend' (China) the relationship can also be attributed to their shared culture, common democratic structure, economic interdependence and of course, their strategic maritime locations. An association that started over 800 years ago, India and Japan have been through capricious bilateral ties, only to have come out closer and stronger.

FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE WORLD WARS

Buddhism, the most ancient link between the two countries, spread from India to parts of Korea and China, to eventually in Japan in 570 AD. Gradually, ancient Indian texts and traditions spread to Japan, too. The Panchatantra and Jataka tales, translated into Chinese, reached Japan and became a part of Japanese folklore. In fact, Rama is replaced by Sakyamuni in the Japanese version of Ramayana, while the rest of the narrative has been left the same.

Over the years, India and Japan started to share ideologies, languages and art. As of today, the number of Sanskrit students outside India is the highest in Japan and there are at least twenty Hindu deities, like Saraswati, Lakshmi, Indra and Ganesha that are regularly worshipped in Japan.

While cultural ties between the two countries did pros-

per before the 20th Century, it was Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit in 1949, and his donation of two Indian elephants to the Tokyo zoo, that initiated co-operation on the political and economic front. Shortly after, when Japan had lost the Second World War and was drowning in financial debt, India took the friendship to the next level by signing the Peace Treaty of 1952 waiving off Japan's reparation loans. About seven years later, Japan repaid the favour by making India the first country to receive a Yen loan.

THE COLD WAR PERIOD

Despite a great start, there were three major reasons why the Cold War Era distanced the two countries. Firstly, the economic interests of the two countries were very different up until 1980. While India pursued the socialist model with import substitution, industrialisation and protectionism, Japan focused on an open trade policy by fostering relations with countries that drove their own export and trade. Secondly, after independence, Japan viewed India as a sycophant of the Soviet Union, and strong US-Japan relations at the time brought a conflict of ideologies between the two countries. Thirdly, troubled with domestic preoccupations and rising neighboring conflicts, India's primary concern during the time was to maintain peace with Pakistan and China.

However, even though the Cold War affected both the countries, the undercurrent was still warm. India witnessed improved investment from Japan in the form of joint ventures like Hero Honda and Maruti Suzuki and technical collaborations with companies like Sanyo and JVC in the 1980s.

Following the Cold War period and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the concept of economic globalisation was on the rise. Most nations abandoned the socialist

for the market economy system and so, things began to take a turn for the better. At the national level, reforms in India like the 'New Economic Policy' of 1991 along with the 'Look East Policy' of 1992, resulted in not only an increase in the cumulative Japanese FDI inflows from \$2.6 million in 1990 to \$95 million in 1994, but also facilitated the entry of Japanese brands like Toyota, Toshiba and Panasonic in the Indian market.

Moreover, as the power structures in Asia started changing and India and China began to rise, Japan was in desperate need of more trade, markets and areas of investment in order to maintain its status as an economic superpower. Since there were possible adverse repercussions of a resurgent China wanting to have a decisive say in East and Southeast Asia, India became the ideal country for Japanese investments.

Fast forward to 1998, as India was celebrating its status as a nuclear state, the Indo-Japan ties were pushed to a nadir. India's Pokhran tests evoked a sharp reaction from Tokyo, which led to cancellation of official dialogues, the freezing of new Yen loans at the bilateral level, and a strong statement by Tokyo, condemning the nuclear tests at the international G-8 platform. At those times, these actions were considered "swift and serve" and "out of proportion". Bilateral ties saw a further setback with Japanese interest and inclination towards mediating the Kashmir issue. Japan's neutrality during the Kargil war between India and Pakistan in 1999 disturbed the relations further.

THE 21ST CENTURY

The 21st century was, however, a turning point for bilateral ties between the two nations. In late 2001, the Japanese government announced suspension of its economic measures against India and relations returned to normalcy.

The 'Global Partnership in the 21st Century' of 2001 went on to lay the foundation for the 'Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2007, which highlighted six areas for co-operation with economic co-operation being central to the agenda in case. The two countries further signed the 'Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement' in 2011 that envisaged the abolition of tariffs on over 94% of items traded between India and Japan over a period of ten years. This Agreement, the most comprehensive of all such agreements signed by India, covers not only trade in goods but also services, movement of people, intellectual property rights and custom procedures.

Since 2003, India is also the largest recipient of the Japanese Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and is a beneficiary of over 30% of the total ODA loans given by Japan. A large part of this assistance to India has been for infrastructural development, namely for projects like the Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project Phase 2 and the 1,483 kilometer long Delhi-Mumbai In-

dustrial Corridor (DMIC).

Another important area where Indo-Japan ties started to strengthen was Maritime defence and Security (emphasized during PM Shinzo Abe's visit to India in 2007). Since 90% of Japan's oil requirement is met by the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Malacca and the sole sea route connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans, has been the lifeline of the Japanese economy since time immemorial. India, on the other hand, plays a vital role in monitoring the world's most strategic and trafficked Malacca Strait due to its natural maritime outpost - Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Moreover, the pacifist Constitution of Japan prohibits its forces from participating in any combative activities beyond its territories. Therefore, Japan realised the need for collaborating with countries like India for patrolling sea-lanes (like the Malacca Strait) and for providing security against terrorism and hijack attacks.

THE MODI-ABE ERA

Even before Modi's term, Japanese investors showed a growing interest in India, primarily motivated by the Sino-Japanese territorial conflicts over the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands. A 2010 Japanese bank survey suggested that 74.9% of the 605 Japanese manufacturers selected India as their investment destination for the next ten years, compared with the 71.7% that chose China. Hence, it is no surprise that after coming to power in 2014, Modi promised Japanese investors "no red tape, only red carpet."

Indeed, India and Japan made a quantum leap in 2016-17, when investments reached \$4.7 billion, representing a substantial jump from the \$2.6 billion recorded in 2015-16. Japanese investments are also diversifying and now include retail, textile, consumer durables, food and beverages, and banking (credit card services). Moreover, during his December, 2015 visit to India, Abe committed \$12 billion to Modi's 'Make in India' initiative that aims to transform India into a global design, manufacturing, and export hub.

The Indian infrastructure sector has also a lot to gain from Abe's commitment to co-operation in connectivity and development. Abe has positively responded to India's request to build approximately 1,200 kilometers of roads in six states in the Northeast. Further, in 2015, Abe also pledged a loan of \$12 billion for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail.

Additionally, perhaps one of the most important steps taken by the two countries was India's expression of willingness to accept Japanese assistance in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANIs). This is the first time that India has accepted foreign assistance for developing infrastructure in the strategically important islands, having previously spurned American interest. Japan is now constructing a 15-megawatt diesel plant and a highway on the South Andaman Island.

THE WAY FORWARD

One of the reasons why Indo-Japan relations have stood the test of time is the mutual realisation of the benefit it indicates. However, now recognising the vast opportunities that both countries still have to offer each other, the road ahead is one towards even more enduring and sturdy bilateral ties.

With the rising supremacy of China in the Asian continent, India and Japan can no longer afford to contest China's strategic forays to gain control over the entire continent. As China continues to develop ports in Sri Lanka and Myanmar to shape geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics in the Bay of Bengal, Japanese investments in key strategic sites in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and future possibilities of constructing new signal intelligence stations to monitor Chinese submarine activity in the region is essential. The 'Asia-Africa Growth Corridor' (AAGC), an agreement which aims to link Africa and other South-East Asian countries by sea routes to India and Japan, exhibits yet another joint venture by both the countries to counter China's Belt-Road-Initiative (BRI).

Additionally, since both Japan and India believe in the concept of disarmament, the use of nuclear power for

civil purposes is another area where the relationship can be strengthened. The signing of the 'Agreement for Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy' in 2017 is crucial for an energy starved India, and is the first step towards gaining access to innovative technologies that would generate clean electricity. The fact that India is the first non-signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to have signed such a deal with Japan is testament to the fact that both countries have mutual trust and faith in each other.

We can also expect India and Japan to exploit their differences in demographics and collaborate with each other – Japan can provide technical training, advanced machinery and investments while India can provide workforce, land and profitable investment opportunities. Though there have been talks of setting up Japan-India Institutes for Manufacturing and Japanese Endowed Courses, a lot more can be done in the form of collaborative research projects, student and professor exchanges, partnerships among colleges in both countries to offer combined degrees and vocational training and internships for students in both countries. With shared values of democracy, a common enemy, different strategic maritime locations and worsening economy conditions, the two countries are perfect complements to one another.



VIETNAM

The Ho-Chi Minh Tether

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India and Vietnam celebrated forty-five years of establishment of diplomatic ties in 2017. Cordial relations and the goodwill between the nations stem from the shared experience of colonisation and a valorous struggle for independence. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was the first world leader to visit Vietnam after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, much before full diplomatic relations were set up between the countries. India objected to US military campaign in Vietnam in the 1960s, despite its dependence on the US for food imports. It was a staunch supporter of the Vietnamese cause and among the first countries to recognise a United Vietnam in 1975. India even supported Vietnam's attack on Cambodia to dethrone the Khmer Rouge regime. As a part of the same conflict, China invaded Vietnamese cities of Cao Bằng, Lao Cai and Lạng Sơn. India strongly protested against the move, with the then Foreign Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee cutting short his official trip in protest.

The two nations signed a Joint Declaration in 2007 to form a Strategic Partnership for enhancing overall bilateral co-operation in the areas of defence, trade and business, science and technology, education, energy and culture. The 2007 Joint Declaration served as an important cusp for diplomatic relations, but it was only in 2016, when "a new direction, momentum and substance" was added with the upgradation of ties to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.'

ASEAN has been the focal point of Indo-Vietnam ties. With the completion of 25 years of India-ASEAN Dialogue Partnership, the bilateral engagement between the two nations is set to deepen. India's successful engagement with ASEAN is indispensable for the upward trajectory of bilateral ties.

During his visit to Vietnam in September 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Vietnam "a strong pillar of India's Act East Policy". India is leveraging Vietnam

and ASEAN to protect its interests in the South China Sea, where the Dragon's military domination and diplomatic posturing has created a power imbalance in the region.

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

New Delhi and Hanoi upgraded their relationship to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' in 2016, signalling multi-faceted and holistic development of bilateral ties. The message was clear - Indian diplomacy is moving over a bi-polar world order and is 'Acting East' in search of new allies. The objective was manifold: strengthening exchange of high-level delegations and bilateral co-operation mechanisms, boosting relations between political parties and legislative institutions and speedy implementation of agreements signed between the two countries. There have been noticeable developments in major sectoral areas, which have been discussed in detail in the following sections.

DEFENCE COOPERATION

New Delhi's strategic community sees Vietnam as one of India's closest defence partners in Southeast Asia. Since the signing of the 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' in 2007, New Delhi has been proactive in providing military assistance to Hanoi, extending a \$100 million line of credit to purchase four patrol vessels in 2013. India has also offered assistance in small and medium arm production and in the repair of Vietnamese aircrafts and helicopters. In 2016, New Delhi facilitated a concessional line of credit of \$500 million to procure defence equipment from India for the Vietnamese forces. Hanoi has shown interest in procuring rockets and short-range missiles for coastal protection.

The bilateral co-operation goes beyond military warfare and includes personnel training and capacity

building programmes. The Joint Vision Statement on Vietnam-India Defence Cooperation for 2015-2020 emphasised human resource training, including training of air force pilots and joint naval and coast guard exercises. In December 2017, the armies of India and Vietnam participated in a first-of-its-kind six-day long military exercise in Madhya Pradesh, marking a step towards co-operation in combat, jungle warfare and counter-insurgency training. In the age of emerging forms of warfare such as hybrid and cyber warfare, cyber security and intelligence sharing becomes a prospective area of co-operation. In 2016, India announced a grant of \$5 Million for an Army Software Park at the Telecommunications University in Nha Trang. India also funded the Indira Gandhi High Tech Crime Laboratory, beefing up collective security resources and equipping the Vietnamese Forces to deal with cyber threats.

The two sides continue close coordination and mutual support at multilateral defence and security forums, particularly ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus.

MARITIME SECURITY

During the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in January, 2018, Hanoi readily endorsed maritime co-operation with India. ASEAN-India Strategic Dialogue on Maritime Cooperation was proposed to improve coordination of security initiatives in the littoral seas. The first Indo-Vietnam Maritime Security Dialogue is also scheduled to be held in Vietnam this year. Cooperation among navies and coast guards to secure sea lines of communication, to counter terrorism as well as achieving operational efficiency in humanitarian and disaster relief activities is expected to be at the top of the agenda. Vietnam is also a part of Indian Navy's annual multilateral military exercise, 'Milan', illustrating its commitment on the issue.

On the South China Sea, New Delhi supports maintenance of peace, stability, security and freedom of navigation for unimpeded economic activities in the region. It emphasises full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) as well as the early conclusion of a substantive, effective and binding Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (COC). New Delhi stands for a peaceful settlement of disputes through diplomatic and legal means, in full compliance with international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS).

Prime Minister Modi, in a joint statement during his 2016 official visit, reiterated the duo's role in "reinforcement of an open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region". He called for freedom of navigation, white shipping, trade and commerce and respect for national sovereignty and international law. Vietnam and India are both wary of Beijing's aggressive posturing in the Pacific Ocean in general and South China Sea in particular. China has sought to militarise reclaimed

features in the Spratly and Paracel chain of islands in the South China Sea, building aircraft hangers, ammunition storages, bunkers and radar stations. In the Pacific Islands, China's total financial aid has grown to \$5.9 million since 2011. Chinese direct investment has also risen, with Papua New Guinea receiving almost 70% of the total share. The fact that this money diplomacy is reaping geopolitical gains for the former is evident in Papua New Guinea becoming the first country to recognise China's claims over the South China Sea. This was despite the rejection of the claims by a tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2016. This situation has necessitated an organic alliance of nations to counter Chinese diplomatic offensive. India and Vietnam have become natural allies in the process. In December 2018, Hanoi granted exclusive access to Indian Naval ships to Vietnam's Cam Ranh International Port (CRIP), close to the Malacca Strait. This decision would not only guard Hanoi's economic interests, but also allow India to play a meaningful security role in the South China Sea.

OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION

Vietnam and India have an agreement in cooperative oil exploration in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone which is claimed by China as a part of 'nine-dashed line' area in the South China Sea. ONGC Videsh Limited and Essar Oil are engaged in oil exploration in the area. ONGC Videsh has presence in Vietnam with 45% stake in oil block 06/1 and 100% in block 128. China opposes ONGC's operations in South China Sea. India holds ONGC presence as a commercial operation and not linked to any political plot. Oil exploration is thus, a sensitive issue in India-China and China-Vietnam ties.

ECONOMIC, TRADE AND INVESTMENT COOPERATION

India is among the top 10 trading partners of Vietnam. According to data of the Ministry of Commerce of India, trade volume crossed \$14.2 billion in 2018. Both sides are aiming to hit the trade target of \$15 billion by 2020. Vietnam's main exports to India include electronics and electrical products, textiles, handicrafts, cashew nuts, coffee, tea, mate, spices, canned food, building material, pharmaceutical products, precious metals, copper and rubber. Major export commodities from India are machinery and equipment, chemicals, rubber, ordinary metals, wood and wooden products, fibres of all kind, pepper, products of steel, coffee, footwear, products of chemicals and polymers and resins. The Plan of Action 2018-2020 places priority on expanding trade in agricultural, fruit and food products. Vietnam and India can benefit from the US- China trade wars as American companies look to diversify supply chains after Trump's diktat to "immediately start looking for an alternative to China". Vietnam has seen its exports to U.S surge following the trade, India is yet to cash in. Both nations can collaborate to further improve their trade positions.

In terms of investments, India is the 26th largest inves-

tor in Vietnam with 210 projects worth \$880 million. Major areas of investments are telecommunications, information technology, energy, mining and mineral exploration, pharmaceutical, agro-processing, sugar manufacturing, agro-chemicals, auto components and electrical appliances. Thermal energy and renewable energy are prospective investment avenues for Indian companies. Vietnam's investments in India are negligible. Promotion of Vietnamese investment by facilitating conducive conditions in agriculture, agro-processing, marine products and wood product businesses in India is an important objective of the Plan of Action 2018-2020.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

India has continuously supported development projects in Vietnam through grants, preferential credit lines and capacity building programmes. India and Vietnam are active participants of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), in which both the nations cooperate with Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos in areas tourism, culture, education, and transportation. Besides, Vietnam received \$250,000 from the Revolving Fund of \$1 Million announced by India, using which it sanctioned Quick Impact Projects in five provinces.

Under the ASEAN Integration Programme, Vietnam-India Entrepreneurship Development was set up in Hanoi along with a Vietnam-India Centre of English Language Training at Danang. An Advanced Resource Centre in Information and Communication Technologies was established at Hanoi to train students and government officials in web designing, network systems, java, GIS applications and e-governance. The funding for these projects by India highlighted its commitment to training and capacity building.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

India-Vietnam Joint Committee on Science and Technology has been a bilateral mechanism set up for joint research activities, scientific knowledge sharing and faster implementation of ongoing projects. Both sides are working closely on Satellite Tracking & Data Reception Station and Data Processing in Vietnam. A pilot project to create digital villages for improving rural connectivity is also underway.

Both sides signed 'Framework Agreement on Coopera-

tion in the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy' in 2016. An MoU was also signed between the Institute of Atomic Energy of Vietnam and India's Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership in this regard, to step up efforts in peaceful use of atomic energy.

TOURISM, CULTURE AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONNECT

The establishment of Swami Vivekananda Centre for Indian Culture and Centre for Indian Studies in September, 2016 in Hanoi and Centre for Vietnamese Studies in May, 2018 in New Delhi provided the much-needed platform for academic and cross-cultural exchanges. The Archaeological Survey of India is effectively engaged in the conservation and restoration of three temple groups at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Mỹ Sơn. To promote fraternal relations, a Twinning or Sister City Arrangement between important cities is in the talks. Jet Airways and Vietnam Airlines signed a code share agreement to begin direct flights from Ho-Chi Minh to Delhi. The timing is opportune as 2019 marks the India-ASEAN Year of Tourism, promoting tourism in both countries.

Despite extensive cooperation, Vietnam, like many other ASEAN nations finds India's Act East Policy underwhelming. Abhijit Singh of ORF notes that New Delhi has failed to play a meaningful role in the politics of the South China Sea. In addition, the two sides have made little progress on technology transfer, especially the Brahmos Cruise Missile. Despite India's insistence, Vietnam remains non-committal to join the 'Quad', a coalition between India, US, Japan and Australia for stability in the Indo-Pacific. "Vietnam is reluctant to be seen as 'ganging up' against China, fearing a negative response given China's demonstrated willingness to use diplomatic and economic resources to get its way," notes Rajeshwari Rajagopalan in a commentary in the Diplomat.

India and Vietnam have walked a long path of sustained diplomacy and pragmatic strategies together. As of yet, both nations have prudently capitalized on each other's resources and have put a bold front against external forces with each other's support. However, it will be interesting to see how the politics of ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific pan out for India-Vietnam Bilateral relations in the long run.



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIA

Poised for Greater Partnership

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India-Australia relations have been on an upswing in recent years. Both the countries are emerging as important partners in the context of the Indo-Pacific region becoming the principle global strategic reference point. The two countries have a myriad of issues and concerns as there is considerable alignment in their strategic interests.

India and Australia share historical ties, having established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, when the Consulate General of India was first opened as a Trade Office in Sydney in 1941. Even before independence, when India hosted the Asian Relations Conference in April 1947, Australia attended the conference as an observer, on Nehru's invitation. Historically, India and Australia have shared a number of features, like similar legal and governance structures and a commitment to liberal democratic values to naturally develop a mutually beneficial long-term partnership. However, despite these pertinent commonalities, a long term partnership did not materialize easily. The compulsions of Cold War politics were the main impediment as both countries took different paths to secure their respective interests. India and Australia did not share views on certain major political, strategic and economic issues at that time. Australia maintained close ties with Britain, and after the end of the Second World War, links with the United States. Australia became a part of the Australia-New Zealand-US (ANZUS) agreement in 1951. It also joined the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FDPA), in 1971 consisting of US, UK, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore. On the other hand, India after independence, adopted a foreign policy based on the principles of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and non-alignment.

It was only after the end of the Cold War that the two countries started to look at bilateral relations through a new prism. New Delhi's 'Look East' policy of 1991 and

market reforms of the early 1990s created considerable interest in Canberra. Alongside, Australia's change of attitude towards Asia in general and India in particular and especially its 'Look West' policy 1994, played a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for bilateral relations to make strides.

In recent years, Australia and India have recognized each other as natural partners. As Australia looks forward to adopting the Indo-Pacific world view, it has emphasised relations with its western neighborhood, especially India. At the same time, India's reinvigorated 'Act East' policy, focused on its extended eastern neighborhood, has brought Australia in India's ambit of interest. The recent visit of the Indian President Ram Nath Kovind in November, 2018, the first-ever Indian Head of State's visit to Australia, reflected the upward trajectory of the India-Australia relationship.

POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC RELATIONS

In the strategic and political spheres, it is important to note that the two countries have reiterated their complementary vision for the Indo-Pacific on various occasions. India's vision for the Indo-Pacific, which is 'home to a vast array of global opportunities and challenges,' emphasises a 'free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.' On the other hand, Australia was the first country to officially use the term Indo-Pacific in its Defence White Paper, 2013, and has stressed on the need for 'an open, inclusive and rules-based region'. India and Australia have converging security interests, particularly in seeking security and stability in the larger Indo-Pacific region. Reciprocal Prime Ministerial level visits in 2014 and the Australian Prime Minister's visit to New Delhi in 2017 provided impetus to the bilateral relationship. During Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott's visit in 2014, the long awaited 'Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement' (CNCA) was signed. Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi's visit in 2014 was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Australia in 28 years. During his visit, a 'Bilateral Framework for Security Co-operation' was agreed on for deepening and expanding security and defence engagement between the countries. Earlier, a 'Joint Declaration on Security Co-operation' was signed during the visit of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, in November 2009, emphasising bilateral cooperation within the regional multilateral frameworks like East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper of 2017 highlights the relationship with India as a major bilateral and regional partner of first order importance to Australia in the Indo-Pacific. India and Australia are also engaged in the 'Quad' consultations along with the United States (US) and Japan. Further, both are engaged in various multilateral bilateral platforms, including IORA, ASEAN+8 Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus), East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Australia also supports India's inclusion in the APEC.

In the past, notwithstanding positive developments in the bilateral relationship, there was some political ambivalence on both sides, particularly when it came to playing an active role to build a stable regional order in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Security co-operation between the two has been slow to develop. This is in part because of differing attitudes towards the role of China and the US in regional affairs, particularly as Australia tries to maintain a balance in its relationship with the US, China and India and does not want to be caught in a zero-sum game. India has also been cautious about Australia's strategic commitment in the region. Therefore, geopolitics continues to be a tricky area.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY CO-OPERATION

The Defence relationship between the two has developed steadily under the solid foundation laid down by the 2006 'Memorandum of Defence Cooperation', signed during Australian Prime Minister John Howard's visit to India. The 2013 Defence White Papers of Australia emphasised strong shared interests and key security partnership with India. Both the countries have agreed to extend defence cooperation to cooperate in research, development and industry engagement.

The security relationship between India and Australia will inevitably be spearheaded by maritime co-operation. For both Canberra and New Delhi, their security and prosperity are intrinsically linked to their surrounding waters. For Australia, with its two-ocean geography, 99% of Australian exports are transported by sea. Similarly for India with its long coastlines, 95% of its trade by volume passes via sea route. Therefore, safety and security of crucial sea-lanes remains a priority for both countries. Multiple challenges threaten the maritime security in the region, including inter-state conflicts and changing geopolitical dynamics, now reinforced by energy politics and challenges from an array of non-tradi-

tional threats. India and Australia being the two important navies in the region, with their enhanced maritime capabilities, can help not only by bilateral co-operation but also by taking along other littorals as a part of multilateral efforts to maintain maritime order. Both the countries played an important role in the reinvigoration of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in 2013 and together, both had brought issues related to maritime security centrally to the IORA's agenda for the first time by forming a 'working group on maritime security'. Both countries need to play a crucial role in the future as well for strengthening the regional architecture in a co-ordinated manner.

Navy to navy co-operation, given shared maritime security interests like the Indian Ocean littorals, has been crucial. Navies of the two countries have participated in various multilateral and regular bilateral exercises. The Australian Navy regularly sends ships (since 2003) to participate in 'Milan', a biennial exercise hosted by the Indian Navy at Andaman Nicobar Islands. In the latest 10th iteration of 'Milan' concluded in the Andaman Sea in March 2018, HMAS Larrakia of Australia participated along with other foreign ships. The Indian Navy also sends ship to participate in the multilateral 'Kakadu' biennial exercises, which is hosted in northern Australia. This year INS Sahyadri participated in the 'Kakadu Exercise' at Port of Darwin, Australia in August 2018.

Fruitful interactions have taken place among the navies of the two countries. The most significant recent development in the bilateral naval cooperation has been the beginning of bilateral maritime exercises, AUSINDEX. The Bilateral Maritime Exercise between India and Australia began in 2015. The third iteration of the sophisticated anti-submarine exercise was held from 2nd-14th April, 2019 in Visakhapatnam. This year's exercise had the highest number of units thus far. Australia and India continue to build robust people-to-people links between our defence forces through visits including those at the level of Service Chiefs, regular Naval, Air Force and Army talks, regular personnel and training exchanges at Defence Staff Colleges and training institutes. Such exchanges and interactions help in generating ideas, information exchange, promoting interoperability and building confidence.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Recently, economic aspects of the relationship have been a primary focus area in bilateral ties. Five agreements were signed during President Kovind's visit in November, 2018, to push education and business links between the two countries. In 2018, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade released a report titled 'An India Economic Strategy to 2035: Navigating from Potential to Delivery.' The idea of an independent report was announced by the former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, during his visit to India in April 2017, to identify opportunities for Australian businesses in India and consider India's growth trajectory up to 2035. The report highlights that India's grow-

ing economy offers more opportunities for Australian business over the next 20 years than any other single market. India's total trade in goods and services with Australia for 2017-18 was \$18 billion, including imports of \$14 billion and exports of \$4 billion. India is a lucrative market for Australian natural gas, coal, LNG, and now uranium, after the CNCA in place. Australia is well-placed to supply India's industrial and infrastructure development needs. At the same time, Australia's limited domestic manufacturing base provides an opportunity for India to contribute to Australia's imports of manufactured goods and particularly refined oil. Efforts are being made to expand the product basket.

However, on the downside, despite several rounds of negotiations since 2011, the progress on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) has been slow. The focus at this stage therefore, should be on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). There is immense potential to be tapped in building closer economic partnership between the two countries in the coming years.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE

India and Australia also share a vibrant people-to-people connect. India contributes significantly in terms of immigration, tourism and student exchange to Aus-

tralia. Over 60,000 Indian students contribute roughly 45.4% of total international students in Australia. India is also Australia's ninth largest market for tourists which is expected to grow further. Indian diaspora constitutes 3% of Australia's population, which can be leveraged in building strong People to People (P2P) ties.

CONCLUSION

For India and Australia, with the geographical proximity of a common ocean and growing trade, closer security relations will enhance mutual understanding and facilitate practical cooperation. The year 2019 has been particularly significant as it has been the year of general elections in both countries. The continuation of Modi government in India and Morrison administration in Australia will provide continuity in the bilateral relationship. At the same time, it offers an opportunity to explore prospective areas of positive cooperation. In essence, Australia continues to show strong interest in strengthening relations with India, not only as a trading partner but also as an emerging strategic partner. With a push on the economic sphere and broadly shared objectives of stability, openness and rules based order for the region, it is important that the two countries should start engaging deeply as key strategic and economic partners now.

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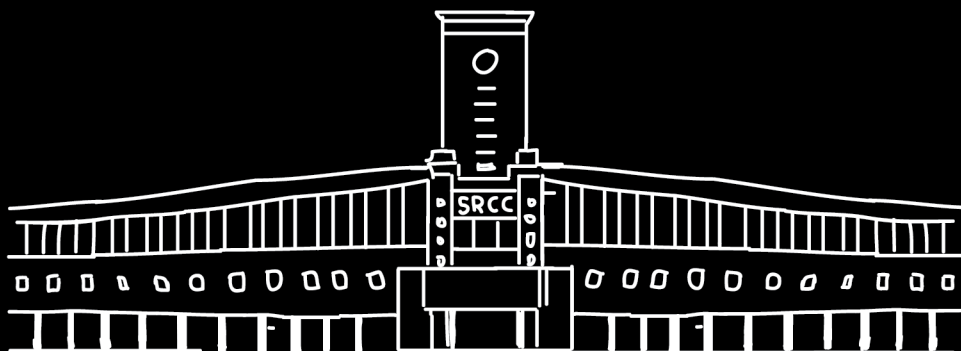
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