

# AAKROSH

ASIAN JOURNAL ON TERRORISM AND INTERNAL CONFLICTS

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New Developments in the Indo-Pacific Geopolitical Arena  
**ASHOK KAPUR**

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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE  
Situation in Kashmir  
**MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD)**



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CENTRE FOR SECURITY AND STRATEGY  
INDIA FOUNDATION, NEW DELHI



# *EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVE*

## Situation in Kashmir

MAJ. GEN. AFSIR KARIM (RETD)

### **GILGIT BALTISTAN(GB) REGION**

In 1935, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir was persuaded to lease the Gilgit Wazarat, north of the Indus and its dependencies, to the British for a period of 60 years. It was, however, made clear in the lease agreement that the leased area would remain an integral part of the Kashmir state.

The British government terminated the lease agreement of Gilgit Wazarat in 1947, and the region reverted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The political agent of Gilgit handed over his charge to Brigadier Ghansara Singh, the governor appointed by the maharaja.

Major William A. Brown, a British officer who was the commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, however, sabotaged the legal transition with the aim of facilitating the occupation of this region by Pakistan. 'Brown and his second in command, Captain A.S. Mathieson, used the Scouts to stage a revolt to take complete control of the Gilgit Agency and offer it to Pakistan.'<sup>1</sup> Whether Major Brown was acting on being promised a better position or was carrying out orders from above is not known. The annexation of the Gilgit Agency against all international rules by Pakistan placed Hunza, Nagar, Punial regions and neighbouring tracts of the Karakoram mountains under Pakistan's control in the autumn of 1947.

The Gilgit Agency and the neighbouring areas were named 'The independent Republic of Gilgit'. This so-called republic opted for Pakistan immediately. The Gilgit Scouts were now dispatched to Baltistan to assist in the occupation of this region also by Pakistan.

The Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region is the starting point and a show piece of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China's Belt and Road Initiative. Pakistan is planning to declare this strategic region as

the fifth province of Pakistan, with a view to meet China's concerns about the unsettled status of GB. Pakistan's plan to change the constitutional status of the region is to provide legal cover to the CPEC. By notifying the so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution (13th Amendment) Act 2018, the Pakistan government has created a dangerous precedence. The Chinese are fully aware of India's position and its concerns about China's activities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

This move obviously raises concerns in India as this region belongs to India and this move could put a question mark on the future of some other regions of strategic importance of Kashmir which are under occupation of Pakistan.

## **KASHMIR SITUATION TODAY**

Kashmir was relatively peaceful till last summer, but then a series of events suddenly changed the situation. The BJP got a strong foothold in Kashmir, and the PDP joined hands with it to form a shaky coalition under Mufti Mohammed Saeed, who wanted to please all and went to the extent of thanking separatists and Pakistan. After that, he got nothing from any side from this unnecessary gesture to separatists and Pakistan. It obviously pleased no one in Delhi. The victims of floods of September 2014 received little compensation, and this displeased all Kashmiris with the Mufti government. They believed in Pakistani propaganda that the PDP government will agree to the abolition of Article 370 and agree to provide special camps for Saniks and Kashmiri pundits to reduce Kashmiri Muslims to a minority in Kashmir. This largely undermined and subverted the PDP government under Mehbooba and greatly helped Pakistan and its supporters to start a new phase of insurgency. This phase gained greater momentum after the killing of Burhan Wani by the security forces. Thereafter, the security forces had to be involved in a big way; they did a good job by killing a large number of dangerous terrorists both of Pakistani and Kashmiri origins. Pakistan was, however, able to create a situation when perhaps for the first time, separatists and mainstream Kashmiris of the valley joined hands.

## LIKELY FUTURE COURSE IN KASHMIR

There is much speculation that separatists will cooperate with the recently declared governor's rule. It is, however, most unlikely that these diehard Pakistani agents will ever change their spots and risk being eliminated by Pakistan intelligence and jihadi groups. Another topic of current discussion is the possibility of Pakistan being inclined towards peace now. Here again, as of now, there is no indication to suggest that Pakistan will stop its proxy war against India. It is training larger groups to infiltrate across the border; a large number are hiding all along the LoC, waiting to cross at a given signal. Pakistan is also training and encouraging a large number of local youth to take to terrorism. Pakistan is far more confident today about hurting India because it has China as a strong ally, whose aims are somewhat similar to those of Pakistan.

The local population today is far more disgruntled than ever in the past, so why should Pakistan agree to cease hostility against India? In fact, all factors point out that Pakistan will intensify operation in Kashmir. In the past, the youth in Kashmir had to be coerced to join the militancy run by Pakistan. Now local militants outnumber the Pakistani elements. Moreover, the current militancy is supported by a very large segment of the Kashmiri population; militants from well-to-do families and many youths with higher education are joining the local militants; a new phenomenon of parental support to militant youths has also been witnessed lately.

The present turmoil, unlike that in the 1990s, has support of the general public and for one armed militant, there are hundreds of unarmed stone-pelting supporters. Far more dangerous than the armed militants is the public support for them. Our aim should be to douse their anger if we want to cripple indigenous militancy. Armed militants can be killed by bullets, but public anger cannot be doused by aggressive police or military action. It is obvious that a joint political movement led by the centre must be launched in Kashmir. In this political drive, both the ruling party and the opposition must be equal partners.

The first requirement is to reach the youths and their parents and prove to them the dangerous and selfish motives of the top separatist leaders, who are promoting the fortunes of their families at the cost of the

common Kashmiris. It should be made clear by presenting facts and figures that the separatists and other Pakistani agents are leading them to their ruin. Extensive use of social media and other means should be made to counter Pakistani propaganda and to expose its paid agents in the Kashmir Valley.

At the end, some parts of the speech of the British minister for countering extremism, Baroness Williams, at an Observer Research Foundation (ORF) conference on tackling insurgent ideologies are worth quoting, as the methods adopted by that country to counter extremist viewpoint have great relevance to such problems in Kashmir:

- ‘vigorously countering extremist ideology – making sure every part of government is taking action to confront extremist narratives that run contrary to our shared values
- ‘actively supporting mainstream voices – especially in our faith communities and civil society
- ‘disrupting the most harmful extremists – using all of the tools available to us and prosecuting those who break the law, and
- ‘building more cohesive communities – by tackling segregation and feelings of alienation which can provide fertile ground for extremist messages
- ‘Let me be clear, this is not about limiting free speech or about enforcing British values overseas. This strategy is about ensuring that individuals’ freedoms, such as the right of women, or minorities, to take a full part in society, are protected.’<sup>2</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, hand list of Papers of Lieutenant Colonel P. C. Garrett.
2. Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Baroness Williams of Trafford. *UK-India Working Together to Counter Extremism*. Published 12 June 2018, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-india-working-together-to-counter-extremism>>.

# New Developments in the Indo-Pacific Geopolitical Arena

ASHOK KAPUR

*President Trump has emerged as a major hurricane in the international political and economic system. He campaigned on issues which define his current actions, and thus his claim that he is fulfilling his campaign promises is valid. He promised to make America great again and to reverse several major Obama-era policies. His rejection of the Iran nuclear deal is one example of his motivation to undo Obama's legacy. He rejected the Obama policy of strategic patience with North Korea and replaced it with a rhetoric of fury and fire against Kim Jong Un's missile and nuclear program, and the use of crude rhetoric ('my nuclear button is bigger than yours') managed to get Chairman Kim to stop missile testing and to stop threatening Hawaii and Guam and the West Coast of the US. To Kim Un's credit, he changed his rhetoric and acted swiftly by offering confidence-building measures: he released three US citizens who were in North Korean custody on various charges and destroyed a North Korean testing site in the presence of foreign journalists, and to Trump's credit, he used zigzag diplomacy much to the dismay of traditional diplomats: first he accepted Kim's offer to meet and talk, which was relayed to Trump by the South Korean president. This reinforced a pattern of North Korean–South Korean talks. Later, when North Korean officials made derogatory comments about Vice President Mike Pence, Trump complained that Kim's tone had changed following his second visit to China and Trump cancelled the 12 June meeting. Trump was quick to imply that China's role in Kim's second visit to China indicated that China had its own agenda to impede Trump–Kim negotiations in a conciliatory manner. Trump's quick action in calling off the*

*summit led Kim to urge resumption of the talks. Thereafter, three senior North Korean generals have been removed and replaced by flexible younger generals. This suggests that Kim is cleaning up his domestic base to move towards a negotiated settlement with Trump.*

## INTRODUCTION

The East Asian geopolitical arena is complicated because the Korean War has a long and bitter history since 1950; the interests of Russia and China lie in checking the expansion of American influence in the East Asian area, and a divided Korean peninsula suits their interests; and now North Korea is not a Chinese or a Russian client state. A little-known fact is that North Korea has territorial claims over some northern parts of China and these are longstanding ones. Although Xi has vast powers following his elevation recently to emperor status, Trump has called out China for its trade practices (the US has been ripped by theft of its intellectual property, says the Trump administration) and recently the Pentagon claimed that China broke its promise of 2015 not to militarise the South China Sea. But still President Xi is a friend of Trump; he helped the US against Kim by accepting UN Security Council economic sanctions. But China's record of implementing the sanctions it has accepted is dubious and shows calculated ambiguity. It is saving face at the UN on the one hand and helping North Korea on the other hand to keep its foothold in North Korean affairs. Trump is also following a zigzag approach with China. It applauds China's cooperation at the UN Security Council on the Korean sanctions file but, on the other hand, deplores its trade practices and theft of US intellectual property rights. With North Korea, Trump claims that he has a policy of maximum pressure; with China, the level of pressure is not maximum – the threat to declare China a currency manipulator has not been exercised, but the threat to apply tariffs is being implemented and the aim is to induce Xi's cooperation in bilateral and regional issues and to secure better trade relations which reduce the US deficit with China. Trump's China trade policy is part of a wider pattern to improve US advantage in trade relations with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) – Canada and Mexico – and EU countries and to penalise Iran for its policies in the

Middle East because, Trump claims, the Obama nuclear agreement with Iran gave away billions of dollars, which enabled the mullahs in Iran to invest in the expansionist and disruptive influence of Iran in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and poses a threat to the security of Israel and Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab countries. US-Russia relations are a side show at the moment, but even here Trump has provided lethal weapons to Ukraine (unlike Obama), strengthened the defence position of the Baltic states and offered a spirited defence of freedom and security to Poland last year in a visit to Poland and now there is talk of having a US armoured division stationed permanently in Poland, which would be a major escalation in US-Russia relations. He has reduced the US commitment – financial and diplomatic – to Pakistan because of its support of the Haqqani and other terror groups while India remains a strategic partner, apparently for the long term. This is evidenced by the fact that the US diplomatic narrative now routinely speaks of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ world, which presumably covers the area between Iran and East Asia, including the South China Sea, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region and South Asia; secondly, recently the government announced that the US Pacific Command will be called the ‘Indo-Pacific command’. This is an organisational change and not simply one of rhetoric.

Trump has emerged as the proverbial bull in the ‘China plus shops’ because he is now threatening and interacting with traditional US rivals – China, Russia and Iran – against traditional US allies – Canada, Mexico and EU – on trade matters and is trying to build a strategic partnership with North Korea and India and eastern European states. Thus far, the Trumpian bull has created volatility in the ‘China plus shops’, and at the moment of writing of this article, it is unclear how the process will evolve and what the likely results will be. However, the observers and the practitioners need to follow the developments, test their analytical skills by understanding the variables in play and form assessments that go beyond the superficial and anti-Trump-driven agendas of CNN anchors and their paid commentators who are heavily invested in the anti-Trump narrative. To determine whether or not Trump has an agenda beyond the crudities of his twitter feeds, one must dig deep to see whether there is a design in his zigzag approach to domestic and international politics and

negotiations with his enemy list. Undoubtedly, unpredictability is Trump's calling card, but is there a method in his endgame?

## ANALYSIS

Trump's unconventional approach to diplomacy and military strategy draws on his business experiences, and the main points of his thinking must be studied because his actions are shaping the making of the Indo-Pacific world now. Of course, he is not the sole practitioner – there are many others involved in the region – Iran, Pakistan, India, South East Asian powers, China, Japan, South and North Korea – but Trump's daily twitter feed is not only shaping the US news cycle but also is forcing his friends and enemies to respond to his actions in real time. He has created dilemmas for them which require them to make choices and to rethink their agendas.

Here are some key points from Trump's book *The Art of the Deal* (1987):

- Don't be intimidated.
- Be efficient and tough.
- Have a flair for the dramatic.
- Prioritise trust over experience.
- Have people report directly to him rather than through a bureaucracy.
- If accused of wrongdoing, tell them to go to hell, ask them to prove allegations and finally settle without admitting guilt.
- Don't back down from a fight if attacked.
- There is no need to be cordial with enemies; it is OK to make crude public insults if attacked or betrayed.
- Enjoy the media circus; monitor it closely so as to manipulate it. Bad publicity is better than no publicity, but good PR is better than bad PR; controversy sells.
- Play to people's fantasies, know what people want and stretch the truth to build a good image. People like something which is bigger, greater and spectacular.

- Bullies act tough, but they are cowards. Politicians react to fear of bad press because it loses votes. Paying politicians does not help.
- Think big. Aim high; settle for less if you get what you want.
- Protect the risk; the gains will follow; own a casino but do not gamble yourself.
- Be flexible, develop your options but do not get attached to a particular deal.
- Be confrontational if you see unfairness, fight for something you believe in, but deliver the goods; don't con people.

Trump is in the second year of his presidency. It is early to assess the success and failure of his approach, but one point is already clear. He is not cordial with his domestic and international enemies and does not recognise the difference between enemies and allies. Within America, he is against the anti-Trump media – the never-Trumpers in his Republican party and in the Democratic party. He is opposed on China and Russia, and he rejected the policies of European globalists and multilateral diplomacy advocates among his allies (Canada, Britain, France, Germany and the EU) and suspects multilateral institutions which are in control of entrenched bureaucracies. He criticised NATO allies last year for the failure of many to pay their dues. He complains repeatedly about the unfair trade practices of his allies – Canada, Mexico, EU, China and South Korea and Japan. In doing so, he has eroded the difference between allies and enemies and sees them as unfair practitioners. In his playbook, traditional friends appear to be enemies in terms of US interests and traditional enemies (e.g., North Korea, China and Russia) are potential friends if they can be induced to cooperate with the US. Between trust and experience, Trump has chosen to rely on his own experience and that of a small circle of loyalists and reject the experience of the Washington–New York beltway's entrenched practitioners and that of NATO allies. Trump is seeking to change the global strategic and economic architecture by wrecking existing international arrangements, such as the Iran nuclear deal.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS THAT POTENTIALLY SHAPE THE INDO-PACIFIC SPHERE**

In the week of 27 May 2018, Trump operated at breakneck speed, where his 'Art of the Deal' approach was in play. His actions challenged seasoned leaders in North America (Canada and Mexico), Europe (France, UK, Germany and EU) and the Indo-Pacific world (Iran, North Korea, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea). His actions blurred the distinction between allies and enemies, and countries in both categories were targets of Trump's actions. His actions were like that of a person throwing grenades in the opposition's camp and letting the others throw them back or diffuse them. By escalating controversies, he was not being cordial with allies; he was aiming high and protecting his risks (think big and settle for less if it satisfies your needs), and he was following another principle: be flexible, maximise your options and use your leverage. He was also playing on the theme 'Bullies act tough, but they are cowards' and they fear the pressure of public opinion. This formula would apply to China, which had threatened reciprocal trade tariffs in response to Trump's tariffs, as did the EU countries, but then seemed to come up with limited tariffs and showed a willingness to negotiate with the US while they blew hot at the G-7 meeting in Quebec City (7 June 2018). He threw another 'grenade' at the G-7 meeting by suggesting that Russia should be allowed to rejoin the group despite Crimea; this was a message to Putin and to the G-7 countries to be open-minded about dealing with adversaries. Trump is indicating that Putin cannot be wished away and his cooperation is required in dealing with the futures of Syria, the Iran nuclear deal, Afghanistan-Taliban-Pakistan issues and the bilateral relationship with the US.

Here are the noteworthy actions by Trump in recent weeks.

- He reversed his decision not to attend the Singapore summit with Kim Jong Un and took the unusual step to invite Kim Yong Chol, North Korea's number 2 leader, close confidant of Kim Jong Un and former spy chief. Following a meeting with Secretary of State Pompei in New York, he was asked to visit the Oval Office to deliver a letter to Trump from Kim Jong Un. This meeting had substance; it confirmed Trump's attendance at the Singapore

summit, and it showed Trump's flair for the dramatic as he held court with the press on the grounds of the White House for almost an hour. At the same time, Trump is protecting his risk: 'I will walk away from the meeting if it fails', but on the other hand, I will invite Kim Jong Un to visit Washington if it succeeds. He gave a hint: the meeting has failed if I use the term 'maximum pressure' after the summit. This is public diplomacy, and it is transparent. It cuts out the influence of a cumbersome and leaky bureaucracy in interpreting the developments in the Singapore summit and communications with the American people and it sidelines the position of the American press in US foreign affairs.

- When the trade tariffs were announced earlier in the year, Trump had suspended their implementation pending negotiations with the countries involved. During this eventful week following failure of the bilateral talks with China, the EU, Canada and Mexico, the tariffs were back in play, with criticism from trade experts and the allies.
- NAFTA was placed on hold because the leaders could not agree to a deal.
- The Pacific command was renamed the Indo-Pacific command. This was a consequential organisational change which showed the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific world and the secondary position of the central command. Note that during the Cold War, the central command was in the driver's seat in Middle Eastern and South Asian affairs where US interests with the Shah of Iran and various Pakistani military governments had a privileged position in the State Department and Centcom deliberations about policies. It was through the prism of US interests in the Middle East (in Greece, Iran and Pakistan in particular) – this constituted the inner circle of Western defence according to Sir Olaf Caroe and the State Department under Dean Acheson and his successors – that the United States' India policy was shaped as a part of the Indo-Pakistani balance of power in US, UK and Pakistani thinking. Trump has broken this pattern of thought by tying his India policy to developments in the Asian sphere and the maritime

community of like-minded countries which neighbour China. In sum, the establishment of the Indo-Pacific command is a major organisational and attitudinal shift which places the focus on the strategic and economic affairs of the world between Iran and East Asia. In doing so, Trump's America has reframed the strategic orientation on challenges in the Indo-Pacific world.

- Even as Trump is embroiled in a nasty spat with his allies and China about trade issues, General Mattis, the defence secretary, told an international audience in Singapore that China had broken its promise made in 2015 not to militarise the South China Sea and now it was seeking to intimidate and coerce countries in the region. Following President Xi's elevation to emperor status in the recent People's Congress, Xi appeared to emerge as a global leader. He was proclaimed as such in the 2017 Davos conference because of Trump's anti-TPP, anti-Climate Accord and other protectionist measures. Xi was seen as the strategic and economic giant whose rise to superpower status was inevitable and as a replacement of United States' global leadership. But growing US pressures against China in the South China Sea, in trade disputes and in the implementation of sanctions against North Korea indicate that China and Xi are in the crosshairs of the Trump administration and now China's emperor must decide how to escalate and negotiate with Trump's America. In this situation, orientation inscrutability is not a useful tool in Chinese diplomacy if the enemy is pushing towards the gates of the emperor!
- Finally, a Russia summit between Trump and Putin is being planned despite the controversy about Russia-Trump collusion. This is still in an early stage of planning, but it reveals Trump's interest in bringing Putin on board as a dialogue partner in Middle Eastern affairs. Putin has assets in relation to policies affecting Israel, Syria and Iran, and if history is a guide, one must not underestimate the potential that the two major powers could find common strategic ground, as they did during the Cold War from the late 1950s onwards.

- A momentous decision by Trump is to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal whereby Iran undertook not to enrich weapons-grade uranium until 2025. Trump objected to this deal as a bad one, in contrast to Obama's claim that this was a masterpiece of strategy. Trump objected that the deal gave Iran's mullahs billions of dollars, which enabled the Revolutionary Guards to intervene in Syria and Lebanon (with the Hezbollah), threatened to expand Iranian influence throughout the Middle East, including Iraq, eventually threatened Israel, and could help bring Iranian influence to the shores of the Mediterranean in the worst-case scenario. Trump also complained that the Iran deal did not curb Iran missile development.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRAN CASE

Along with the trade dispute with China and the allies, the Iranian action is an example of how Trump is able to rock the boat and create dilemmas for others and force them to make choices, in this case, trade with the US or trade with Iran. Pulling out of the Iran deal is not simply a bilateral US-Iran issue. It brings into play the interests of the signatories to the deal – France, Germany, China, Russia and the UK, as well as European companies that benefit from massive trade deals with Iran. It brings into play the future direction of Iranian actions and influence in the Middle East and the position of the Revolutionary Guards and the mullahs in the making of Iranian external policies.

Trump led the charge against the Iranian nuclear deal throughout his campaign to be president and has kept it alive during this presidency. However, Israel, which opposed the Iran deal, has strengthened Trump's hand by a daring intelligence operation which led Mossad to acquire the archives of the Iran nuclear program. The Mossad raid and recovery of the Iran nuclear documents was revealed in April 2018 in a highly publicised press conference by Israel's prime minister. About 100,000 documents were recovered by Mossad. Israel is leading the charge that Iranians lied about the peaceful nature of its program. Instead, say the Israelis, firstly

the Iranian program had military intent since 2001 and after accepting the nuclear deal with Obama, Iran handed over the military program to her Ministry of Defence in written orders, and secondly its military sites are not open to international inspection. By signing off against the Iran deal, Trump has triggered sanctions against Iran and European companies which had gained cover through the Iran deal to pursue major commercial deals in energy and aerospace. France's TOTAL and Airbus are affected. Siemens (Germany), Lukol (Russian oil giant), Royal Dutch Shell (another old giant) and India's Reliance Energy are affected. The sanctions are in two phases. From 6 August, they apply to currency exchange and carpets, and from November, they apply to oil and gas and shipping interests.

The Europeans governments and major companies are in a pickle because sanctions and their threat create uncertainty in the business world. For instance, UK companies had planned to invest about US\$600 billion in trade and infrastructure in Iran over 10 years. The EU invested about US\$25 billion in trade with Iran last year, compared to about US\$200 million in trade between The US and Iran. These figures show that the stakes for the European governments and companies are high and their objection to Trump's action are presented as an attack on a rule-based world order and multilateralism.

Apart from the commercial interests involved in the Iran-Europe trade, Israeli and Saudi security interests in the fight with Iran and the US interest in curbing the spread of Iranian influence in the Middle East, there is a debate about the philosophical underpinning of the Iran deal. Europeans and the Obama administration had believed that if sanctions are lifted, Western commerce with Iran would flourish, Iran's economy and society would modernise and its expansionist impulses would be tamed and the benefits would flow to the Iranian people. This did not happen. The Iran deal strengthened the hands of the mullahs and the Revolutionary Guards, its expansion into Middle East situations continued and poverty remained a major issue for the Iranian people. The belief that the nuclear deal was likely to strengthen the hands of the moderates did not materialise. In short, the policy assumption of the Western negotiating partners that trade and lifting of sanctions would modernise Iranian economy and society and tame its expansionist impulse did not materialise. This was the second

error made by Western planners, that is, the use of a false premise to change policy. Earlier, President Clinton and his advisors believed that bringing China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) would increase China-West economic cooperation, which would tame China's nationalist and expansionist actions. This did not happen, and now American practitioners realise that China is capitalist, not democratic, and it has used its 'developing country' status in the WTO to promote its economic interests without giving up its authoritarianism, and in the process, it has engaged in intellectual property theft on a massive scale. US companies that wish to invest in and trade with China are required to transfer their technology to Chinese companies, which are under government control. In sum, the theoretical underpinning is the same but with an erroneous assumption or expectation about the benefits of China and Iran trade. Another link is that Iran has benefitted from the transfer of Chinese and North Korean nuclear and missile technology via Pakistan in the past (and vice versa for North Korea). Just as the North Korean denuclearisation issue will take time to solve (one will first need to unravel the scope and roots of its nuclear and missile program), the links between North Korea, Iran, Pakistan and China will take time to unravel before the issues are resolved by transparent means. In a world given to bad behaviour, this is not an easy task. In the twenty-first century, there are two competing views of 'hope and change'. Obama's view gained him the presidency and gave birth to the Iran nuclear deal – the hope was that Iran would reform itself with billions of dollars in sanctions relief. President Clinton's acceptance of China as a member of the WTO was based on the belief that West-China trade would enable China to reform itself. Clinton-Obama expectations have turned out to be untrue, and now it is Trump's turn to show whether his 'fire and fury' approach will tame North Korea, Iran, China and the Europeans.

### **THE TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT, BACKGROUND AND CONSEQUENCES**

The 12 June 2018 summit meeting between Trump and Kim in Singapore was a high-drama and high-stakes event which had the marks of Trump's

‘Art of the Deal’ and the reality show *Apprentice*. Trump took a calculated risk and prepared American and world opinion by signalling that he was ready to walk away from the meeting if he found that Kim was not sincere about seeking a real change that required complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. The meeting went well, both leaders were respectful with each other and the photographs showed forward movement on an issue which a few months ago had threatened to lead to a nuclear showdown. Trump’s critics complained that the short declaration was vague – it was high on intent and low on results, and this was a concern because the Kim dynasty had held meetings in previous years, agreements had been signed and money had changed hand and still the North Korean programme had moved ahead to the point that North Korea now possessed the capacity to hit US targets in the Pacific and the mainland. So, what is different this time?

Students of international strategic affairs should study the Trump-Kim dynamics carefully as an important case study of how to become friends with a brutal and dictatorial regime to gain a reduction of regional tensions and possibly peace and harmony in the future.

Several actions on both sides have led to a pattern of engagement between the two on issues which have resulted in 70 years of war (the Korean War): bad behaviour by the Kim dynasty (abduction of Japanese women from their fishing villages, killing of Kim Jong Un’s uncle and half-brother, involvement in counterfeit currency and drug trade); development of nuclear and missile trade between North Korea, China, Pakistan and Iran; and the open defiance of the international community through rejection of the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) after signing it and through public display of repeated nuclear and missile threats and nasty public statements against Trump and the US.

What did Trump do? He answered Kim’s nasty rhetoric with his own bad rhetoric and both leaders called each other names, which was unbecoming. But it appears that the exchanges indicated reliance on psychological warfare to get into the other person’s mind. When Trump told Kim that his nuclear button was bigger than Kim’s, the remark seemed to register.

Trump was escalating the tension with Kim by building the pressure on him. Playing on China's Xi's unease about North Korean missile and nuclear proliferation, the Trump administration sought and gained Xi's cooperation against Kim. UN ambassador Nikki Haley used her diplomatic skills and clear messaging to secure two UN Security Council resolutions which unanimously imposed and strengthened international sanctions. (She is the unsung heroine in this saga and as an aside, she is worth watching as a potential US presidential candidate in the future). China is on the US watchlist because it has a habit of signing declarations and then failing to implement them. Almost 90% of North Korea's trade is with China, and the border is porous and sanctions can be easily violated. US intelligence watched the activities of Chinese and North Korean ships along with Russian ones. This pressure worked, and the UN action as well as sanctions which hurt Kim's capacity to let his generals live well gave Kim a choice: negotiate with Trump to denuclearise sincerely or remain addicted to your missiles and face an uncertain future.

Kim chose diplomacy, recognising that Trump acknowledged that the young Kim was talented, had established North Korea's status as a nuclear state and was ready for a bargain which gave his regime security and his country prosperity. Trump offered him both, provided he denuclearised. Trump also promised that sanctions would not be lifted until denuclearisation was verified and complete.

Kim showed the world, including sceptical US practitioners (especially the retired generals) but not the partisan democrats and CNN commentators who give knee-jerk opposition to anything Trump says or does, that he was taking a different path to change the past history of conflict. Last year, he asked to meet Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and a businessman. This indicated a desire to open up North Korea to international business. The result of this initiative is unknown, but its mere reporting indicates that Kim was open to business. But the first sign of a thaw and change in direction was Kim's decision to participate in the Seoul Olympics by sending his charming sister as his representative. Then events moved rapidly. The president of South Korea met with Chairman Kim, and they shared their common Korean heritage and a desire for regional harmony and peace. The public meeting between the two was at the demilitarized

zone (DMZ) line. This meeting – with the symbolic crossing of the armistice line, by President Moon’s invitation to Kim to cross into South Korea across the line and by Chairman Kim’s invitation to the president to cross the line into North Korea – broke the hostility between the North and the South following the Korean armistice in 1953. Kim asked Moon to set up a meeting between Kim and Trump. This was a seminal event which showed the speed with which Kim was moving, and Trump’s quick acceptance of Kim’s invitation showed that he was not using traditional diplomacy and he was adopting a top-down approach in dealing with a pressing international problem. US practitioners were horrified that Trump did not go through the usual diplomatic method to first study the invitation and then place conditions on the meeting which would signify Kim’s international status. Trump’s diplomatic style showed that he was acting on his instincts rather than a conventional diplomatic pattern of behaviour.

What are the results of the Singapore meetings, what are the issues which remain to be discussed and what are the variables in the management and settlement of the denuclearisation issue? Before the Singapore meeting, Trump indicated that the issue required a process and a good relationship between him and Kim. Apparently, the Singapore meeting demonstrated the establishment of a process and a pleasant relationship between the two leaders. Trump indicated that sanctions would remain in place pending denuclearisation, but there is a discussion that China favours a strategy of a freeze for a freeze, that is, linking sanctions relief to a freeze in North Korean weapons testing. Nikki Haley had rejected the approach in the UN Security Council debate as ‘insulting’. But China has not abandoned the approach as it enables China to keep Kim in its orbit, it helps Xi maintain his leverage with Trump and China is satisfied if the military drills between the US and South Korea are ended. The endgame is not in sight at present (June 2018), but a pattern of goodwill gestures between Trump and Kim has emerged even as Kim and Xi have frequent meetings to coordinate their strategy towards Trump. Kim returned three Americans held in labour camps before the Singapore meeting. Kim promised to return the remains of a few thousand US soldiers killed in the Korean War. He has blown up a testing site in the presence of journalists but without verification by international or US inspectors. He acknowledged that the past history of

regional conflict had to change towards peace and harmony. His meetings with South Korean president Moon indicated a desire to build on the Korean heritage of the two countries. Trump has made goodwill gestures too, predicated on his view that good-faith diplomacy was necessary to implement the North Korean commitment to denuclearisation. Trump has suspended the military exercises between South Korea and the US, but the exercises suspended in August 2018 are meant to check the efficiency of the command-and-control set-up of the two countries, and a test of the success of good-faith diplomacy is whether the exercises in April 2019 are suspended; those involve the full might of the command, control and troops in action. Another test is whether there are curbs demanded or placed on the disposition of US B-1 bombers which threaten North Korea and China and whether there is a demand to withdraw 28,000 US troops based in South Korea. Also, will Kim show goodwill towards Japan by releasing the Japanese women who were abducted by North Korean agents and will there be a demand by Kim to weaken the US-Japan military arrangements. Xi, with his new uncontrolled powers and with an increasingly nationalistic population, has the ambition to replace the US as the dominant world power, and he is likely to use North Korea as a pawn in the pursuit of his ambition. Trump's America knows this, and it will squeeze Xi on trade, the South China Sea and UN sanctions against North Korea until there is complete, verified and irreversible nuclear disarmament. But Xi and Kim want denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula while Trump speaks of North Korean denuclearisation. The former requires the retreat of US power from the region, which suits Xi's ambition. Kim is playing a shrewd game by coming out of the isolation of the hermit kingdom. He has met Xi three times, the South Korean president two times, Mike Pompeo twice (in his capacity as the CIA director and later as secretary of state) and once with President Trump and expects to meet President Putin later this year. Intelligence and diplomatic analysts will need to assess the scope and results of each meeting to determine whether good-faith diplomacy is actually occurring and particularly to assess whether China is above board in its public declarations or whether it is acting in a predatory manner and as a double-faced country.

The future endgame depends on the discussion in the media. If CNN is followed, and CNN only hosts anti-Trump critics, and hence its reporting is one sided and misleading, then Kim played Trump, Kim was the winner and Trump got a vague declaration which was nothing new compared to previous declarations and promises by the Kim dynasty. But there is another side. The context of the Kim-Trump summitry is different compared to the past. The US now recognises that Kim has an arsenal to hit US targets and can come to the table as a confident negotiator. But what does he want now, asks Trump? Kim has two choices. He can stay addicted to his missiles and act like the region's bad boy, which even upsets the normally unflappable Chinese, who worry about a regional nuclear war and/or implosion of North Korea and the spectre of millions of North Koreans flowing across the Yalu into China. The second alternative, Trump and Americans think, is that Kim may acquire an addition to money and the good life for North Koreans and himself. On this point, the reader is urged to read the British press, which shows the dynamics differently than CNN. CNN 'news' is a one-day story, but British journalism is still real journalism and it gives a futuristic picture which is plausible and rests on a play between two human emotions: fear of war and greed of profit. I'll give two examples: the column by Roger Boyes, a seasoned journalist, 'Trump Has Calculated That Kim Is for Sale,' of 13 June 2018 (*Times*, digital edition) and 'Investors Abuzz as Kim Hints of Bonanza', (World News, *Sunday Times*, 17 June 2018, digital edition). This article points out that foreign investors are looking for rich investments in a resources-rich country worth up to 7 trillion UK pounds. Trump alluded to the attractive beaches and wondered how the condos would look on the beaches (a natural thought for the property developer). If Kim takes the second path, South Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Indian and Western investors will rejoice at the opening up of the last frontier – the hermit kingdom. But this is a scenario, not an actual development, and the road towards this aim is long and bumpy.

Although Kim told Trump, Moon and Pompei that he is committed to denuclearisation, this is not a done deal. China is the fly in the ointment because it wants to keep North Korea in its orbit, it does not want Kim to move into the American orbit and it does not want American influence

to expand in the Korean peninsula, and furthermore, it has problems in dealing with the US in trade and South China issues. China prefers a linkage between North Korean nuclear and missile freeze in exchange for incremental sanctions relief, a strategy which delays denuclearisation of North Korea, keeps the US on a leash and prolongs the process, which maintains China's leverage, as in the past. Kim's concessions to the US – return of remains of US servicemen killed during the Korean War, the return of four Americans held in prison on various charges and the missile testing freeze, which reduces tensions and fear of nuclear war – are important goodwill gestures, but they are marginal to the desired endgame: denuclearisation and the opening up of North Korea to US diplomatic influence and capital flows from South Korea, Japan and the US, along with Chinese capital, into North Korea.

Still, a roadmap is emerging towards securing denuclearisation. General Jack Keane, a retired four-star general, told Fox News on 23 June 2018 that two important steps have emerged. The first is that North Korea is expected to provide a full disclosure of its nuclear and missile inventory and the location of its testing and storage sites. The US already possesses some information but if North Korea withholds the full information, it would create a trust deficit. Secondly, if this step is fulfilled, the US will assemble international inspectors to verify the North Korean arsenal. But the US will not rely on International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. Apparently, although General Keane did not say so in so many words, the IAEA is not trusted by the Trump administration because its reporting in the case of Iraq was misleading and it has been certifying the Iran nuclear deal which Trump denounced and it is seen as a politicised UN agency.

At the time of the writing of this article, the major developments initiated by the Trump administration during June 2018 have far-reaching consequences which can go in different ways.

- Tariffs can lead to trade wars and global recession.
- Trump's relations with allies in Europe and Canada can lead to an irreparable breach and affect trade and NATO issues, and this possibility will take shape at the next NATO meeting, in July 2018.

- The US-China relationship could face a nosedive on trade disputes, the controversy over the South China Sea and the growing Western (US, UK, France) patrolling in the South China Sea.
- The preceding three points indicate a growing pattern of conflict on economic and military questions, but there is a wrinkle in this view. It is speculated that European allies and East Asian allies of the US, on the one hand, are critical of Trump's tariffs, his attack on NATO allies and his opposition to international agreements, such as the Obama-era Iran nuclear deal and the climate change agreement, and on the other hand, share Trump's opposition to China's intellectual theft practices and secretly support his strategy to confront China on the issue. Trump's action enables them to blame Trump for the deteriorating international environment but at the same time gives them the cover to question China's predatory practices. When Secretary of State Pompei calls out China's Xi by his public statement that China's so-called openness as a globalist is a joke, Pompei is undermining Xi's claim and image that Trump's protectionist measures enable China to fill the void as a successor to US leadership. So Davos 2017 should be compared with Singapore 2018 to show the contrast, where the latter exercise shows US assertiveness against China in the South China Sea (refer to the statement by General Mattis that China broke its 2015 promise not to militarise the South China Sea) and the trade tiff between the US and China shows that China does not have a straight path to global leadership, where the Europeans will fall into the Chinese orbit; and the Trump-Kim meeting shows a desire to control the nuclear file and to build a new relationship between the US and North Korea on the initiatives by South Korea, North Korea and the US.
- By pulling out of the Iran nuclear accord, Trump has created a dilemma for Iran and his European allies. If Iran and the European partners in the nuclear deal decline to negotiate a new deal that curbs Iran missile activity and regional expansionist moves and the US follows by imposing sanctions on Iran and European

companies that trade with Iran, then Iran and European governments and companies will have to choose between trading with the US or trading with Iran. This dilemma is not easily resolved, and the aim would be to create a situation of manageable instability in the relationships with Iran and to look for signs that her actions show restraint in the region.

- Finally, the conversion of the US Pacific naval command into the Indo-Pacific command implies the ascendancy of India's position in US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean/Pacific Ocean spheres. The changed designation of the biggest military command in the US recognises the connectivity between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and a connectivity between maritime trade, diplomacy and military security. The upgrading of this command shows that the US navy and the underlying commercial and diplomatic activities are here to stay, and this command's elevation is a sign that the US is now tied to the problems of a militant and expansionist China in the South China Sea and vis-à-vis China's neighbours. When China was admitted to the WTO with President Bill Clinton's strong support, the assumption was that inside the tent of the WTO, China would conduct itself as a global citizen and its nationalism would be changed. Instead, China has emerged as an economic predator, especially in the sphere of intellectual property; it has become a strong capitalist state and its nationalism has grown instead of being tamed. The image now is that China is a predator and its claim about its commitment to globalisation and multilateral institutions is a cover for its self-serving predatory policies. China's Xi may find himself in a game of chicken. He smiles a lot and talks nice things, but can he walk the talk when he is confronted by Pompei, who call his claims about openness a joke? Xi and the Chinese do not like to lose face, and Pompei, ex-CIA director, would have his professional experts tell him about Xi's personality and the weak spots in his well-cultivated profile. Whether Xi openly confronts American practitioners or comes up with subtle and meaningful changes on the trade and military fronts remains to be seen. Trump and his negotiators openly

question Xi's 'Made in 2025' campaign as a cover for his predatory practices, and Japan is planning to spend billions as a counter to Xi's road and rail project. India opposes this project for strategic reasons, but they are not limited to her concern with road building in Kashmir. It reflects a concern with the long-term strategic, diplomatic and economic rivalry between the two Asians.

In sum, the undercurrent of international thinking in Europe, the Middle East and Asia will require continuous, serious study on the principle that what is obvious is not necessarily the most significant in a changing and volatile world.

# India-Pakistan Peace: Is It Viable or Just Wishful Thinking?

RAMTANU MAITRA

*We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.*

*—From US president John F. Kennedy's speech, Rice University, Houston, TX; 12 Sep. 1962*

Having failed to appreciate the depth of animosity and mistrust that has dominated India-Pakistan relations over the years – nay decades – international political observers long ago concluded that establishment of peace between India and Pakistan is virtually impossible.

In terms of the degree of difficulty, the task perhaps is on a par with that of establishing peace between the Israelis and Palestinians and is considered a notch above landing astronauts on the moon. Despite such apparently insurmountable difficulty, it is self-evident that peace between India and Pakistan would not only serve both countries well but also enhance the security of the region, opening new avenues for greater opportunity for both.

This is now being discussed more by Asian observers. As of now, there is little to suggest that the authorities in either Islamabad or New Delhi have identified this objective as one of their near-term priorities. Yet there may be a glimmer of hope on the horizon in light of some changes that have taken place. To carefully assess the potential for progress in Indo-Pakistani relations today, it is first necessary to set the context. And that necessitates a quick review of modern-day history.

## THE BRITISH COLONIAL CURSE

The seven-decade-old animosity between India and Pakistan began in 1947, on the very day the British Raj left the subcontinent after almost 300 years of the divide-and-rule policy that sharpened the division between the two major religious groups, Hindus and Muslims. Before departing, British officials drew the borders in 40 days, using out-of-date maps and dated census materials to partition the subcontinent on the basis of religious demography, thus creating within it a nation for the Muslims – Pakistan – in two parts, East and West, separated by about 1,000 miles of Indian territory.

Having thus plunged the entire subcontinent into chaos and violence, the departing colonials handed over the reins to the newly formed India and Pakistan. Compounding the chaos, the colonials left 565 independent princely states, whose lands comprised two-fifths of the subcontinent and that had a population of 99 million at the time. The rulers of these princely states were given the option to join either India or Pakistan.

The violent riots between Hindus and Muslims that the British had nurtured to break up the subcontinent got worse following partition and began to metamorphose from hostility between the Hindus and Muslims into that between India and Pakistan – not altogether an unexpected fallout since one of the nations was formed for the people belonging to a particular religion. Israelis and Palestinians know well the type of conflict that the formation of a religious state sparks and perpetuates.

Neither should it have been surprising that this state of impassioned chaos quickly transformed into a full-fledged war between the two new nations. One of the princely states, situated between India and Pakistan in the north, Jammu and Kashmir, became the first major battlefield. In October 1947, Pushtun tribesmen, accompanied by Pakistani troops wearing the garb of tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by Islamabad in 2010), invaded the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Troubled by the increasing deterioration in law and order and earlier raids, which culminated in the invasion of the 'tribesmen', the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed the Instrument

of Accession to merge the state with India and requested armed assistance from India.

Indian troops stopped the Pakistani troops from advancing but did not push them back to where they came from. A divided and disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir was thus formed. Since Islamabad did not recognise the Instrument of Accession, it continues to claim that the state belongs to Pakistan; and for years, Islamabad has deployed well-armed terrorists to weaken Indian control there. Pakistan's objective has all along been to keep the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir unsettled and awash in blood.

Since that first war over the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947, animosity has become more pronounced. India and Pakistan have fought two more full-fledged wars – the last one, in 1971, resulted in the separation of Pakistan's eastern wing from its western wing and its conversion into an independent nation state, Bangladesh.

## **BEYOND SIMLA: HOW TERRORISM WAS BORN IN PAKISTAN**

Following the 1971 war, on 2 July 1972, the late Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and the late Pakistani president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Simla Agreement. The agreement, a substantive treaty, not only settled the war (i.e., brought about withdrawals of troops and an exchange of PoWs) but also presented a comprehensive blueprint for good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan. The Simla Agreement still exists – not so much in spirit but on paper – a historic document that cannot be wished away.

The Simla Agreement begins thus:

The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan are resolved that the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace in the subcontinent so that both countries may henceforth devote their resources and energies to the pressing task of advancing the welfare of their people.<sup>1</sup>

On the status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the agreement states:

[T]he line of control resulting from the cease-fire of December 17, 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side. Neither side shall seek to alter it unilaterally, irrespective of mutual differences and legal interpretations. Both sides further undertake to refrain from the threat or the use of force in violation of this line.<sup>2</sup>

India can rightly claim that it stuck to the Simla Agreement in both letter and spirit, but Pakistan never did because, as every Indian knows, its single-most-important and influential institution is not the parliament but the military.<sup>3</sup>

The Pakistan army's humiliating defeat in Bangladesh at the hands of its Indian counterpart perhaps deepened anti-India feelings within Pakistan and certainly hardened the resolve of the military elite to hold fast to power and seek every opportunity for revenge against India.

The cold war greatly strengthened the Pakistan military's hand. The policies that governed that period – which officially ended in the late 1980s but continued to influence global political dynamics until at least the arrival of the new millennium – made the prospect of peace at any level between India and Pakistan illusory. For the anti-Soviet West, Pakistan was an important geopolitical ally to undermine the Soviets and their allies, including India. Beholden to Saudi Arabia, Britain and the United States, the Pakistani military was 'used' to serve the anti-Soviet 'democrats' and Islamists. The Islamist mob was recruited, armed and provided guidance. Its anti-India jihad was viewed by the anti-Soviet West as a mere blip on the radar screen. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and its decade-long floundering there, allowed the West and the Saudis to build up Pakistan as a hub of armed orthodox Islamists who 'hated' everyone with passion, including the Hindus of India.

At the same time, the British curse continued to plague India-Pakistan relations. Britain harbours politicians, bureaucrats, immigrants and Islamists who spare no effort to stoke the fires of the Kashmir conflict, organising those who are ready to lay down their lives to establish an

independent Kashmir. Even if such efforts were met with little success, the London British empire servers needed the conflict to maintain Britain's influence over the area and to prevent India and Pakistan from working together for the development of their respective countries. As a result of hundreds of years of involvement in the Indian subcontinent as colonial rulers, during which time they 'educated' a stream of Indian and Pakistani elite, the British have assets on both sides of partitioned Kashmir. Some are old assets, who have kept the pot boiling all this while; and some are new, and decidedly more violent.

Understandably, the shadow of the past wars has made it difficult to push ahead with an admittedly feeble peace process. Still, efforts were made over the years; but, repeatedly sabotaged, those efforts failed to lay a firm foundation for a real peace process to mature.

## PROGRESS AND SETBACKS

A landmark date in efforts to lay the foundation for peace between the two countries was 21 February 1999, when the prime ministers of two countries – Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and Mian Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan – signed the Lahore Declaration. This declaration committed India and Pakistan to intensifying their efforts to resolve all issues. However, just three months after Indian prime minister Vajpayee's symbolic ride on the inaugural bus trip from New Delhi to Lahore, the promises of that declaration were abandoned when Pakistani military-backed infiltrators triggered a limited war in the Kargil region of Kashmir. That infiltration was organised by Pakistan's then chief of army staff, General Pervez Musharraf, who soon took over the reins of Pakistan – in a military coup in 2000. Musharraf had kept Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif mostly in the dark, while the latter was discussing resolving various issues with his Indian counterpart.<sup>4</sup>

Still, Vajpayee did not throw in the towel. In July 2001, he held a summit in Agra with Pakistan's then chief executive Pervez Musharraf, who had been instrumental in the Lahore Declaration's demise. Prime Minister Vajpayee and Musharraf had one-on-one talks for more than eight hours during the two-day summit. The talks lasted for twice the scheduled time, and the release of a joint nine-point 'Agra Declaration'

was repeatedly put off. The talks covered many bilateral issues but concentrated on the Kashmir dispute. Pakistan insisted that Kashmir was the core issue, while India wanted a more broad-based dialogue linking ‘cross-border terrorism’ in the Valley.

In his speech at the banquet hosted in his honour by Indian president K. R. Narayanan, President Musharraf said he believed that there could be no military solution of Kashmir but that the dispute must be resolved peacefully. In his breakfast meeting with Indian media, Musharraf said that the Kashmir dispute remained central to ending enmity with India.<sup>5</sup> Within months, however, on 13 December 2001, Pakistani terrorists attacked the Indian parliament in New Delhi.

At that point, the prospect of resuming a fresh round of peace talks seemed unattainable. Nonetheless, the potential of a stalemate in the protracted crisis, and international pressure for resolution, once again led the two sides to sit at a negotiating table in 2004. The resulting composite dialogue lasted for five years, during which public diplomatic gestures by Indian and Pakistani leaders facilitated discussion and softened attitudes among civil society and the media on both sides. More importantly, closed-door dialogues made substantial progress and helped in drafting the conditions for peace. In addition to confidence-building measures (CBMs), including the resumption of a New Delhi–Lahore bus service, and a number of concessions on the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, those backchannel negotiations launched in February 2004 brought India and Pakistan somewhat closer to an agreement on Kashmir, the Siachen Glacier and Sir Creek – the key outstanding issues.

But true to the oscillatory nature of the India-Pakistan relationship, the progress of the composite dialogue was derailed after the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. It was not until the ‘cricket diplomacy’ between Pakistan prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh at the March 2011 Cricket World Cup semi-final between India and Pakistan that the two sides agreed to resume talks.<sup>6</sup>

Since the monstrous 26–29 November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, Pakistan-deployed terrorists have carried out a number of attacks on Indian security forces. One such notable attack took place on 2 January 2016, on a forward airbase near Pathankot, Punjab. This attack is significant

because less than three weeks earlier, Indian prime minister Narendra Modi, on his way back home from Kabul, had stopped in Pakistan. ‘Officials in Delhi and Islamabad told The Hindu that Mr. Modi had telephoned his Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from Kabul to greet him on his birthday, and during the call, made plans to travel to Lahore to wish him personally a few hours later.’<sup>7</sup> That was a major gesture, but Islamabad had no compunction in letting that one go to waste, as well.

Despite those setbacks – and the sabotage organised from Rawalpindi, exploiting Pakistan’s weak and fragile political system – there was no dearth of attempts made to start talks between the two to ease tensions. Peace, of course, was never on the horizon since one party was aiding and abetting terrorist attacks against the other party.

## **THE TRUST ISSUE**

None of the peace efforts succeeded in easing tensions to a level at which serious discussions could take place. Perhaps the main ingredient missing was trust. Pakistan’s governments, which fell under military domination soon after the country’s inception, could never get past the knowledge that the break-up of the subcontinent was not acceptable to most Indians. Hence, these governments have insisted that Indian authorities will continue trying to undo the partition forever. This paranoia was spread throughout Pakistan by the military and later by the Islamic jihadis. It has been used to justify the Pakistan military’s retention of the levers of power and to argue that a democratic form of government under weak political elites would endanger the nation’s existence. Rawalpindi has never stopped chanting this mantra.

As American academic Ashley Tellis notes in a 2017 paper for the US-based think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the pre-partition slogan of the Muslim League Party, ‘Islam in Danger’, ‘which served as the galvanizing trope that forced the British Crown to cleave its proudest imperial possession, remains etched in the psyche of the contemporary Pakistani state.’ And in the interim, the ‘Islam in Danger’ slogan has been effectively replaced by ‘Pakistan in Danger’, thanks to the joint efforts of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Tellis notes that former Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressed this paranoia during his historic 1999 visit to Lahore. He used oratory and poetry to convey a significant message to the people of Pakistan when he visited Minar-e-Pakistan, boldly stating: ‘A stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India’s interest. Let no one in Pakistan be in doubt. India sincerely wishes Pakistan well.’<sup>8</sup>

Tellis adds: ‘Even the expectation of Pakistan’s collapse and its reintegration into India—ideas some Indian politicians entertained in the immediate aftermath of independence—have long disappeared from the national imagination. Since at least 1971, all of India’s prime ministers have desired stability in Pakistan if for no other reason than to avoid the spillover effects of domestic crises across their borders.’

Quoting Daniel S. Markey, a well-known American analyst of the subcontinent, who stated, ‘Most Indian strategists see Pakistan as a huge mess, not one India would want to inherit even if it had the military tools to sweep across the border unobstructed’, Tellis sums up: ‘India merely wants to be left alone: it desires that Islamabad and Rawalpindi concentrate on their own domestic challenges and, recognizing the futility of pursuing an unattainable parity with New Delhi, permit India to advance its great-power ambitions in ways that will not undermine Pakistan’s security given its possession of nuclear weapons.’<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, however, Pakistan’s increasing isolation and lack of leverage on the issue of Indo-Pakistani relations is apparent. As Tellis also states in the same article, ‘India’s clear geopolitical, economic, and military superiority implies that Pakistan cannot compel it to revise the status quo by force. Nor does India have to offer any compromises to procure peace because it is both a satisfied and dominant power.’<sup>10</sup>

Some analysts are even more blunt, arguing that, in fact, Pakistan has no legitimate claim at all against India. In a 2016 article, American academic C. Christine Fair, an associate professor at Georgetown University’s Security Studies Program, succinctly summarises why Pakistan continues to disregard peace with India as a necessity. Says Fair: ‘Indians and the rest of the world must understand that the Pakistan army will always be a spoiler of even the most well-intended peace overture from Pakistan’s beleaguered and besieged civilians. Once one realizes this, one

must confront the very real question of the ultimate aim of this dialogue, because it cannot produce peace. Worse, any dialogue with Pakistan on “outstanding disputes” rewards Pakistan by reaffirming the deep state’s contention to its yoked citizens and wearied international community that there is, in fact, a territorial dispute.

‘In fact, there is no territorial dispute in which Pakistan has any defensible equities. Neither the Indian Independence Act of 1947 nor the Radcliffe Boundary Commission accord Pakistan any claim to Kashmir. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 averred that the sovereigns of princely states could choose which state to join. As is well-known, Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh only acceded to India after Pakistan dispatched irregular forces to seize the terrain by force. In fact, Pakistan makes this claim based upon the Two Nation Theory, its communally bigoted founding ideology.’<sup>11</sup>

## **CHANGES IN THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

With that as the background, conventional wisdom says peace between India and Pakistan is well-nigh impossible. However, conventional wisdom has limitations grounded in time and environment. Global political situations, particularly in the region, have changed, although those changes have yet to be fully reflected in Pakistan’s domestic political environment.

Changes in the region during the last few years have been extensive. Barring any unforeseeable event that may engulf the region in the coming years, these changes could bear healthy fruit. To begin with, the rise of China and India as major economic powers and their close relations with Russia could make the Eurasian zone, along with South East and East Asia, the motor for development in the coming decades.

While India has done very well in maintaining, and even upgrading, its relations with these two areas of future prosperity, Pakistan has also made some progress. What makes India’s success particularly laudatory is that it has brought under its umbrella of economic partnership such important East Asian countries as Japan and South Korea, and to its west, almost all of the Gulf nations, including Iran. India’s success with the Gulf countries and Iran, all Muslim nations, obliterates another piece of

conventional wisdom, expressed mostly in the West – namely, that India is allergic to Muslims.

There is, however, still one major caveat in the Eurasian zone (minus the Middle East) – and that is Afghanistan, a bordering neighbour of Pakistan where hostilities continue with no solution in sight. This particular situation has also created a rush of bad blood between India and Pakistan because the Pakistani military is actively involved in preventing any large-scale interaction between Afghanistan and India, undermining the necessity and will of these two countries.

Among the environmental changes, topmost in the list is the growing prowess of Russia, India and China within the five-country – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – BRICS organisation. Although domestic problems within South Africa and Brazil have stymied the growth of BRICS as a major economic powerhouse, that has not undermined the growth of Russia, India and China, nor has it slowed their economic and political interactions.

In addition to BRICS, interaction between Russia, India and China has been given a boost in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The SCO was originally formed as the Shanghai Five – China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – in 1996. Following the inclusion of Uzbekistan as a full member in 2001, it was given a rebirth in Shanghai in 2001 and renamed the SCO. In 2017, India and Pakistan became full members. The SCO also has six dialogue partners, including Afghanistan and Iran.

Set up as a confidence-building forum to demilitarise borders, the organisation's goals and agenda have since broadened to include increased military and counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing. The SCO has also intensified its focus on regional economic initiatives, like the recently announced integration of the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union.

The potential for the SCO to be effective is manifold. Apart from the fact that its leadership rests in the hands of the 'Big Three', the organisation has provided another platform for the heads of states of Russia, India and China to interact directly and deal with the regional security situation, which remains acute. By including Pakistan as a full member, and having

Afghanistan as an observer, the 'Big Three' have created an opportunity to deal with terrorism and drug-trafficking issues – which, if not dealt with firmly, could affect the developmental plans of the 'Big Three' and weaken their ability to play a global role.

Terrorism already affects all three directly. In India, the terrorism instigated and orchestrated from Rawalpindi and Islamabad in the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir continues despite various measures undertaken by New Delhi. In addition, heroin/opium moving in from Afghanistan through Pakistan on the west has bolstered financing of the terrorists in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and has unleashed a drug epidemic in the Indian state of Punjab. Moreover, in India's north-east, where many small but violent secessionist groups operate, heroin and synthetic drugs are coming in from the east. New Delhi is concerned about these developments and would like to shut off the conduits.

In Russia, particularly in the northern Caucasus, Islamic jihadis have established their presence over the decades. Among the most affected areas are Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia and North Ossetia; but the terrorists have reared their heads in Tatarstan, as well. Maintaining stability and enhancing prosperity of these areas are important for Russia since they adjoin the 'stan' countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) – all Muslim states that were part of the erstwhile Soviet Union and are now part of the SCO, where Russia is a major power to reckon with.

## **WORK CUT OUT FOR CHINA**

For China, a terrorist-free Eurasian zone is the key to making its visionary Silk Road Economic Belt (henceforth identified as the Belt and Road Initiative, or the BRI program) viable and beneficial for the host and recipient countries. The BRI runs through the 'stan' countries to Russia and Europe and also to the Gulf countries through Iran. China has invested heavily in this enterprise to make these transport corridors a success. However, if China does not step up to the plate in dealing with the drug traffickers and terrorists who roam virtually free in these sparsely populated

areas, Beijing's dream of interlinking China through roads and railways with central Asia, Europe and the Middle East could end up in tatters.

China has also invested heavily in Pakistan, where terrorists, some of who operate under the protective umbrella of Rawalpindi, remain active. China is planning to invest some \$60 billion in Pakistan to upgrade roads and railways, to build a port in Gwadar City (which may turn into a Chinese naval base over the years) on the Arabian Sea close to the Iranian border and to build hydro and coal-based power plants. This scheme, which is very much underway now, is known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and one of its arteries passes through the secessionist and terrorist-infested Balochistan to Gwadar – a key destination of China.

It is important to recognise that the BRI is not a one-shot deal. Its utility will be realised on the basis of its 24/7 operations spread over the coming years. That means the entire area around these installations has to remain terrorist-free and stable. This is a task that China must undertake using the SCO and its bilateral relations with the countries involved. Moreover, when allowed to develop fully, China-India relations have an enormous potential to assist in accomplishing this difficult task.

However, if China does not step up to the plate to stop the Rawalpindi-instigated terrorist actions in the Indian part of Jammu and Kashmir and to force Pakistan to drop its opposition to building a land-based trade route between India and Afghanistan, the relationship will remain limited, and the assistance that could be gained for the BRI will not materialise.

## **ANOTHER POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Another noticeable change in the area which could help start a real peace process between India and Pakistan is what could be described as the apparent 'rapprochement' between Russia and Pakistan. During the Cold War, Moscow considered Islamabad a facilitator of its enemy (for good reason). Pakistan had surreptitiously provided the United States a base in Peshawar to carry out surveillance on the Soviet Union. That was exposed in the 1960 U-2 spy plane incident. Then, following the Red Army's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and throughout its decade-long stay in that country, Pakistan was a conduit for the West and Saudi Arabia to

recruit, train and arm Islamic jihadis brought in from Arabia and beyond. The entire financing operation by the West and Saudi Arabia to strengthen these jihadis to kill Russian soldiers and their Afghan collaborators was run through the Pakistan military, under the leadership of General Zia-ul-Haq, the then president of Pakistan. Moreover, there were reports of direct participation by Pakistani troops during that period alongside the jihadis.

Although the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1989, the bad blood between Moscow and Islamabad continued to flow for almost another three decades. But today that seems to have changed. Lately, Russia has extended a friendly hand toward Pakistan. Since 2015, the chiefs of Pakistan's army, navy and air force have travelled to Russia. The flurry of high-level exchanges between the two nations resulted in the signing of a deal for the sale of four MI-35 attack helicopters to Islamabad.

In September 2016, about 200 troops from the two countries were involved in a two-week-long military drill named 'Friendship 2016'. A Russian ground forces contingent came to Pakistan to participate in the first-ever joint military exercises. The move was widely acknowledged as a sign of increasing defence ties between Moscow and Islamabad, as the latter was also thinking to buy advanced Russian warplanes.<sup>12</sup>

If the Russia-Pakistan 'rapprochement', which is still in an early stage, does, indeed, materialise, it would help India. It would mean that Russia, a well-wisher of India, in addition to China, can bring full-court pressure on Pakistan to stop aiding the anti-India terrorists and act as a responsible nation by accepting the basic principles on which an India-Pakistan peace process could begin.

## TELLTALE SIGNS

There is no guarantee that the changes mentioned above will automatically create the environment for starting a peace process. On the ground, there is no such indication yet. Only recently, Pakistan refused to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire understanding and not use its violations at the LoC to provide cover for infiltration. The Indian government says that in 2018 alone, there have already been more than 1,000 violations from the Pakistani side of the 2003 ceasefire agreement between New Delhi and Islamabad.<sup>13</sup>

These violations are clear indications that the Pakistan military wants to continue its anti-India jihad, throwing caution to the wind. On the other hand, some of the recent statements by top Pakistani military officials indicate a subtle shift in tone. In April, Pakistan's chief of army staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, invited Sanjay Vishwasrao, the Indian military attaché, and his team to the Pakistan Day military parade in Islamabad. The Royal United Services Institute (a British defence and security think tank whose director is Karin von Hippel, former chief of staff to US general John Allen, special presidential envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter-ISIL) described the gesture as 'historic', and noted: 'And in a sign that ties between the two foes are warming up, Javed followed this two weeks later by saying that the Pakistan military wanted peace and dialogue with India.'<sup>14</sup>

As RUSI also pointed out, 'Bajwa himself, speaking at RUSI last year, announced that "the Pakistan army is now no more insecure and feels confident of its future and that he welcomes Indian participation in Pakistan's flagship infrastructure project, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor".'<sup>15</sup>

Another statement issued recently by Pakistan's military spokesman is also significant. Speaking at a press briefing on 4 June, Pakistan military spokesperson Major General Asif Ghafoor said he wished for all issues between the nuclear-armed neighbours to be resolved through dialogue. 'War is a failure of diplomacy,' Ghafoor said. 'We are two nuclear states, there is no space for war. So dialogue continues. India has always been the one to back out from dialogue, not Pakistan.'<sup>16</sup>

Do these statements imply that the paranoia, the policy to bleed India and the siege mentality that have driven Rawalpindi's policies for decades have begun to wane? It would be naive to assume that that has happened. However, it is likely that the impact of changes in the region are beginning to be felt; and that, if these changes continue in the right direction, the beneficial effects will be too powerful for Rawalpindi to resist.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding, a note on border disputes, the kind that exist between India and Pakistan, is in order. These border disputes should not be allowed to perpetuate animosity and hostility. Look, for example, at Sino-Indian relations. India and China have a longstanding, fundamental dispute over their borders. Both sides understand that the border disputes will not be settled in the near term. As Indian academic Mohan Guruswamy put it in one of his articles: ‘Both countries agree that these are legacies of history and cannot be solved in the short or medium term and are best left for the future...’<sup>17</sup>

Yet Sino-Indian relations are developing in many other directions. The economic interactions, as well as bilateral trade, are growing. As mentioned earlier, both countries have taken leadership roles in both BRICS and the SCO. There is a realisation in both New Delhi and Beijing that the scope exists for cooperation, which would not only benefit the two nations but also have a global impact. Pakistan, an ‘all-weather ally’ of China, should take note of this.

Finally, it is also important to note that the mere cessation of hostility, or simply ceasing the firing along the borders, is not the entire definition of ‘peace’. While cessation of hostility is the necessary first step, what makes ‘peace’ worthwhile is the development of interaction between the two countries at every level – ensuring security, strengthening economic relations, engaging in joint innovative projects, setting up transport corridors and enhancing bilateral trade. To make India-Pakistan peace worthwhile, both sides need to embrace the whole process.

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# Inculcate Friendly Relations with China: But Be Ready for Confrontation

J. K. VERMA

*Prime Minister Modi has inculcated friendly relations with all neighbours, including China. He has met Chinese president Xi several times in the last four years. In informal meetings, several important issues, including the 73-day Doklam standoff, were discussed. It was decided that the defence forces of both countries should have more communication and adopt additional confidence-building measures. The special representatives, who already have had 20 rounds of talks, should try to pursue the border issues more vigorously. There are several irritants between India and China: border disputes; shelter to Tibetan refugees, together with Dalai Lama; India's special relations with Bhutan; a rising trade imbalance; China's close relations with Pakistan, etc. However, efforts should be made by both countries to resolve all issues amicably. At present, China's economy is five times bigger, and it spends six to eight times more on defence in comparison to India. It is the third-biggest exporter of arms in the world. China has also developed infrastructure in the border areas, while India is far behind. Hence, India should inculcate friendly relations with China but continue preparing for any eventuality as China is an expansionist country.*

Kautilya, statesman and philosopher, mentioned in his book *Arthashastra* that '[y]our neighbour is your natural enemy and the neighbour's neighbour is your friend,' Hence India, which is surrounded by seven neighbours, including Afghanistan, must be vigilant. Out of these neighbours, China is the most powerful and, unfortunately, India has several issues with China, including border disputes.<sup>1</sup>

Prime Minister Modi, who understands the importance of neighbouring countries, including China, has met Chinese president Xi Jinping several times in the last four years. On 9 June 2018, Modi held a bilateral meeting with Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the two-day summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at Qingdao.

In the meeting at Qingdao, China agreed to supply hydrological data of the Brahmaputra River, as well as permitted India to export non-Basmati rice and more pharmaceutical products to China. Both leaders agreed to enhance bilateral trade from the current US\$84.44 billion to US\$100 billion in 2020. Besides reviewing the overall bilateral relations, they also evaluated the progress in implementing the decisions taken at the Wuhan summit. India was the only country in the SCO to raise its objections on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Modi, while appreciating the importance of connectivity and infrastructure projects, mentioned that projects must honour the sovereignty of the other country.

Modi also held a two-day informal summit with Xi Jinping at Wuhan, on 27 and 28 April, without any agenda or aides, pressure of signing agreements or anxiety of a joint communiqué. The analysts claim that both Modi and Xi met in September 2017 in Xiamen, while attending the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit, and decided to hold the informal meeting. Before the informal summit, the Indian government also showed some overtures, as in February, the cabinet secretary issued a directive to all government officials that they should not attend any event organised by Tibetan leadership. Modi also congratulated Xi on his re-election to presidency. China also reciprocated by restarting military exercises.<sup>2</sup>

The Western Theater Command of People's Liberation Army (PLA), which is responsible for guarding the Line of Control (LoC) between India and China, has also announced that soon a Chinese military delegation will visit India. The PLA spokesperson further mentioned that, at present, both sides are busy in consulting each other on the details of the forthcoming visit. The exchange of military delegations was suspended because of the 73-day Doklam standoff. The relations between both countries are normalising after the informal summit at Wuhan.<sup>3</sup>

Before the informal summit, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj also visited China and met their counterparts and discussed diverse issues of common interest. The summit was important as President Xi Jinping has become very powerful since the Chinese parliament has abolished the two-term limit, making Xi president and leader for life.<sup>4</sup>

The informal summit was important as several significant issues, including the 73-day Doklam standoff, were discussed. Doklam has been the gravest border issue between India and China in the last 30 years, and not only this, the Chinese state-controlled media issued wild threats of war to Delhi and repeatedly reminded India about the 1962 debacle.<sup>5</sup>

It was decided in the informal summit that the defence forces of both countries should have more communications and adopt additional confidence-building measures and the special representatives should try to pursue the border issues more vigorously. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, and in addition to border issues, numerous other topics, including tourism, agriculture, entertainment, export of Hindi movies and trade, were discussed.

The rising trade imbalance in favour of China, which became US\$51.1 billion in 2016–2017, was also discussed. Modi indicated that China, which has emerged as the biggest importer of agricultural products in the world, should import more agricultural and pharmaceutical items from India.

## **IRRITANTS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA**

China, which has expansionist policies and wants to become a super power, considers India as its potential rival and views India's progress with suspicion. Visibly it may show friendship with Delhi, but clandestinely, it will continue weakening India. Beijing helps and instigates Islamabad to create troubles in India. Unfortunately, Pakistan alleges that India is responsible for its bifurcation and the creation of Bangladesh and is determined to take revenge and has waged a low-intensity war against its eastern neighbour. China, which wants to weaken India, assists Islamabad in its nefarious designs. The sinister Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is

supporting diverse terrorist outfits in India, especially in Kashmir. China even supplied missiles to Pakistan so that it can stand against India with confidence.

## **BORDER DISPUTES AND BORDER TRESPASSES**

The basic reasons behind border disputes are the British legacy and misreading of the maps of the area which cover the highest mountains – a rough and inhospitable terrain. India and China have 3,488 km-long borders, which are not demarcated fully. China claims 90,000 km of Arunachal Pradesh, which it refers to as ‘South Tibet’; apart from this, China also claims about 10,000 sq. km in Uttarakhand; however, analysts point out that all these claims are for bargaining purposes as China does not have any locus standi on these areas. China has forcibly occupied Aksai Chin, which is a part of India. Pakistan illegally handed over Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 for constructing the Trans-Karakoram Tract. So far, the special representatives of India and China have had 20 rounds of talks, but the matter remains unresolved. Besides these territorial disputes, there are also disagreements regarding South China Sea.

Both countries develop infrastructure up to the last point; hence, there are several trespasses and skirmishes, as both are nuclear power nations and have strong armies. Hence, the situation becomes complex. At present, India has deployed 120,000 defence personnel and also announced that it will raise a new mountain strike corps, while China has posted 300,000 soldiers at the borders.<sup>6</sup>

## **SHELTER TO TIBETAN REFUGEES, INCLUDING DALAI LAMA**

In 1950, China occupied Tibet, but the local population revolted and the 14th Dalai Lama took asylum in India. China alleges that India assists Dalai Lama, who constituted a Tibetan government in exile in India. China also objects to the free movement of Dalai Lama in India, especially in Arunachal Pradesh and abroad. However, the present government has put some restrictions on Indian government officials attending functions

organised by Tibetan refugees, including Dalai Lama. Analysts feel that Tibetan refugees, including Dalai Lama, have been a bone of contention between India and China for the last 60 years or more and India should review its policy towards the Tibetans staying in India.

### **STAPLED VISAS TO RESIDENTS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND J&K**

China issued stapled visas to the residents of Arunachal Pradesh and J&K. After strong protests, Beijing stopped issuing stapled visas to the residents of J&K but continued stapled visas to the residents of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>7</sup>

### **INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH NEPAL**

China does not like India's special relations with Nepal. In his last term, Nepalese prime minister K. P. S. Oli had signed a trade treaty with China with the intention to reduce its dependence on India. In the present term, Oli has paid a three-day official visit to India in April and Prime Minister Modi has also made a two-day visit in May 2018, but analysts feel that Oli is very close to China and his statements were anti-India during his election campaign as well as in his previous term as prime minister. Oli is expected to visit China soon and apart from several agreements between them, it is expected that China will help in building oil storage facilities in the country and a decision would be taken about the construction of various projects in Nepal under the BRI. Although Oli visited India first and claims that he will maintain a balance between India and China, relations between Kathmandu and Beijing are much closer than relations between Kathmandu and Delhi.

### **INDIA'S SPECIAL RELATIONS WITH BHUTAN**

China is very critical of India's age-old special relationship with Bhutan. According to Article 2 of India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 2007, both countries 'shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its

territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.' Hence it is the duty of Indian defence forces to defend Bhutan from external forces, including China. In this way, Bhutan becomes a protected state of India. India has influence on the foreign, defence and commerce policies of Bhutan. India is the biggest donor of foreign aid to Bhutan: in 2015–2016, India provided US\$985 million in aid to Bhutan. India operates three hydropower projects of 1,416 MW, and three more power projects of 2,129 MW are under construction. China has border disputes with Bhutan and threatens the latter with dire consequences but because of India's backing, Bhutan feels safe. China, besides threatening, also tries to allure Bhutan into investing in infrastructure projects, just to mitigate Indian influence. China also wants to open its diplomatic mission in Bhutan. Indian intelligence agencies should keep an eye on the increasing Chinese influence in Bhutan. Generally, Indian projects are delayed, which causes problems. Hence, the government should aim for projects to be completed well within time.

## **CHINA HAS ENCIRCLED INDIA**

Beijing, which considers Delhi as its potential rival, is very active in the Indian Ocean and has more or less encircled India as it has made huge economic investments in India's neighbourhood. Myanmar leased strategic Coco Islands to China, where it constructed a signal intelligence station. China also has control over Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka became a victim of China's debt trap as Beijing invested enormously in big infrastructure projects and ultimately Sri Lanka failed to repay the debt and had to hand over Hambantota Port to China on a 99-year lease. China established a naval base on Marao Islands of Maldives, in the Indian Ocean, in 2010 and deployed a nuclear-powered, missile-fitted submarine. China has established the naval base under the garb of constructing an observatory which will monitor the weather conditions. China has assured that it will invest more than US\$50 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan will also have to invest huge amounts in various projects connecting the CPEC. China is giving loans to Pakistan for these projects at high interest rates, and the contracts of the projects will also

be given to Chinese companies at rate higher than the market, as in most of the cases global tenders will not be floated. In this way, the CPEC will be a deathtrap for Pakistan, and China will occupy not only Gwadar Port but also some arable land of Pakistan. India is rich in soft power and has a glorious past, Bollywood and a vivacious democracy, but China has hard cash and is ready to spend it on the development of infrastructure in other countries. Hence the cash-starved countries are more inclined towards China than India.<sup>8</sup>

India objects to its encirclement and has also tried to inculcate friendship with countries near China, including Japan, South Korea and Vietnam. Japan issued a statement in favour of India at the time of the Doklam standoff, mentioning that a status quo should be maintained. The United States also stated that the dispute between India and China must be resolved amicably. China has officially inaugurated its first overseas naval base, at Djibouti, on 1 August 2017.<sup>9</sup>

## **WATER DISPUTE**

China has built dams on the Brahmaputra River, which is also known as Tsangpo River in Tibet, although India objected to the construction of these dams. But in the absence of any treaty, China has not given any heed to India's protests.

## **CHINA BLOCKS INDIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE NSG**

India wanted to become a member of the 48-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), but China blocked Delhi's entry on the pretext that India has not signed the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). China also pleads the case of Pakistan for membership of the NSG as Pakistan also possesses nuclear warheads and has not signed the NPT, but Pakistan has a very poor record and Pakistani scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistani nuclear bomb, sold nuclear bomb secrets to North Korea, Libya and Iran. Hence, the world body will never allow Pakistan to join the NSG. In this way, China is blocking India's entry into the NSG and also showing to

Pakistan that Beijing is making sincere efforts to get Islamabad to become an NSG member while, at the same time, stopping its sworn enemy India from becoming one.

### **CASE OF MASOOD AZHAR**

China has blocked efforts of several countries, including India, to designate Maulana Masood Azhar, chief of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), as a global terrorist under the Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the 15-member United Nations Security Council. JeM is a Pakistan-based terrorist outfit, and Masood is a Pakistani national. China, by helping Masood in the United Nations, shows its assistance to Pakistan and this makes Islamabad and Masood more determined to infiltrate terrorists into India.

### **CHINA–PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR**

The CPEC is an important part of President Xi Jinping’s dream project the BRI. China has promised to invest huge amounts in this project, and Pakistan has projected as if the CPEC will address all the economic woes of the country. Nevertheless, India has opposed the CPEC as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), which is an integral part of India and occupied by Pakistan illegally. In fact, construction of the CPEC is a direct intervention into Indian territory, and hence Delhi has lodged a strong protest with China.

India is laying more emphasis on the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor. Although China stated that the BCIM Corridor is an important part of the BRI, India, while refuting the claim, mentioned that the BCIM Corridor was much before the BRI. India is more focused on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) trilateral highway project (India–Myanmar–Thailand), which may be significant for its ‘Act East’ policy. The analysts claim that as China is willing to extend the CPEC up to Afghanistan, it will be difficult for India to remain averse to the BRI all the time.

The Pakistan government under pressure from China passed the Gilgit-Baltistan Order on 21 May 2018. The order snatches away powers from the Gilgit & Baltistan Council and gives wide powers to the prime minister of Pakistan. China has promised to invest a huge amount in the CPEC, and some portion of the CPEC passes through Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). Hence, Beijing compelled Islamabad to pass this order as China was unwilling to invest money in disputed areas. It is expected that soon Pakistan will declare GB as its fifth state. India summoned the deputy high commissioner of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi and lodged a strong protest as entire the J&K, including GB, is an integral part of India and Pakistan is not legally empowered to make any changes in the present state. Residents of GB also protested against the order, and the police had to resort to lathi-charge and firing, in which several persons were injured. China avoided making any comment and simply stated that the CPEC is an economic project and the Kashmir problem is a bilateral issue and India and Pakistan have to resolve it.<sup>10</sup>

## **INDIA'S EXPLORATION OF OIL AND GAS WITH VIETNAM IN SOUTH CHINA SEA**

Vietnam approved a two-year extension to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) to explore oil in the South China Sea. The permission was first given in 2006, despite strong objections from China. It is a vast area and besides China and Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia and Philippines also stake claims in the area. These countries have been staking their claim for decades, but as China has strengthened its claim, all countries, especially Vietnam, have also toughened their stand. China is critical of the move and considers oil exploration in the area illegal. Analysts claim that exploration in the area is more strategic than commercial.

Although trade between China and Vietnam is growing, there is a deep distrust between both countries and China does not like Vietnam's growing security relationship with the United States, Japan and India. Vietnam is enhancing its defence and commercial relations with India and wants Delhi to play a more active and effective role in South China Sea. As China is encircling India, Delhi is also escalating relations with Vietnam

and has provided naval patrol boats and promised to supply Brahmos cruise missiles, etc. However, there is some objection from Russia; therefore, Vietnam may purchase Brahmos missiles from Russia instead of India. Delhi has also offered US\$500 million in credit line to Vietnam and will also equip two Petya-class frigates of Vietnamese navy with requisite weapons.<sup>11</sup>

## THE WAY AHEAD

India has some tactical advantages at Doklam and at a few other places, and defence analysts claim that the PLA needs more than 200,000 soldiers to evict the Indian army and capture that area. It is not easy to deploy such a large contingent with arms and ammunitions in that deserted area stealthily as Indian forces, particularly intelligence agencies, are much more vigilant after the debacle of 1962 and clashes at Nathu La in September and Cho La in October 1967. Here it will also not be wise to remind Beijing that in 1967, the PLA losses were much more than losses suffered by the Indian troops, as this will irritate Beijing. China has already built roads, bridges, railways, airfields, etc., on the border areas; hence, it is in a much stronger position than India. Delhi should also construct roads, bridges, railway lines and airfields on the India-China borders. At present, numerous projects of the Border Road Organisation (BRO), including roads, bridges and culverts, on the sensitive India-China border, are in doldrums and running behind schedule. The central government empowered the director general of the BRO to purchase construction material of up to 100 crores. It is expected that this empowerment would enhance the pace of construction of sensitive projects. The government must keep a stringent vigil on the BRO so that the construction work does not suffer because of rigmaroles of procedures.<sup>12</sup>

On 2 June 2018, India successfully test-fired the surface-to-surface, nuclear-capable Agni-5, which has a strike range of 5,000 km. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) scientists mentioned that all the electronic devices fitted in the missile worked properly. In Agni-5, the most advanced technology was used in navigation and guidance, engine and weapons. The missile has strengthened India's

defence, and India must continue strengthening itself so that it can negotiate for peace with strength.<sup>13</sup>

Recently, India also accomplished its biggest air exercise, where it showed that hundreds of aircraft can be shifted from western borders to the eastern sector, facing China.

The PLA is larger than Indian defence forces, but Beijing has also more obligations than Indian troops. China has common borders with 14 countries and has unfriendly relations with 8 neighbours. Hence, it cannot shift forces from these borders to China-India borders. Secondly, China, which has global aspirations, is threatening neighbouring countries and so the neighbouring countries do not trust China, while India has an image of a peaceful nation. India should continue assisting its neighbours honestly and genuinely.<sup>14</sup>

China opposes India's membership in the NSG as at present, China has a special position in Asia in nuclear technology and it does not want to share that position with India. Nonetheless, both New Delhi and Beijing can help each other; China can assist India in getting membership of the NSG, while India can help China in getting membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which is a multilateral export control regime of 35 countries. India got its membership while the membership was refused to China as the MTCR members felt that Chinese policies are not transparent and that it helps other countries to develop ballistic missiles.

China is improving its relations both with the US as well as with Russia. Hence, India has to be careful. Russia is becoming close to China due to the sanctions imposed by Western countries, while the US understands that North Korea has the covert backing of China. India was the only country which openly discarded Xi's dream project the BRI, which covers Asia as well as Europe. After India's rejection, other countries, including the US, Japan and European Union, had also raised doubts as the BRI is heavily tilted towards Chinese companies and smaller countries will have to take loans at higher rates from Chinese establishments and it will be difficult for them to repay. The BRI will not only make China economically strong but also strengthen China strategically. Beijing is also concerned about meetings between India, the US, Japan and Australia, where these four nations discussed developing a substitute for the BRI.

Hence, China wants India's help in accepting the BRI and also wants to distance Delhi from Washington. Indian policymakers must keep a balance between its relations with major powers of the world.

India is an active member of ASEAN, which meets semi-annually and deals with security, political, economic and sociocultural development of South East Asian countries. ASEAN is an important forum. Not only this, India has excellent relations with other important countries of the region, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and Israel, which is Delhi's strength.<sup>15</sup>

Indian security agencies should also make sincere efforts to counter Chinese information warfare. Select newspapers publish distorted news which is picked up by the international media, including the Indian media. The *South China Morning Post* of 20 May 2018 published an article captioned "How Chinese Mining in the Himalayas May Create a New Military Flashpoint with India'. The article was widely quoted in the Indian media and thus created an erroneous impression in the country. The report is not based on facts, and there is no large-scale mining in Lhuntse County. The day after this report, the *Global Times* contradicted the report and also mentioned that Chinese people did not trust the report while the Indian media was 'extremely excited' about it. The Indian media should first verify a report before publishing it as nowadays, there is more disinformation than information.

There is lot of scope for trade increase between India and China. In 2017, bilateral trade between India and China was enhanced to US\$84.5 billion, excluding trade between India and Hong Kong, which is about US\$34 billion. The bilateral trade can grow up to US\$100 billion.

China, which has global ambitions, would not like to waste its resources fighting with India. The Chinese economy is passing through a lean period, and in the case of a war, it will go further down. China will also lose the big Indian market. The Indian economy, which is rising steadily, will be ruined. China will also not like that India join the US camp as it will be detrimental for Beijing. Not only this, India should also remember that the present US president, Trump, is unpredictable; hence, India should keep good relations with the US but should not trust Trump.<sup>16</sup>

India is a big market for Chinese products, and China has surplus foreign exchange and it may like to invest it in India. It is good for both countries to be friendly, but Delhi should never forget that China has expansionist policies. So India must keep itself prepared for any eventuality. Unfortunately, at present, Indian defence forces need a lot of replenishments as the armaments have become stale. The present government is purchasing and trying to produce several articles under its 'Make in India' programme, but procurement of arms and ammunition is a cumbersome process and it consumes a lot of time and resources.

Prime Minister Modi, while delivering a keynote address at the 17th Asia Security Summit, which is also known as 'Shangri-la-Dialogue', mentioned that 'Asia and the world will have a better future when India and China work together in trust and confidence'. Modi, while emphasising India-China relations, also stated that no two countries have so 'many layers' in relations as there are between India and China. Modi, without mentioning the BRI, also pointed out the dangers of taking loans that may not be good. The state-run TV channels in China also appreciated the statement and projected it as a positive statement. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj also met her Chinese counterpart on 4 June on the sidelines of the BRICS ministerial conference at South Africa. In the meeting, both leaders conversed about how to maintain peace and enhance multilateral cooperation. Frequent meetings of top leaders as well as of other functionaries would resolve the differences before they crop up and even if differences surface, they can be reconciled amicably and the situation would not deteriorate like in the case of the Doklam standoff.

Indian security experts are worried because of the PLA flexing its muscles, especially in the Indian Ocean, but India has deliberately and diplomatically avoided any confrontation, and not only this, India also does not want any conflict between the US and China in the Indian Ocean.

India also blocked the entry of Australia in the Malabar Exercise 2017, in which India, Japan and US maritime forces took part. In this seven-day exercise, about 95 aircraft, 16 ships and 2 submarines participated. The US wanted to include Australia, while China was opposed to it, hence India's opposition must have pleased China.<sup>17</sup>

On the basis of the US Trade Representative (USTR) report on China, President Trump imposed a 25 per cent tariff on 1,300 items imported from China, worth US\$46 billion. Beijing, without wasting any time, reciprocated and increased duty on 106 items imported from Washington, costing US\$50 billion. The US is threatening more restrictions on imports from China. As the US and China are the world's biggest importers and exporters of goods, their trade war will affect all the countries, including India. On the trade dispute between China and the US, India remained impartial, although Delhi suggested that China can import soya and sugar from India, as China's agricultural imports from the US are worth about US\$20 billion. Analysts mention that because of the terse trade war between Beijing and Washington, China is strengthening its relations with Japan, India and other countries. Hence policy planners in India should keep this in mind that once trade disputes between the US and China are resolved, the latter will again move towards the former.<sup>18</sup>

China has deep pockets and expansionist policies; it wants to become a global power soon and considers that India, with its huge population and vast resources, may challenge it. So on one hand, it wants to restrict India's progress and on the other, it continues encircling it. Indian policy planners are also aware that the Chinese economy is five times bigger than the Indian economy and it spends six to eight times more on defence in comparison to India. Not only this, China produces several types of military equipment indigenously and recently emerged as the third-biggest exporter of arms in the world, after overriding France. It also exported defence equipment worth more than US\$7,919 million to several countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Venezuela. However, Pakistan is the biggest importer of arms from China (worth US\$3,016 million). India spends approximately two-thirds of its defence budget on routine expenditures, including pay and allowances of defence personnel, while China spends more money on importing cutting-edge technology and on research and development of armaments. Hence, it will not be wise on the part of India to struggle at this stage. India for a few more years should invest in defence preparedness, should improve infrastructures at the borders and must avoid any confrontation.

Besides a few irritants, there are several common points between the two Asian giants. India and China are both ancient civilisations and have had cultural relations for centuries. Both are rising economies and have huge populations and a sizeable number of people are living below the poverty line. Hence both countries must end the suspicions and should inculcate friendly relations and utilise their resources in the economic development of their countrymen.

Prime Minister Modi has rightly stated at Singapore in his recent visit that ‘The world is convinced that 21st century belongs to Asia’ and the Asians should also realise it. He also mentioned that ‘Asia has seen major progress’ and that ‘we need to work towards making this century ours’. Hence both India and China must live in peace so that the massive populations of both countries achieve economic progress.<sup>19</sup>

President Xi Jinping emerged the most powerful leader after the present Congress re-elected him and passed a resolution that he can continue for the rest of his life. However, intelligence sources reveal that there have already been six attempts to kill him. The opposition leaders also tried to overthrow him, and although he subdued the opposition, the possibility that he is assassinated or overthrown cannot be ruled out completely. So Indian policy planners should also try to inculcate friendly relations with the persons who may succeed Xi Jinping.

In this world, soft power can play a vital role in improving relations between different countries. As both India and China are neighbours and there have been cultural exchanges from olden days, soft power can still perform a positive task. Soft power cannot unravel contentious issues, but it can inculcate better perception and appreciation of others’ viewpoints. Gautam Bambawale, Indian ambassador to China, sometime back mentioned that there should be more people-to-people contact and both countries should not get restricted by controversial issues, like the CPEC. Contact should be established at various levels, including the leadership level, the official level and also the people-to-people level. There should be more exchange of tourists, and more Bollywood movies should be exported. Even President Xi told Modi that he had watched the Indian movie *Dangal*. China has developed Confucius Institutes, which are attracting a large number of foreign students. China is number 25 in the Soft Power 30 index,

2017, by Portland. Unfortunately, India could not get a place in this ranking. India can develop yoga in China. There can be more exchange of students. In 2016, more than 18,000 Indian students went to China for studies. In the same way, India should also try to attract more Chinese students. The residents of the eastern states of India where Chinese companies would invest can also visit various provinces of China, and the Chinese can visit these states more regularly and frequently. If there is more people-to-people contact, people will assess the issues independently and will not be guided by press reports which may or may not be true.

Analysts also claim that the basic cause of the tense relations between India and China is misunderstanding. The public of both countries gets information only through the media, and often the reports are biased. The public of each country needs to know more about the other country, and analysts feel that intelligence departments of both countries can play a vital role. Each country can appoint more experts of the other country in intelligence departments so that they make factual assessments about the thinking of that country, which will help policy planners to formulate realistic policy towards the other country.<sup>20</sup>

In the beginning, China also made significant gestures to improve relations with India. In 2014, when Indian ambassador Ashok Kantha presented his credentials, Xi met him and during talks, he mentioned that he wants to not only strengthen India-China relations on a bilateral plank but also intensify cooperation on regional and international issues. Not only this, Chinese vice president Li Yuanchao attended India's Republic Day reception on 26 January in Beijing and in his speech, eulogised India-China relations. China also withdrew its troops from Daulat Beg after initial invasion. However, India could not assess China's desire and remained suspicious about its acts.

Indian policy planners should also come out from the 1962 syndrome and must eschew the suspicion towards China and should try to strengthen economic relations, none of which is feasible unless there is flexibility in the approach of both countries. Xi promised to invest US\$20 billion in India within five years; however, far less has been invested so far in India.

Both countries should relax visa conditions, connectivity should be increased and there should be more direct flights. The policy planners

must fix long-term as well as short-term goals with regard to India-China relations.

India must maintain peace and tranquillity not only at the borders but also in its relations with China. India should also try to inculcate friendship with neighbouring countries as well as countries like the US, Japan and Vietnam. India should also strengthen its defence forces, and the infrastructure on the India-China border should be constructed on a war footing. If India strengthens itself, the chances of a war become bleak as China will understand that a war will damage both countries and must be avoided.

In a nutshell, there are a few disputes between India and China which need careful handling, but both countries should continue enhancing their economic ties so that the prevailing diplomatic and strategic distrust is mitigated and both countries become true friends. It is not difficult in the present era as European countries that fought bitter wars in the past are living peacefully and contributing in the progress and welfare of each other.

At present, the chances of a full-scale war between India and China are remote as China is also aware that India has strengthened itself after the debacle of 1962 and it proved its mettle in 1965 (with Pakistan), in 1967 (with China) and in 1971 (again with Pakistan).

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# India's Act East Imperatives: Renewed Thrust in India-Indonesia Relations

ALOK KUMAR GUPTA

*Indian prime minister Narendra Modi took a five-day, three-nation East Asian jaunt, from 29 May to 2 June, 2018, and visited Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore on a single leg of his foreign visits. Spread over five days, this was his first two-day visit to Indonesia, with the other three days meant for Malaysia and Singapore. The said visit has several political, regional, economic, cultural and strategic dimensions of utmost importance, of protecting and promoting India's national interests in all walks of life along with further boosting its 'Act East Policy'. It was meant to reinforce India-ASEAN ties, explore ways to enhance maritime security in Indo-Pacific, hold a detailed discussion with the leadership regarding growing Chinese interference and presence in the region, forge a stronger consensus on antiterrorism initiatives, negotiate to enhance India's trade interest with the countries of the region and build connectivity with these countries. His trip was meant to address bilateral as well as multilateral issues within the region in view of changes that have taken place in the global order and regional geopolitics.*

*Modi's visit could also be understood in terms of India's response to Indonesia's attempt at developing better ties with India owing to China's growing assertion in South China Sea and in the South East Asian region. It is also well in line with India's endeavour to promote its 'Act East Policy' through connectivity and enhanced engagement at different levels of bilateral interactions with countries of the east. Indonesian president Joko Widodo had visited India in December 2016 with a promise to elevate India-Indonesia ties. Widodo on his visit to India had stressed the importance of resolving disputes in the*

*region as well as in different parts of the world by peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including UNCLOS.<sup>1</sup> Though both India and Indonesia are not direct stakeholders in the South China Sea dispute, both are concerned about China's ambitions of territorial expansionism and China's ever-expanding maritime dominance and its reluctance to abide by global norms. China's endeavours, thus, have the potential to create a ripple effect and meddle with the maritime order in the region. Resources at sea are global commons to which all countries have equal rights and, therefore, shared responsibility to protect in terms of fair use. There is thus a growing convergence between India and Indonesia over the last few years which requires to be understood in the proper perspective as well as in terms of imperatives of their foreign policy choice and changing global and regional geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics. The author thus endeavours to explore the recent dynamics and necessities of Modi's visit to Indonesia amidst India's foreign policy choice of 'Act East'.*

## **ACT EAST POLICY: EXTENDING INDIA'S OUTREACH**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the new coinage 'Act East' in course of his address at the 9th East Asia Summit meeting held in Naypaidaw, Myanmar, on 13 November 2014, when he said, 'Since entering office six months ago, my government has moved with a great sense of priority and speed to turn our "Look East" policy into "Act East" policy.'<sup>2</sup> This statement evidently emphasised his administration's desire to activate and rejuvenate the erstwhile Look East policy (LEP) into the Act East policy (AEP). The spirit and rationale of this policy initiative has reflected continuity with its 'Look East' and 'Move East' predecessors. The government's aspirations to make it more proactive, expeditious and engaging have been evident from the changed nomenclature.

The major component of India's AEP has been building and strengthening ties with South East Asian region alongside enhancing its relations with Japan and engaging China positively. The South East Asian

region consists of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)<sup>3</sup> who have been linked for centuries with India both geographically and culturally. India when unable to make way towards its west formulated the foreign policy choice of LEP in 1991. It is in consonance with this foreign policy choice that India signed a free trade agreement with ASEAN in 2009. Ever since India has adopted the LEP, it has strongly aspired to build relations and renew partnership with these countries via trade, commerce and business. Gradually, India has also been attempting to reach out to these countries through its soft powers. However, these countries and their economies are strongly integrated with China, which has always been a rival of India in southern Asia. Their strong ties with China have been one of the factors that have acted as a bottleneck towards India's fulfilment of AEP aspirations. India is exploring ways and means to achieve its AEP aspirations and full membership of ASEAN<sup>4</sup> towards furtherance of its national interests.

India's move towards the east has not been hassle-free. It is full of challenges and complexities. Hence India has to keep devising different strategies to make way for its foreign policy objectives. One of the strategies that India has been adopting in the recent past is exploring the mechanism of building ties with each of the members of ASEAN on individual basis with an aim of charting its course for full membership of the regional grouping. India treats Myanmar as a 'Gateway to ASEAN' solely from geographical contiguity point of view. Similarly, it treats Singapore as a 'Gateway to ASEAN' solely from economic and development points of view. Thailand has the potential to become a 'Gateway to ASEAN' from spiritual and cultural connectivity points of view, given the nature of its population. Over 94 per cent of the total population of Thailand is a follower of Buddhism, in which gives India a strong leverage owing to the country-of-origin effect. It is in consonance with India's strong urge to make way with each of the ASEAN members and other countries on its east that India is building bridges with each of the countries individually. India is active on its east by engaging different countries both bilaterally as well as by using multilateral forums. Accordingly, India has been nursing a multifaceted relationship with ASEAN owing to a number of factors both internal as well as external. Some such factors are as follows:

Firstly, India's own attempt at liberalisation of its economy, which it initiated in the 1990s, made it imperative for India to look for economic space in the outer world. East Asia was a space which was available to India in its extended neighbourhood with comparative advantage in terms of geographical contiguity. Accordingly, India articulated its LEP, which later matured into the AEP, under the present political dispensation, to accord increased dynamism to it and make it more action oriented.<sup>5</sup> India's AEP thus is aimed mainly at greater engagement and integration between India and countries of South East Asia. This was a timely transformation, given (i) China's growing menace in the Asia-Pacific, (ii) America's confused and uncertain posture towards Asia, (iii) the US under Obama adopting 'Pivot to Asia' foreign policy choice and (iv) China's growing presence in the littoral states of Indian Ocean. India accordingly started exploring its relations with ASEAN and areas in which it could cooperate and collaborate with each of the members to reap the benefits of liberalisation and globalisation. A lot has been done under the auspices of growing relations, and now far more requires to be done in the changing circumstances. Modi's visit to Indonesia is a step forward in this direction.

Secondly, India's north-east region has been passing through phases of political, social and economic upheavals and witnessed frequent violent upsurge owing to poverty, unemployment and lack of development. Consequently, India needed to develop the region and make it economically viable to avoid any future disintegration and subversion as it had all the potential to assume external dimensions and interference. India thus planned to build its relations with ASEAN so that its north-east region is benefitted economically through trade and other forms of engagement with the countries of ASEAN. Economic development brings prosperity, which is a strong ingredient of peace and freedom. Natural and geographical contiguity along with considerable similarity in demographic character and cultural affinity between India's north-east and ASEAN were strong determinants of India's convergence with the regional economic grouping. However, the north-east has mainly been used as a transit to ASEAN and Myanmar. Therefore, the need in the contemporary situation is to develop the north-east through mobilisation of companies and investment, which

shall bring greater connectivity with most countries of ASEAN, including Indonesia.

Thirdly, the present political dispensation, like its predecessors, was not being able to achieve any considerable success on its western front owing to the bottleneck with Pakistan. Activation of the Chabahar Port of Iran for India's trade and shipment bypassing Pakistan could happen much later. Therefore, failure on the western front was another reason for convergence with the east because India needed to expand its economic activities owing to imperatives of globalisation and liberalisation, with the outside world in view of tremendous growth of its corporates within. Therefore, the corporate India necessitated an enhancement of connectivity with ASEAN that would create space for them to invest in goods for the ASEAN market. This shall have an added advantage in terms of creating space for India as China is mainly engaged in resource-based economic activity in ASEAN. Many of India's multinational companies have made inroads into ASEAN which require to be consolidated and entrenched on a permanent basis.

Fourthly, the success story of ASEAN across the region and the world raised the economic status of its members, with consequent attraction for the world community. India being in its immediate neighbourhood with geographical and political positives would have been at a great loss by missing the bus to ASEAN as its trade and business destination. The changing geoeconomics of ASEAN has brought several opportunities and advantages for India, which it needed to capitalise upon at the earliest and at a faster pace.

Fifthly, China's expansion in the South Asian region has raised the threat perception of India in its immediate neighbourhood, which has been its traditional stronghold. India has been facing tough competition on account of China's economic engagement with the South Asian countries. China's presence in the South Asian countries has been a constant source of nuisance and threat to its territorial and maritime security. India slowly and gradually is learning to live with China's growing presence in its proximity as it does not have the might and means to push China away from the region. This approach is another strong determinant of India's convergence with ASEAN as it has been the traditional stronghold of

China. China has deep-rooted economic engagement in ASEAN. India's growing engagement with ASEAN may throw a challenge to China in the long run. India thus has been building strong ties with Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia through visits and counter-visits of country heads and other officials over the last two decades.

## **INDIA AND INDONESIA ARE NATURAL PARTNERS**

As the largest ASEAN state, accounting for over 37 per cent of the population and over 33 per cent of the combined gross domestic product (GDP), and as a fellow member of G-20, Indonesia continues to be of particular interest to India. Their bilateral relations are a key element of India's engagement with the entire ASEAN region.<sup>6</sup> India and Indonesia share a common maritime boundary along the Andaman Sea, which makes them natural partners in ensuring the development and security of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific littoral region.

India's geographical location is at a strategic crossroads of Asia, which has naturally contributed to the founding of its external relations with its Asian neighbours. India has expanded its foreign policy outreach from the immediate neighbourhood to the extended neighbourhood, that is, countries on its east as well as in central Asia. This has been evident since independence as convening the first Asian Relations Conference in March 1947, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru declared: 'It is fitting that India should play her part in this new phase of Asian development. . . . [G]eographically she is so situated as to be meeting point. . . .'<sup>7</sup> India's engagement with East Asia in the post-Cold-War era has assumed significant proportions and remains a top foreign policy priority for the Indian leadership. This is often attributed to their strong historical civilizational and cultural links and the present bonding of being major global economic players – members of ASEAN partners with varied commonality of interests, from trade to traditional and nontraditional security concerns with India. India's relations with the East have come a long way, and in 2017 they celebrated 25 years of constructive engagement. Articulating Indian interests, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had contended during his regime,

'Look East Policy was not merely an external economic policy; it was also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all, it was about reaching out to our civilizational Indian neighbours.'<sup>8</sup> This was indeed a pragmatic shift in India's foreign policy which not only led to connectivity in the area of economy but also intensified new vistas of cooperation in the political arena as well as in areas of defence and security. This has helped India to have imbued bilateral ties with strategic depth. The objectives of LEP could be assessed from the then prime minister Manmohan Singh's statement, 'Our engagement with the ASEAN and its member countries is the cornerstone of our LEP and has evolved into a strong, comprehensive and multi-faceted partnership in recent years. It started with a strong economic emphasis, with focus on commerce and connectivity, but has increasingly acquired strategic content.'<sup>9</sup>

ASEAN consists on the one hand of developed countries, like Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, and on the other of less developed countries (LDC), namely Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) and Vietnam. Relations with the two groups need to be construed from two different perspectives. India will gain by focusing on cooperation with developed countries in areas where they have advanced and have will and means to share their prosperity with India. On the other hand, LDCs require resources, skill development and capacity building, along with investment in infrastructure, where India can encourage investment and could also promote its companies for business in these countries. India too needs their resources and market for its own economic growth. India also needs the support of these countries and coordinated effort to fight terrorism across the border. Common to both groups is India's role in upgrading maritime security as almost all members of ASEAN are weary of China's predominance and eager to maintain a balance of power in the region. All such developments put tremendous responsibilities on India and Indonesia to be proactive in the region, which necessitates their convergence.

The geographical location of India and Indonesia plays a greater role in making them natural partners. Indonesia's location on the junction of Indian and Pacific Oceans, where it is sitting astride and on the major

sea lanes of communication, that is, the Strait of Malacca, makes it strategically important. India and Indonesia thus need to work together to protect the sea lanes of communication between Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia. Together they need to control the entry point from the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean to the Strait of Malacca. Their partnership becomes natural, given their democratic governing systems and nearly similar foreign-policy outlooks. All the littoral states' cooperation is essential to keep the Strait of Malacca safe from any future Chinese misadventure or it becoming a zone of chaos on account of big-power rivalry. Accordingly, both India and Indonesia have together invited the cooperation of littoral states of the Indo-Pacific region to maintain the strait's security. However, such endeavours of both these countries are still at a nascent stage to effectively meet the ever-growing challenges in the region.

Indonesian president Widodo's visit in 2017 marked a step forward in the direction of the will to engage constructively. Modi's visit of May 2018 is indeed the response and expression of India's willingness to strengthen ties and provide a strong boost to the relationship. However, it took nearly two years for India to respond to Widodo's visit and Indonesia's expressions of enhancing engagement and connectivity with India. It speaks volumes about India's slackness in areas of conducting foreign policy, especially when India seems to be quite aggressive about its pursuit of its foreign policy choice – the AEP.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, website, the fact that there have been as many as eight head-of-state/government visits both ways since 2000 stands ample testimony to the intensification of bilateral ties. There has also been a regular exchange of ministerial visits and a Joint Commission process co-chaired by the foreign ministers of the two countries. Modi's May 2018 visit is another feather in the cap of Indo-Indonesia ties which needs to be understood in the light of India's AEP.

## **GROWTH OF BILATERAL RELATIONS**

In 2019, India and Indonesia are looking forward to the commemoration of 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two

countries and it was during the recent visit of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi that they launched the logo for its anniversary celebration. They also supported activities proposed to be conducted by both sides to commemorate the same. Leaders on both sides agreed to seize the momentum to promote relations to a higher level, aiming to enhance mutual goodwill and greater understanding among the people of both countries.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, they signed and released a joint statement and also published a discussion titled 'Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'. The text of both establishes the fact of the ever-deepening bilateral relations between the two countries on the one hand and the strong determination to further enliven their ties in a free and fair manner amidst changing regional geopolitics on the other.

The tone and tenor of India's priority while conducting its relations with other countries of the world was delineated during the 12th India-ASEAN meeting, where India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj observed that India would always stand by the organisation and take her relationship with it forward so that people's aspirations for growth and development could be fulfilled. She called for improvement of connectivity in all its dimensions, geographic, institutional and people-to-people; and referred to the five Ts of government of India – tradition, talent, tourism, trade and technology – as its priority areas; and noted that in foreign policy matters, it is connectivity that precedes them all.

Prime Minister Modi, on his visit, described Indonesian president Widodo as '*Bharat ke bahut acchey dost*' (a very good friend of India). He pointed out that the geostrategic location of both India and Indonesia is crucial in the context of safety and security in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>11</sup> Modi accorded due recognition to the warm welcome that was given to him and President Widodo's 'personal commitment', which was obviously to give a boost to India-Indonesia ties. He also articulated that with regard to countries like Indonesia, India is keen to add another element to its AEP. He referred to this element as SAGAR, or 'Security and Growth for All in the Region', and highlighted that the idea is in tune with the visionary leadership of the Indonesian president.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Modi also said that India's AEP and the vision of SAGAR match President Widodo's 'Maritime Fulcrum Policy'.<sup>13</sup> India and Indonesia had comprehensive talks on the

potential areas of cooperation, like infrastructure development, defence, maritime security, terrorism, trade and economy. Both countries also agreed to upgrade their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and signed 15 agreements.<sup>14</sup> India and Indonesia had earlier signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2005, which started an annual strategic dialogue. Following this agreement, they ratified a defence cooperation agreement which was initially signed in 2001, focusing on areas of defence supplies and technology and other joint projects.<sup>15</sup> Thus India-Indonesia ties were provided a considerable boost on Modi's visit in furtherance of India's AEP. This also becomes evident from the details in different areas of cooperation that they discussed and committed through their joint statement.

## **COOPERATION IN TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

India and Indonesia are among the fast-growing large global economies of the contemporary world. The two economies have strong complementarities as well as face many challenges. They discussed and decided to provide a major boost to their trade and investment ties by focusing on areas of oil, gas, renewable energy, information technology and pharmaceuticals. Both countries are developing and promoting their countries as attractive destinations for global investors. India has also become a major source of military hardware for Indonesia.

According to Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS), trade between the two countries in 2016 was US\$12.9 billion.<sup>16</sup> It rose by 28.7 per cent, to US\$18.13 billion, in 2017, with Indonesia's exports to India reaching US\$14.08 billion and its imports from India standing at US\$4.05 billion. An agreement was reached between India and Indonesia during Modi's visit to double their efforts to take the bilateral trade to US\$50 billion by 2025. They issued a joint statement after the talks and agreed to work intensively for the early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and reiterated that it needs to be comprehensive, fair and balanced, with benefit to all member states. Leaders of both these countries instructed their respective officials to optimise the cooperation between ASEAN and India for establishing sustainable and

mutually beneficial relations and remove impediments to trade and investment.<sup>17</sup>

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was concluded between the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Both leaders appreciated the setting up of a CII office in Jakarta. Indian investment in Indonesia has been growing and contributing to its economy. Indonesian companies have been participating through a 'Make in India' initiative and are being welcomed to avail the opportunities provided by India.<sup>18</sup> Hence, Modi's 'Make in India' initiative has become a natural corollary of India's AEP and could become a strong channel of economic engagement in the future between India and members of ASEAN.

Palm oil plays an important role in Indonesia's export to India, where consumer consumption of the same has been growing. India is the largest buyer of crude palm oil from Indonesia. Accordingly, in view of its growing importance, both countries agreed to address all issues related to obstacles to trade and investment in palm oil products and industries.<sup>19</sup> The major items of export from India to Indonesia are petroleum products, oil seed, motor vehicles for transportation of goods, animal feed, cotton, flat rolled products and alloy steel, while the main items of import from Indonesia to India are fixed vegetable fats and oils, coal, copper ore, natural rubber, pulp and waste paper, alcohols and phenols, hydrocarbon machine tools, medicinal and pharmaceutical products, fertilisers, paper and paperboard carboxylic acids dyeing, tanning extracts and other chemical products.<sup>20</sup>

India has a substantial investment in Indonesia in the textile, steel, automotive, banking and resource sectors. Foreign investment from India in Indonesia dates back to the 1970s. In the recent past, there has been a new wave of investment focusing on the mining, automotive and banking sectors. The major Indian companies operating in Indonesia are the Aditya Birla group, which has a viscose fibre plant and downstream units; Essar, which has a cold-rolled steel mill near Jakarta; and Jindal Stainless Steel, which has a factory in Surabaya. There are two Indian motor cycle manufacturers – Bajaj and TVS – in Indonesia. The State Bank of India and the Bank of India have branches in a number of Indonesian cities.

Tata owns 30 per cent of the two largest coal mines in Indonesia. More than 40 Indian companies are currently mining or exploring coal blocks in Indonesia. Indian companies have won an exploration license for gas on-shore in Sumatra. Balmer Lawrie has a joint venture agreement for manufacturing grease and lubricants in Indonesia.<sup>21</sup> These are being mentioned just as some representative information regarding India's investment and penetration of Indian companies in Indonesia and vice versa. Indian companies are operative in most sectors of Indonesia. Further, during the visit of Mr. Modi, the leaders of two countries also discussed the importance of intensifying infrastructure development in both countries and the mutual benefit of enhancing cooperation in the same.<sup>22</sup> Both leaders agreed to cooperate in the railways sector, which would promote technical cooperation, development of rail-related programmes and exchange of knowledge, technology and institutional cooperation. Recently, India and Indonesia have got duly connected by flights. Garuda Indonesia has started operating direct flights between Bali (Indonesia) and Mumbai (India) from April 2018. Batik Air and Air Asia Indonesia has been serving through their flights to different cities between India and Indonesia. Both countries have further agreed to discuss the matter of enhancing their traffic rights through the bilateral air services; consultations for the same will begin in 2018 itself.<sup>23</sup> Both countries are thus making efforts to enhance their connectivity through infrastructure development. A number of high-profile commercial events have been held in Indonesia to give a boost to bilateral 'trade and investment' relations between the two countries, like India Show in Jakarta. Modi, on his visit, agreed to the encouragement of greater flow of goods, services, investment and technology between India and Indonesia and the region to further develop their economies sustainably. He also reiterated the facilitation of business-to-business (B2B) linkages between the Chamber of Commerce of Andaman and the ones of the Provinces of Sumatra, including Aceh.

## **COOPERATION TO COUNTER TERRORISM**

Indonesia too has been a victim of terrorism, like India, though not to the extent that India has been suffering from. Indonesia is the world's most

populous Muslim-majority nation and has been struggling with Islamist terrorism and violence against its Christian minority since the past two decades. Both India and Indonesia signed an MoU on combating international terrorism in 2004, under which a joint working group on counterterrorism had been set up. An extradition treaty has also been signed, along with a mutual legal assistance treaty in criminal matters. Terrorism thus has been a constant source of violence and disturbance in both India and Indonesia.

Indonesia's second-largest city, Surabaya, was hit thrice during May 2018 at three different locations by terrorist bombings.<sup>24</sup> It is in this context that Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the terrorist attacks in Indonesia during his visit and expressed his stand that in order to fight terrorism, there is a need to work together globally.<sup>25</sup> A joint statement of India and Indonesia condemned terrorism in all forms, underscoring zero tolerance for acts of terrorism. The statement has asked all nations to work towards eliminating terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks and their financing channels and stopping cross-border terrorism.<sup>26</sup> Through the statement, they have also sent a message to China, which has been blocking India's move to get Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar designated a global terrorist, the two countries called upon global communities to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1267 (banning militant groups and their leaders) and other resolutions designating terrorist entities.<sup>27</sup> Leaders of both these countries called for enhanced cooperation, including through greater exchange of information and intelligence between them. They also called for expeditious finalisation and adoption of the 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism' in order to strengthen the existing international counterterrorism legal framework.<sup>28</sup>

One of the relevant mechanisms that have gained a place of primacy in the recent past is the instrumentality of 'Interfaith Dialogue'. This is fast becoming an effective forum to nurture peace and social harmony, as well as to promote democracy and human rights. Interfaith dialogue is also a reflection of the united commitment of both India and Indonesia to explore new understanding on the rise of religious identities and the dynamics of pluralism and to eradicate radicalism, terrorism and violent

extremism. Ideals of pluralism, tolerance, rule of law and values of peaceful coexistence have been strong pillars of both India and Indonesia. Together they have rightly agreed to organise an interfaith dialogue in early October 2018, which will be followed by a similar dialogue in India next year.<sup>29</sup>

## **CULTURAL AND OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION**

There is an active cultural exchange between the two countries. The two Indian cultural centres established in Jakarta and Bali are the focal points of exchange. These cultural centres organised 'Festival in India' in 2009. Many other cultural programmes have been organised in Indonesia, and they also signed an MoU to set up rotational Chair on Indian studies in the Faculty of Cultural Sciences at the University of Gadjah Mada in 2011. There are more than 100,000 Indonesians of Indian origin in Indonesia, mostly concentrated in Greater Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya and Bandung. They are mainly engaged in trade, dealing in textiles and sports goods. There are around 9,000 Indian bankers and professionals.<sup>30</sup>

India and Indonesia signed an MoU on health cooperation during the visit of Modi, which is intended to pave the way for closer collaboration in tackling common health challenges.<sup>31</sup> The scope and opportunities for cooperation in health and pharmaceutical sectors were duly recognised by leaders of both India and Indonesia. They also agreed to convene a meeting in the second half of 2018 comprising health officials, drug regulators and industry representatives to develop a roadmap on health cooperation in future.<sup>32</sup>

India and Indonesia also agreed to cooperate in the promotion of energy efficiency technologies and new and renewable energy technologies, with the shared aspiration to ensure energy security and to replace the use of fossil fuel, as well as to meet respective climate change targets. They welcomed potential cooperation in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy and looked forward to the early renewal of an agreement in this sector.<sup>33</sup>

The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) offers 20 scholarships every year to Indonesian students for pursuing higher studies at undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral levels in 181

participating universities and educational institutions all over India under its General Cultural Scholarship Scheme (GCSS). India also established a vocational training centre in Jakarta and Aceh in August 2010. An IT lab was also set up in Mageland, West Java, and handed over to the Indonesian Military Academy in May 2011.

India has also been providing substantial assistance in cash and kind to Indonesia during natural disasters, like the tsunami of 2004, the major earthquakes of March 2005 and May 2006 and the Mt. Merapi volcanic eruptions and the consequent tsunami in October 2010.<sup>34</sup> This clearly reveals the status of shared concerns of India and Indonesia at times of distress when a country needs help from all over the world. Both countries have agreed to promote cooperation between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Institute of Aeronautics and Space of the Republic of Indonesia (LAPAN) to monitor the earth's environment from outer space and remote sensing of the earth.<sup>35</sup>

A mutual realisation of common traditional and nontraditional security challenges has brought India and Indonesia together to closely cooperate in the field of defence and security. Accordingly, they signed a defence cooperation agreement in 2001 and since then both sides continue to have regular exchanges, including the exchange of officials and ships and joint coordinated patrols at the mouth of the Straits of Malacca.

## **GROWING CONCERNS ON MARITIME SECURITY**

India, with a coastline of 7,500 km, with more than 1,380 islands and more than two million square kilometres of exclusive economic zone, occupies a central position in the Indo-Pacific, while Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic state in the world, with a coastline of 108,000 km, with 17,504 islands and features and total maritime area of 6,400,000 sq. km, including an exclusive economic zone, is a fulcrum that connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The two oceans represent a combined maritime region which is important for global maritime trade and commerce.<sup>36</sup> Their combined maritime areas, that too in one of the most sensitive maritime zones of the world, necessitates that they cooperate to keep away the vested interests of the world.

Moreover, India and Indonesia are maritime neighbours and seafaring nations. Together, they have a shared vision of a peaceful region and the seas around them and also of an evolving maritime environment in the region and world at large. They do believe that all trade routes and sea lanes must be protected from traditional and nontraditional threats and all countries using these international waters must act with responsibility and restraint. Both these countries are in need of open trade and the sea lanes that carry it. Indonesia's idea of a 'Maritime Axis' and India's commitment to 'Mausam Project', which links the countries of the Indian Ocean, can bring benefits to both. India and Indonesia are one of the founder members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which is the apex pan-Indian Ocean multilateral forum. Indonesia, given its strategic location, can be a bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. As one of the most important countries of the Asia-Pacific rim, Indonesia is in an advantageous position to connect a vibrant South Asia to the Pacific region. Since the countries of the East Asian region strive for greater economic integration, the safety of sea lanes is critical for maritime trade and commerce. Maritime security and access to marine resources in accordance with the accepted international norms continue to be of great significance for both these countries and the other littoral states in the region.<sup>37</sup>

Indonesia has started taking seriously India's growing profile in the wider Indo-Pacific. It is in the larger and long-term interests of both India and Indonesia to emerge as major maritime powers to ensure a stable maritime order in the region, one that is under stress on account of China's rapid rise and America's growing reluctance to be the sole guarantor of regional security. India's concern is about the security of the sea lanes of communication in the larger Indo-Pacific area; on the other hand, Indonesia's major concerns are (i) Chinese maritime intrusions near the Natuna islands, which it claims as part of its exclusive economic zone and (ii) Chinese attempts in the past to include the island chain in its territorial maps.<sup>38</sup>

Accordingly, in this backdrop of rapidly changing maritime security agenda that both India and Indonesia are faced with, they have now agreed to focus on their defence and security ties in order to address the

issue. Both India and Indonesia together decided to set up a joint task force to undertake projects for port-related infrastructure in and around Sabang.<sup>39</sup> Sabang is a strategic island at the northern tip of Sumatra and close to the Strait of Malacca. India has plans to invest in the port of Sabang and develop an economic zone. Indonesia's decision to provide India access to Sabang is a great diplomatic gain which has tremendous potential for India's growing aspirations in Indo-Pacific and its endeavour to transform the Indian Ocean so that true to its name, it reflects greater dominance of India on this maritime region. Rapidly evolving regional strategic realities have forced India and Indonesia to coordinate their policies ever more closely, and after years of neglect, Indonesia has duly recognised the role that India can play in structuring a favourable balance of power in the region.

Modi's visit to Indonesia was timely and an opportune one as India and Indonesia understand the importance of stronger connectivity, particularly sea links, in order to facilitate economic cooperation and people-to-people contact. Modi, underlining the importance of greater ties between the two countries, reiterated that maritime security needs special focus as this would be vital to serve the economic and commercial interests of both India and Indonesia. Accordingly, Modi and Widodo planned to build connectivity between Andaman Nicobar–Aceh to unleash the economic potentials of both areas.<sup>40</sup> He emphasised the collective interests in a prosperous Indo-Pacific region by enhancing connectivity for promoting regional prosperity based on universally recognised international norms, good governance, rule of law, openness, transparency, equality and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and in this regard looking forward to the expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement.<sup>41</sup>

Modi also highlighted that there has been considerable growth of non-conventional threat<sup>42</sup> in the maritime region. Accordingly, both India and Indonesia have together recognised the need to combat and eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and have recognised transnational organised fisheries crime as one of the emerging crimes which need to be tackled on an urgent basis.<sup>43</sup> The two countries have also signed an extradition treaty and a 'mutual legal assistance treaty' for

gathering and exchanging information to enforce their laws. India has also expressed its support for the efforts by ASEAN member states and China to conclude the 'Code of Conduct' to keep peace and stability in the region.

India also recognised the importance of the blue economy as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in the region. Accordingly, both leaders agreed to a 'Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' region to harness the opportunities and to meet the challenges together as comprehensive strategic partners.<sup>44</sup> Modi asked for promoting the blue economy as a key source of inclusive economic growth and job creation. This would also help in combating marine plastic debris through bilateral and regional cooperation.

They have also been undertaking joint naval exercises and patrols and regular port calls by their navies. Modi further asked for strengthening the existing naval cooperation, including the bilateral coordinated patrols initiated in 2002 between the navies of India and Indonesia and commencement of regular bilateral naval exercises. Both countries have also agreed to promote cooperation between their coast guards through capacity building activities; by establishing hotlines and single points of contact; and through regular consultation meetings, coordinated patrols and joint exercises.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it's a timely organised intervention by India and Indonesia to maintain a balance of power at their shared seas. It will certainly bring long-term benefits to their national interests to keep a tab on maritime order in the region. A secure maritime order will be one of the strong driving forces of India's AEP as well.

## CONCLUSION

India and Indonesia share a world view which has been reflected in their close cooperation on regional and international issues. Relations between the two countries have deepened since inception and have come a long way without any recorded animosities. Rather, it has always been on the positive track, with occasional coldness in interactions and engagement. They agreed to shape their economies and relations through strategic engagement, defence and security cooperation, comprehensive economic

partnership, cultural and people-to-people links and cooperation in responding to common challenges. Together they have a shared commitment to values of democracy, pluralism and diversity, which makes them natural partners and thus a valuable entity for India to further its relations with ASEAN, thereby achieving the goals of the AEP. Contemporary relations between two countries present a multitude of industrial, commercial and investments opportunities, along with opportunities for expansion of soft power. They provide opportunities for enhancing bilateral trade, promoting foreign investment and strengthening diplomatic relations.

According to many experts, analysts and keen observers of India's foreign policy, a new dynamism has come to characterise India's foreign policy through increased frequency of interactions with small, medium and great powers of the world, including those which were not in the diplomatic basket and those which had slipped out of it. Reinvigorated relationships are sometimes taken as a reflection of the personalities of political leaders managing foreign affairs and their ability to replace diplomatic jargon with an informal style of interaction and allowing enough space for conduct of smart power. This is true also to an extent as in the conduct of foreign policy a lot depends upon the personal outlook and exposure to global dynamics of the leader of the country or those who are entrusted with the task of managing the same. However, the success and failure of contemporary bilateral relations are determined by geopolitical realities, geoeconomic situations, shared historical past and cultural affinities, along with the regional and international personalities of interacting powers. Bilateral or multilateral, external relations have an immense influence on domestic issues, particularly economic opportunities, growth and internal peace. Therefore, increased economic engagement with countries like Indonesia is bound to create and bring opportunities for youth and other professional in both countries.

The rechristening, redefining and reactivating of the LEP by transforming it into the AEP has been a momentous contribution of the present political leadership. It is one of the promising relations in Asia and that of the twenty-first century. Commonality of interests with member countries of ASEAN remains unexplored in most walks of life, that is, from trade, commerce and business to culture and different types of soft power.

The changing geopolitics and geoeconomics of the region, China's rise and maritime disputes in the Indo-Pacific have a causal effect on the security and strategic landscape of India. A changing political and strategic scenario has elevated the paradigm shift in India's foreign policy from 'Neighbourhood First' to the 'Act East Policy'. Renewed and reinvigorated interest in India-Indonesia relations is certain to provide a strong boost to India's AEP. The success and growth of India's AEP largely depend upon India's deepening ties with each member of ASEAN individually as well as collectively. India's foreign policy under the present political dispensation has certainly provided a fillip to the AEP, which is the demand of the present regional order and geopolitics and India's economic aspirations.

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23. Ibid.
24. The bomb blasts, including suicide bombings, also struck outside churches in Indonesia, killing at least six and wounding dozens of others. According to other sources, at least 7 people were killed and more than 40 others were injured in the blast. This was the worst attack on churches in the last 18 years in Indonesia. For details, see 'PM Modi Condemns Terror Attacks in Indonesia, Lays Emphasis for Improved Ties.' Ibid., n. 11.
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