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Special Article

- India-Japan:
The Emergence of
Strategic Relations
(2015-2019)

Report

- 4th Indian Ocean
Conference - IOC 2019
- 5th Dharma Dhamma
Conference 2019

Book Review

- Raghuvendra Tanwar's
'Be Clear, Kashmir will
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Of Black Swans and Grey Rhinos

Asia is a veritable cauldron of conflict. While the Af-Pak region continues to remain the epicentre of terrorism, conflict in the Gulf now has increasingly worrying dimensions. Besides the Af-Pak region, South Asia appears more stable, but random acts of Islamic terrorism occasionally come to the fore, as in the case of the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka. In India, the overall security environment remains stable, with violence levels in the Northeastern region as also areas impacted by Left Wing Extremism dipping considerably. Kashmir appears stable after the abrogation of Article 35A and some provisions of Article 370.

Within the ASEAN countries, the Islamic State (Daesh) has made limited inroads into Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Terror groups are increasingly decentralised, use sleeper cells and resort to lone-wolf attacks using social media and other forms of advanced technology in the process of recruitment, and pose what may be termed as “third-generation threats”. Further East, China continues to deal with its Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang in a high handed fashion which may invite a future blowback. Tibet too is restive, though both Xinjiang and Tibet are relatively stable as of now. China is also facing mass protests in Hong Kong over some of its policies.

The above violence levels are localised and are being contained by the respective governments. However, of deep concern is the happenings in the Gulf, especially in respect of targeting of oil facilities. The war in Yemen has been ongoing for a few years now, with the Saudi coalition forces trying to dislodge the Houthis who are backed by Iran. If the situation gets out of hand, it could lead to regional instability with the supply of oil becoming the critical determinant. The Saudi oil facilities were attacked by the Houthis (as claimed by them, though evidently, the Houthis would have been supported by external power). The attack crippled the Saudi oil supply by 50 per cent for over a month until the supply was eventually restored. The ferocity, suddenness and pinpoint accuracy of the attack led many to call it a Black Swan event, but a cursory analysis points otherwise. Over the past two years, the Houthis have carried out over 18 attacks on Saudi facilities and so an attack on Aramco should not have come as a surprise. It was thus a Grey Rhino event—one that could have been foreseen but was ignored.

The danger signals are now all around us. Besides the attack on Aramco, ships carrying oil have also been targeted. While regional conflicts can be contained, a conflict which results in the antagonists attacking each other's oil facilities could be dangerous, especially if it leads to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. That would be disastrous for the Asian economies, especially for India and could spell the end of the much-heralded Asian century.



Resurgent ISIS and The Threat to South Asia

Dr Adil Rasheed*

They scorched the snake, but could not kill it! In late February this year, US President Donald Trump asserted that the US had defeated “100 percent of the (ISIS) caliphate”¹. However, many US officials, like National Security Advisor John Bolton, disagreed with him then and acknowledged that the monstrosity was not defeated, but had slithered away into the desert with a large portion of its wealth, weaponry and warriors still intact to fight another day.^{2,3}

This fact has been reiterated in a recent report by the US Institute for the Study of War (ISW) that claims that ISIS purposely retreated during the US-led campaign from Mosul, Raqqa, and other important Syrian cities in order to relocate its fighters and their families to remote ‘support zones’ in Iraq and Syria⁴. Intelligence officials of the US-led international coalition also claim that ISIS currently sits on a “mountain of stolen cash and gold” (estimated by independent experts to total about USD 400 million)⁵, which its leaders were able to stash away before ceding territory to international forces.

In fact, far from being vanquished in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is said to be staging resurgence now through a “capable insurgency”⁶. In addition, the transnational menace has increased its activities in other parts of the world and has even conducted one of its worst terrorist strikes on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka (21 April 2019), which claimed over 260 lives.

Method in the Mayhem

According to the ISW report, ISIS was quick to assess that it would be difficult to stop Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) launched by the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) from taking over Mosul and then Raqqa back in mid-2017. Therefore, ISIS carefully sidestepped the military juggernaut and focused instead on arranging safe havens for its forces fleeing from the battlefield in remote parts of Iraq and Syria.

Thus, when the US and ISF troops laid a siege on Mosul, they remained unaware that ISIS fighters were already escaping the city by way of a wide and complex network of tunnels. Thus, US military experts aver: “ISIS fighters likely went to ground near Mosul; regrouped in Tel Afar in Iraq or the Middle Euphrates River Valley in Syria; or relocated to Hawija, Iraq”.⁷

In order to facilitate this process of troop dispersal, ISIS even allowed civilians to leave the cities in large numbers, so that their fighters could blend with the crowds. Specific patterns have been found in the mode of the migrants’ dispersal and destinations, which shows that ISIS “deliberately planted fighters and ideologically committed supporters (among the civilians) across both Iraq and Syria”.⁸

With the recapture of Mosul and Raqqa, US officials appeared to grow complacent and believed that the ISIS had given up the fight. In October 2017, Lt. Gen. Paul Funk of the US military, then

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serving as CJTF-OIR commander, surmised: “They’re (ISIS) giving up ... [and] their leaders are abandoning them.”⁹ Even the then-secretary of defense James Mattis said: “The caliphate is on the run, we’re breaking them.”¹⁰

These statements of triumph reflected the initial enthusiasm of CJTF-OIR forces over liberating cities from ISIS control. However, it was only later that the US began to understand the error in its assessment. By February 2018, then secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen noted that ISIS fighters in Syria were “going underground, dispersing to other safe havens, including on the internet, and returning to their home countries.”¹¹

Even the Iraqi government took its eyes off the ball after the recapture of Mosul in late 2017, as its focus shifted towards the referendum conducted by Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for breaking away from Iraq in September of that year. The crisis disrupted coordination between the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and Peshmerga fighters, which allowed ISIS to regroup and move about along the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs). With his government facing charges of nepotism and corruption, then Iraqi premier Haider al-Abadi hastily declared the victory over ISIS in Iraq on 9 December 2017 as a major achievement of his term in office. He claimed that the ISF had successfully seized the last city held by ISIS in Anbar Province and routed the terror group out of the country.

His administration then got preoccupied with contesting the May 2018 parliamentary elections and got little time to focus on post-ISIS stabilisation. The elections gave a fractured mandate and led to a political deadlock. With growing civil unrest after

the elections in provinces of southern Iraq and the city of Basra, Iraqi forces were taken away from ISIS-infested areas in the west of the country. ISIS fighters on the run took full advantage of the situation as they regrouped and planned the launch of a new insurgency.

Thus, it was embarrassing that by December 2018, when Iraqi government was indulging in anniversary celebrations of its ‘victory’ over ISIS, reports were streaming in that members of the supposedly defunct terror group were carrying out guerrilla attacks, bombings, murders, kidnappings and road blockages across various governorates of the country.

Veteran leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party Masoud Barzani issued a dire warning to Iraq around that time: “Da’esh (ISIS) has returned to a lot of the areas much worse than before.”¹² He then gave names of few of the governorates where ISIS had started spreading its terror—Nineveh, Diyala and Salahuddin. Even Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr warned on twitter: “Mosul is in danger and terrorist cells remain active there”.¹³ He added that the deteriorating situation has been caused by the misrule of corrupt politicians.

By then, even ISIS had started chiding the international forces about the so-called victory of their forces against the terror group. ISIS spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir reproached in April 2018: “What victory do you speak of oh America, when the mujahidin ... [have] a condition that is better than the one from which you fled in Iraq several years ago?”¹⁴

ISIS soon reconstituted its command and control centres, its media apparatus, and its high-end explosive capability along with reorganising

its scattered militants to fuel a new insurgency. The terror group even managed to develop an underground global financing network with branches stretching from the Middle East to Africa to Europe. This infrastructure was built during Saddam's regime to bust sanctions and is known as Al-Rawi Network, which invested "tens of millions" of dollars of ISIS money in real estate, car washes, and other legitimate businesses worldwide.¹⁵ ISIS 'wilayahs' (or global provinces) also started pouring in funds into their headquarters in Syria and Iraq from late 2018 onwards.¹⁶ Since then, the terror group has been awash with funds.

Increased VBIED Detonations

Then on August 22, 2018, Baghdadi made an audio announcement marking the commencement of ISIS' new military campaign in Iraq and Syria. He asserted that the U.S. "boasted of its so-called victory in expelling the State (ISIS) from the cities and countryside in Iraq and Syria, but the land of Allah is wide and the tides of war change."¹⁷

The message was followed by waves of detonations carried out across Iraq and Syria by Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs). These attacks targeted people in markets and restaurants, particularly in newly liberated cities of Raqqa and Mosul, as well as at military checkpoints and convoys in regions of Iraq and Syria. Later, ISIS repeatedly conducted VBIED strikes in the cities of Mosul, Kirkuk City, Tikrit, Raqqa, and Idlib. With these new tactics the terror group was successful in sapping public confidence in the Iraqi and Syrian security forces. By 2019, the scope and scale of VBIED attacks has further increased.¹⁸

The Ingress in Af-Pak

In fact, ISIS kick started a new phase in its global operation from the month of Ramadan in 2019. After conducting the devastating Sri Lanka attacks on 21 April, it dubbed its new global campaign as 'the Battle of Attrition' on 31 May. As part of this campaign, ISIS claimed responsibility for attacks in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, Central Africa, West Africa, Somalia, Pakistan, and the Sinai Peninsula.¹⁹

It has also announced the creation of three new provinces (wilayah) in Democratic Republic of Congo, India (mainly in Kashmir and Bengal), as well as in Pakistan.²⁰

It is important to note here that the presence of ISIS in Afghanistan (known as ISIS-K, with 'K' standing for Khorasan) has further vexed the security situation in that country. According to the report issued by the US Department of Defense issued to Congress in June 2019, ISIS-K has made significant "territorial gains" in the country's eastern provinces (notably Kunar) between December 2018 and May 2019. The group also carried out a suicide blast at a wedding reception on 17 August 2019 that claimed 80 lives and halted the country's independence-day festivities.

The ISIS-K is trying to take advantage of an uncertain phase in Afghanistan, when the US is seeking a peace accord with the Taliban for the gradual withdrawal of its troops from the country, which the upstart terror group knows would create power vacuum in various areas and could prove useful in consolidating its positions.

When the group was formed in early 2015, many Afghans dismissed it as an insignificant incipient, led by dissident Tehreek-i-Taliban militant

Hafiz Saeed Khan (its chief) and former Afghan Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Aliza (its deputy). However, both these leaders were taken out by the US by air²¹ and drone strikes,²² almost after a year of the group's formation. But the group received a boost in 2016 when the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) joined it. To curb its growing menace thereafter, the US dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb (GBU43B Massive Ordinance Air Blast - MOAB) on the group's cave complex in Achin District in Nangarhar Province on 13 April 2017. The so-called 'Mother of all bombs' reportedly killed 36 of ISIS-K fighters and decimated its tunnel network.²³

ISIS attaches great importance to its presence in Afghanistan because of the region's historic and religious significance in the jihadist lore. In fact, the modern jihadist movement originated in Afghanistan. A few Hadith sayings purportedly prophesize the rise of an "army of true believers from the Khorasan" before the apocalypse, which ISIS has made central to its eschatological claims.²⁴ "Operations on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region also enable ISIS to directly challenge its rival group Al-Qaeda for the leadership of the global jihadist movement."²⁵

The ISIS-K makes inroads into Kunar and Nangarhar, it seeks to tap into the frustration of hardline Taliban fighters unimpressed by their leadership's supposed concessions in negotiations with the US. Therefore, Taliban defectors joining ISIS-K may increase in the months to come.²⁶

On the Prowl in Bangladesh

In addition to expanding its influence in the nursery of global jihad—the infamous Af-Pak

region, ISIS has increased its prowl on the eastern front of India with its growing footprint in Bangladesh. It is curious that Bangladesh authorities have repeatedly denied the presence of both ISIS and al-Qaeda in their country, despite the fact that these groups have conducted several attacks over the years and taken responsibility for many of them. The most recent of such strikes came as late as 30 August 2019, when two policemen were injured in a blast near the car of a minister in Dhaka. It is believed the bomb was thrown from a footbridge at night, but the minister escaped injury. Hours later, ISIS took responsibility for carrying out the blast.²⁷

On 6 August, the Bangladesh unit of ISIS came out with a video titled 'The Best Outcome is for Pious', which was released by the Amaq Agency and pro-ISIS Telegram channels. The eight-minute video showed four masked ISIS operatives, two wearing suicide jackets, criticising in Bangla language the current Sheikh Hasina government and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) engaged in counter terrorism operations. The speaker ends his speech by calling on Muslims to join ISIS. It is important to note here that ISIS had increased its activities in Bangladesh in the immediate aftermath of the Sri Lanka Easter bombings, when it announced the appointment of a new 'emir' (a certain Abu Muhammad al Bengali) to lead its charge in India and Bangladesh towards the end of April this year.²⁸

It is worth noting that Bangladesh witnessed the first major ISIS-claimed attack in South Asia, outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan in July 2016. This was the assault on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, which killed 22 civilians. With foreigners

as the main target, ISIS-Bangladesh claimed responsibility for the attack, which was carried out by the ISIS-affiliated group, Dawlatul Islam, Bengal. The group—consisting of individuals who had defected from Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jund at-Tawhid wal-Khilafah—was formed in 2015 and led by Muhammad Saifullah Ozaki, a Bangladeshi-Japanese individual whose current whereabouts are unknown. Ozaki is reported to be the leader of ISIS-Bangladesh. Curiously, despite ISIS's claim, the Bangladesh government back then denied that the Dhaka attackers had any connection with ISIS, and alleged that they were instead members of a breakaway group of JMB.²⁹

Inroads into Sri Lanka, Maldives

Even as Sri Lanka hobbles towards normalcy, after a four month long emergency rule following the devastating Easter Sunday attack on 21 April 2019 that killed over 260 lives is revoked, investigations into the first ISIS attack on the country continue. The ISIS attack were themselves followed by rioting in the country's North Western Province that destroyed hundreds of Muslim properties. The fear is ISIS might seek to exploit resentment after these mob attacks blamed on Buddhist extremist groups against the Muslim community, which constitutes 10 percent of the island state's population, to spread its tentacles in the country.³⁰

The Sri Lankan government has stated that the eight suicide bombers which carried out the bombings belonged to two local Islamist groups—National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), led by Zahran Hashim, and Jamatheel Millathu Ibrahim (JMI).

According to authorities, those directly responsible for the bombings have been killed or arrested.³¹

The picture from the island paradise of Maldives is quite disconcerting when it comes to growing resonance of the ISIS message among its population. According to the Soufan Group report, the small country with a population of just over 400,000 surprisingly found 200 of its youth migrating to ISIS territory in Iraq and Syria, a number surpassing other regional countries — India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with far larger Muslim populations.³²

The Rising Threat for India

As demonstrated above, ISIS on its comeback trail is seeking to increasingly focus on the Indian subcontinent. With its third largest population of Muslims in the world, India appears an attractive catchment areas for the global jihadist group to swell its ranks. In the words of CNN journalist Tim Lister: "Its propaganda suggests ISIS sees India as promising territory and is intent on aggravating Muslim-Hindu tensions there."³³ For this purpose, ISIS announced the formation of an exclusive province of its fictitious caliphate in India (Wilayat-al Hind) on 10 May 2019³⁴ and has since increased its focus in Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and Assam, as well as in southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

It is noteworthy that the ISIS statement about the establishment of its exclusive province in India corresponded with a police report that a militant affiliated to a transnational group named Ishfaq Ahmad Sofi was killed in an encounter in Shopian the very day.³⁵ The Islamic State announced in early February 2016, its intention to expand into

Kashmir as part of its broader Khorasan branch.³⁶ The presence of Islamic State in J&K progressed gradually during 2017. Islamic State flags have been waved during rallies and protests around the valley. While this claim is still pending official verification, Islamic State's Amaq news agency claimed responsibility for an attack in Srinagar on November 17, 2017, which killed an Indian policeman. The terrorist killed in the attack, Mugees Ahmed Mir, is suspected to have been inspired by the Islamic State's online propaganda and was found wearing an Islamic State T-shirt at the time of the attack.³⁷ Since late 2017, the pro-Islamic State J&K-focused media group al-Qaraar has engaged in a social media campaign, directing messages tailored to inspire a Kashmiri audience.

In December 2017, a pro-Islamic State video in Urdu was shared via its Telegram channel, using the hashtag "Wilayat Kashmir," in which a masked man representing "Mujahidin in Kashmir" pledges allegiance to the Islamic State and specifically invites al-Qaeda-affiliated group Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind to join the caliphate.³⁸

According to a media report, in its publication ('Amaq' November 2018), ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack on a police post at Zakura on the outskirts of Srinagar, on November 17.³⁹ In this incident, one militant, Mugees Ahmad Mir and a J&K policeman were killed in a shootout on November 16 at Zakura. Mir was wearing a black T-shirt with IS stamp and later at his funeral, his body was wrapped in a black flag. Police sources were quoted in the media report that Mir was actually a district commander of Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen and was loyal to the now deceased Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind commander Zakir Musa.

When it comes to the spread of ISIS influence in south India, it should be noted that the mastermind of the Sri Lanka Easter bombings Hashim Zahran had travelled to India, Maldives and Gulf states to spread the following of his group National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ). In India, "his sojourns were mostly in the Malappuram District of Kerala and the Coimbatore, Trichy, Thirunelveli, Vellore, Nagapattinam, Kanyakumari and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu. All these districts have sizeable Muslim populations. He openly advocated the ISIS cause in these places and canvassed for volunteers to join the fighting forces of ISIS. It is during this time that Zahran came to the attention of Indian intelligence services".⁴⁰

Since the Easter Sunday bombings, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) adroitly foiled a suicide attack in Kerala by arresting an ISIS suspect who was inspired by the blasts in Sri Lanka. Since then, the NIA has busted a suspected module and arrested several ISIS suspects in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.⁴¹

Civil Discord: The Subtext of Terror

With the end of the territorial caliphate, ISIS has redoubled its efforts to carry out terrorist attacks across the globe and seems keen on increasing its footprint in populous countries with large Muslim populations, such as India. More than causing terror, ISIS has perfected the art of carrying out attacks aimed at polarising societies by seeding discord through the subtext of its violent messaging. Terrorism is a form of non-verbal communication and ISIS sent a sick message by choosing an Easter Sunday to demonstrate its resurrection in order to tease its prime enemy, "the

Crusading Christian forces”.⁴² Easter also represents the “Christian doctrines that Islam manifestly rejects: that Christ was crucified and died; that he was resurrected; and that by special virtue of the latter, he is the son of God”.⁴³

Similarly, ISIS killed a Muslim Jordanian pilot by fire, a mode of punishment prohibited in Islam but used only by Imam Ali against apostates, which ISIS repeated to draw Shiite ire.⁴⁴ ISIS claims that it learnt this tactics of ‘nikayah’ (emotional injury) from its ideological mentor Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who had claimed to have perfected the technique and may have even masterminded the 2006 al-Askari Shrine bombing (where the 10th and 11th Shia Imams Ali al Hadi and his son Hasan al Askari are buried) to incite a civil war between Iraq’s Shiites and Sunnis.⁴⁵ ISIS’ magazine *Dabiq* explains and extols the dubious benefits of this tactics of creating civil discord, thus:

“Shaykh Abu Mus’ab (rahimahullah) implemented the strategy and required tactics to achieve the goal of Khilafah without hesitation. In short, he strived to create as much chaos as possible ... He would order to carry out nikayah operations dozens of times in a dozen areas daily, targeting and killing sometimes hundreds of apostates from the police forces and Rafidah.

In addition to that, he tried to force every apostate group present in Iraq into an all out war with Ahlus-Sunnah (Sunnis). So he targeted the Iraqi apostate forces (army, police, and intelligence), the Rafidah (Shia markets, temples, and militias), and the Kurdish secularists (Barzani and Talabani partisans). In his speech titled “Hadha Bayanullin-Nasi wa li Yundharu Bih” (This is a Declaration for the People That They May Be

Warned by It), he threatened war on any Sunni tribe, party, or assembly that would support the crusaders.

Then when some so-called ‘Islamists’ entered into the democratic political process – ignoring what it entails of clearcut major ‘shirk’ (worshipping someone besides Allah) – he officially declared war on them in his speech titled ‘Wa li Tastabina Sabilul-Mujrimin’ (And Thus the Way of the Criminals Becomes Evident).⁴⁶

When one looks at the aftermath of the Sri Lanka Easter bombings, we find that the social hostility and sectarian violence that followed the blasts put a strain on the social fabric of the country. The above text shows that ISIS plans civil discord through its attacks in its bid to turn a peaceful nation into a radical and polarised society, which could then become a hotbed for its radicalisation and terrorist activities.

The tactics of ‘nikayah’ will play a key part in the strategy of attrition that Baghdadi declared in his last video release. When it comes to India, it is important that security forces and the general public remain alert not only about the physical threat posed by ISIS terror attacks, but also the underlying provocation and trauma it entails. A concerted anti-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation campaign needs to be launched to immunise vulnerable communities and sections of Indian society. In this regard, the development and propagation of a national ethical code to create socially responsible citizenry may help in combating the threat of terrorism and its plans to cause civil unrest.

A closer and more cohesive society, where Muslim citizens play a key role as the bulwark against trans-national terrorism, will be of immense

significance. Greater coordination between our security forces and intelligence agencies of neighbouring states like Afghanistan, Bangladesh,

Maldives, the UAE etc. could prove critical in thwarting the resurgent threat of ISIS and other jihadist groups lurking on the horizon.

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Maritime Security in Bay of Bengal : Potential Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

Bangladesh is a maritime nation with heavy dependence on seaborne trade with the outside world (Delwar Hossain and Md. Shariful Islam 2016). More than 98% of Bangladesh's total containerised goods and products are transported through the Chittagong port via the Bay of Bengal. Hence, it is crucial to protect its sea lanes of communications along the maritime border from any nefarious maritime activities including conventional and non-conventional security threats. The government is also prioritising the marine affairs and integrating it to top foreign and security policy issues. The security affairs also go beyond the national border and impacts international trade and geopolitical issues with other Indian Ocean littoral states.

This paper will contextualise the maritime parameters, analyse the emergence of the blue economy in the Bay, explore the threat landscape, provide modalities of developing national capabilities and smarter maritime border management, and discuss the opportunities in forging a stronger regional integration through maritime cooperation among the littoral states.

Blue Economy in the Bay: A New Horizon for Bangladesh

In the course of strategic positioning in Asia and the Indian Ocean, Bangladesh's geo-strategic

location in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) provides the country with a significant strategic maritime vantage point. Located on the northern border of the BoB with 710-kilometre-long coastline, Bangladesh had obtained a sea area of about 166,000 square kilometres after the demarcation of its maritime boundary with Myanmar in 2012 and with India in 2014. This maritime area serves as the lynchpin of Bangladesh's economic development, affecting about 30 million people who are directly connected to the ocean-based economy (Sarker 2019). From an economic point of view, BoB and its adjoining littoral areas have a vast amount of living and non-living organisms and resources, i.e., hydrocarbons, fisheries, minerals, and energies. The sea has a huge potential for energy motherload. For instance, about 106864.56 million barrels of oil (MMbbl) of gas motherload was discovered in Bhola, the southeast district of Bangladesh, in January 2018 (Ibid).

The coastal belts of BoB have about 475 species of fish. This accounts for about 4.9% of the country's total export earnings and 2.73% of national GDP while generating about 12% of its total employment. For Bangladesh, these data indicators provide the proving ground of adopting an appropriate platform of marine and maritime security. In this case, Bangladesh has the option of utilising its blue economy for national development and harnessing further geo-economic opportunities.

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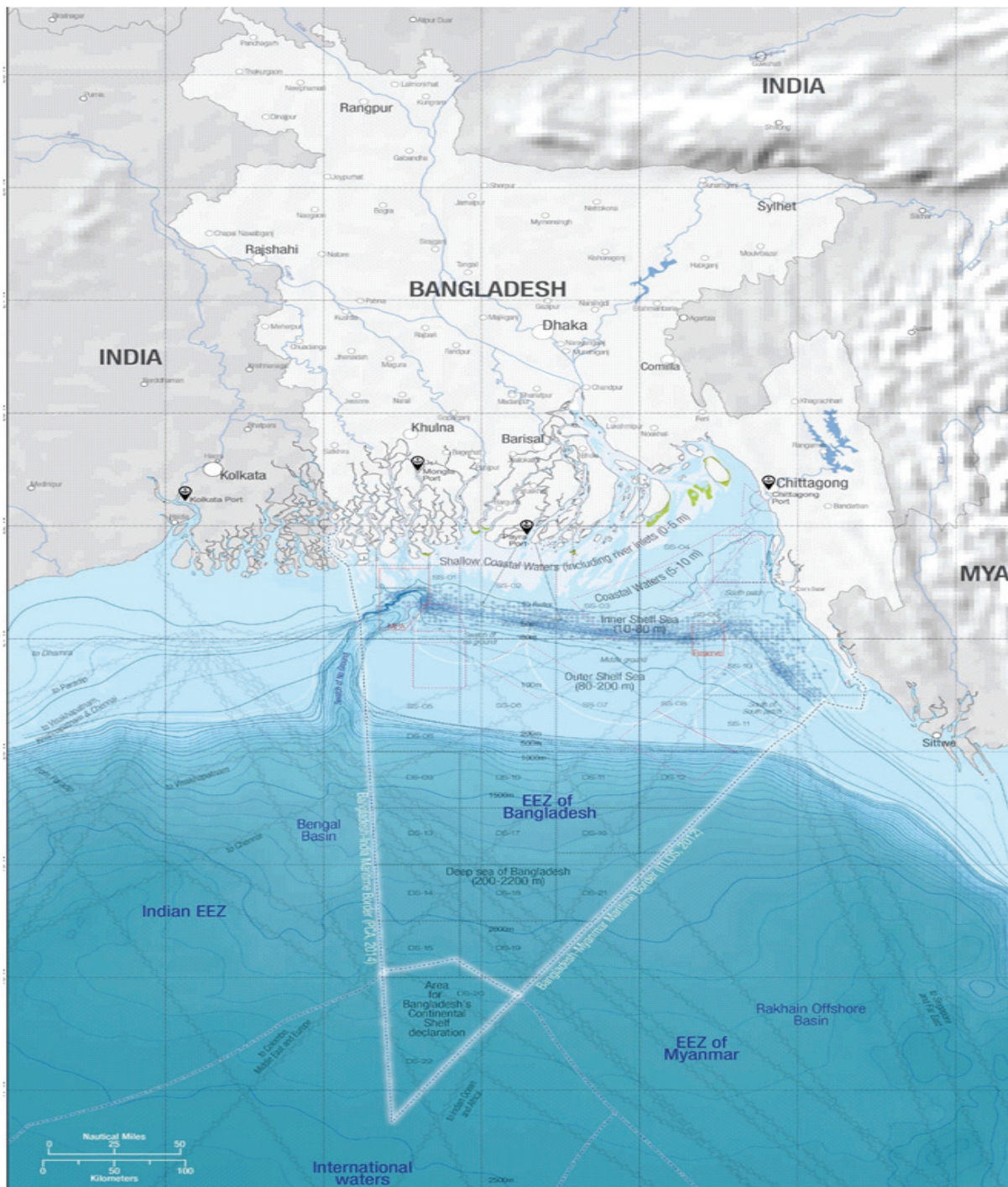


Figure 1: Maritime borders of Bangladesh
Source: (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission 2019)

Although Bangladesh has vast potential in maritime affairs, the bay area is open to numerous security and strategic threats. BoB consists of two critical sea lines of communications (SLOCs): 1) One route heads east to the Eastern countries like China, Japan, countries in Southeast Asia (SEA) and the South China Sea through the Strait of Malacca, 2) The second one heads west to Iran and Saudi Arabia. Besides trade and economic routes of communication, the seaborne area also poses great geo-strategic contention in the Indian Ocean. Due to its strategic vantage point, the area has become the tiger's eye for the superpowers, i.e., China, USA, India, and Japan (Lukaszuk 2012).

Security Threats in the Seas

Maritime security issues have long been induced numerous non-conventional threats in the BoB which has now become a national phenomenon in Bangladesh. Although the country has a competent national security apparatus, i.e., the navy and coast guard, maritime security in the BoB demands more security. These insufficient maritime securities and increasing seaborne threats are exponentially reducing the potentials of newfound maritime boundaries. Illegal fishing, arms & drug smuggling, human trafficking, seaborne pollution, and acts of robbery and piracy are some of the major trans-national threats faced by the BoB.

Maritime Terrorism

One increasing concern is the rising of maritime security threats among 60 countries in the world, among which Bangladesh is one. Among major non-conventional maritime threats, maritime

terrorism is increasingly becoming an international security concern. The security threats are easy to enter through any land and port through the sea and hard to trace and track the location of the incident through any available technology. Bangladesh maritime domain is also becoming a proving ground of armed robbery and piracy-related incidents. If we consider the combined number of incidents related to piracy and robbery in the major maritime junctions, the Straits of Malacca has 10 incidents, Malaysia has 14 and BoB has 10 (Suritec Piracy Report, August 2014). The same report by Suritec also revealed that the major upcoming seaborne threats will take place in South China, the Gulf of Guinea and Bangladesh. In the first half of 2014, there were 18 major piracy and robbery related incidents (RECAAP 2018). Among this, 2 incidents took place in the BoB. The pirates (locally known as 'Jol Doshus') plunder natural resources like fish and minerals and collaborate in smuggling of small and heavy arms. They are even patronised by the local hooligans (mastans) and corrupted leaders & police officers.

Illegal Fishing

Illegal fishing and poaching is another age-old maritime issue in Bangladesh. Among this illegal fishing, the illegal trade of baby Hilsha (locally 'Jatka') is the most threatening one. This issue even breeds another problem: 40% of the local fishermen depend directly or indirectly on the illegal trade of baby Hilsha for their livelihood. In Bangladesh, fishing is considered illegal when it is done in the wrong seasons or without a license. Local fishermen also catch immature fish and use prohibited nets.

Only 1,18,000 metric tons of fish and shrimps are legally harvested among the total annual yield of 3,89,000 metric tons (UNDP). The remaining 2,71,000 metric tons are attributed to the illegal poaching by foreign fishing boats and trawlers. In this act, sea pirates, bandits, and robbers had killed at least 411 local fishermen and wounded another 1,000 in the last five years (2014-2019). (Cox's Bazar District Fishing Trawler Owner Association (DFTOA), Ibid).

Although the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard are technically competent, they lack proper equipment and effective manpower. As a result, many of the threats are not being handled properly. On top of that, when catching fish, illegal fishermen from Myanmar are breaking international maritime territory laws. As a result, local Bangladeshi fishermen are being deprived of fishing in their own ground.

Drug Smuggling

In the BoB, drug smugglers and international terrorist groups sometimes work hand-to-hand which has long been a painstaking task for Bangladeshi national security agencies to prevent. The country's maritime area is bordered with Pakistan's 'Golden Crescent'. It is also sharing the maritime area with Myanmar's 'Golden Triangle'. These areas pose significant security threats as they have long been considered as the proving ground of illegal drug smuggling. In this junction, Bangladesh remains a significant security threat as drug peddlers can use BoB as a portal of illegal drug supply in the national and international markets.

Smugglers from Myanmar and Afghanistan

are also using BoB and adjacent rivers to supply their illegally produced drugs. Through BoB, smugglers from India and Myanmar are channeling Yaba and other illicit drugs and narcotics to the Bangladeshi (Khan 2019).

Arms Smuggling

Illegal arms smugglers use land and maritime ports as a junction of transit points to channel their products. For Bangladesh, gunrunning and illegal arms trafficking in the BoB is another maritime security threat. Historically, the country has experienced such incidents for long. For instance, on April 2, 2004, Bangladesh police had seized a large supply of illegal arms including AK-47 rifles, assault units, rocket launchers, submachine guns, 2,000 grenades, and 300,000 bullets. These supplies were being unloaded from MV Khazar Dan and FB Amanat at the Chittagong Urea Fertilizer jetty. It was later found that the arms haul was conducted by Assam-based militant group United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) (Ibid).

From 2012-2019, Bangladesh Coast Guard and navy police have also seized several fishing crafts loaded with arms and drugs in Cox's Bazar's coastal area.

Sea-borne Robbery

Recently, Bangladesh has emerged as a strong country in shipbuilding and related shipping business. This is often challenged by the danger of sea-borne robbery. Many of the international shipping lines and ocean-bound Bangladeshi ships are being attacked by these sea pirates. However, unlike Somalia sea pirates, Bangladeshi robber goes for petty theft as they do not have the equipment

and capacity to go to deep seas and commit robbery there. Hence, they are confined to armed robbery and banditry on anchored ships near the coasts or even in the ports—both national and international.

Sea piracy does not take place in Bangladeshi waters. However, incidents of armed robbery and demand for ransom have taken place in several shores of the country. However, in recent time, the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard have successfully dismantled incidents such as petty theft targeting ships at Chittagong Port anchorage.

Ocean Pollution

Although not directly related to maritime security, ocean pollution of the marine environment is another cardinal offence in the BoB. Bangladeshi rivers travel across lands from India, Nepal, and China and fall in the BoB. The upstream rivers carry river dumps and industrial waste in the BoB which is dangerous for living and non-living beings and resources. For instance, the BoB has 20% living organisms and 80% non-living resources which account for almost half-million different types of living and non-living prototypes in the BoB. Sea-borne ships and vessels discharge injurious oil and chemicals which pollute the water by spreading oil across the water-surface and hampering fisheries.

Warming in the Ocean

Bangladesh has undivided 710 km long coastline in the BoB. Out of 64 districts, 19 are dangerously lying below coastline. Rising temperature is causing a sea-level rise in the BoB and affecting the low delta districts. It is estimated that due to global warming, sea level will rise 10

cm, 25 cm, and 1 m respectively by 2020, 2050 and 2100. Respectively, 2%, 4%, and 17% of the land will be submerged by the sea (World Bank). This is even more dangerous for Bangladesh, as sea level in the BoB is rising 1 cm every year which is putting a dangerous effect on agriculture, ecosystem, fisheries, island, ports, tourism, and associated business sectors. Furthermore, a rise in 1 degree Celsius will put around 20% of Bangladeshi land underwater. This will turn another 30 million people into climate migrants (Ibid).

Smart Maritime Border Management and Coastal Security

Managing an efficient maritime border, countering coastal threats, and ensuring marine security are herculean tasks for any maritime nation including Bangladesh. Since it is not possible to install a fence along the sea-line and around the seashore, it is difficult for the maritime nations to put voluntary vigilance and effective physical surveillance in place. The resulting gap puts the coastlines and seashores vulnerable to several marine and sea-bound crimes. Hence, Bangladesh must install an effective maritime security measure to ensure and security in the BoB. For a maritime nation like us, smart border management for the coastal areas can be one such way to counter the burgeoning maritime threats.

However, the desired result of smart border management can only be achieved through joint efforts and collaborative approach among the security apparatus, intelligence agencies, and relevant maritime stakeholders working in this sector. As the BoB is the domain for multiple users and definition groups, no single security agency

alone can ensure its overall guarantee. Hence, apt cooperation and collaborative approach are needed where coordination among the different operators is of paramount importance for achieving a sustainable security measure in the maritime domain. Some of the guidance mechanisms for harnessing an effective smart maritime border in the BoB are discussed below.

Maritime Domain Awareness

A crucial element of acquiring effective maritime security is to harness vigilance and awareness for maritime domain. It is important that both the civil society and law enforcement agencies hold and participate in related campaigns, and based on that provide situational assessment, response, and reporting on the most recent information. The objective of this awareness program is to gather and disseminate as much information, strategies, and action plans as possible and relevant intelligence regarding any nefarious activities taking place in the BoB at any given moment.

As Bangladesh has adopted a 'zero tolerance' policy on maritime terrorism and violence, this is particularly useful for the law enforcers as they will be able to share any information available in their database inventory. Maritime domain awareness is another important aspect as law enforcers can learn new field techniques, tactical battle plans and wargames being initiated and adopted by the sea criminals. Through a comprehensive domain awareness, law enforcers will be able to check and investigate the entry points of the criminals that they are going to penetrate along the maritime border. By doing so,

the patrol guards will be able to eliminate any risks of potential attack at any given time.

Maritime Security Governance

Ensuring sound governance for maritime security cannot be emphasised more for a country whose 20% of the annual income comes from sea-borne fisheries that contributes to 5% in GDP. It is equally crucial for ensuring food security and bolstering national security. Without a strong and prudent national policy for this area, it is impossible to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) whose several goals are associated with maritime and food security.

The BoB is being marked as a cockpit for economic and strategic growth. It provides critical SLOCs which is crucial for energy trading and transit routes for Africa, Europe, and the Middle East with the countries in Southeast Asia. For this purpose, the government of Bangladesh is refocusing on the importance of coastal areas and island states in the BoB which is now dealing with both traditional and non-traditional threats in the domain.

Cooperation in BIMSTEC

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional bloc built upon the promise of mutual cooperation that comprises of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It is one of the well-positioned multi-country initiatives that can aptly engage in maritime security cooperation among the member countries.

For a bay state like Bangladesh, it is, however essential to develop a robust framework of maritime governance and cooperation mechanism

with other countries that lie in its surrounding water. Timely and coordinated cooperation through the BIMSTEC network can be effective in resolving issues such as the 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis. The incident involved thousands of ‘boat people’ being stuck in international waters that provided potential recruitment opportunity for sea pirates, international criminal networks, and Islamic militant groups.

Maritime security cooperation through BIMSTEC also provides another wide-angle benefit—a potential inroad into the Southeast Asian (SEA) countries. Under the BIMSTEC initiative, cooperation in maritime security does not include all the coastal states in the bay belt but includes states from outside of South Asia. This can be useful as SEA countries like Myanmar and Thailand can make avenues into the other part of the Indian Ocean. Leaders and governors from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka also agree with the vision by reflecting their awareness that the South Asian countries should break out from its confinement and connect more with the SEA states.

Maritime Security in the Digital Age

The maritime industry is responsible for over 80% of global transportation of goods and services, and a successful cyber-attack against this sector could be devastating, costing millions and ruining businesses. With the rise of technical efficiencies, industries are now facing new vulnerabilities. These newfound threats are now emerging on the surface due to the modified synchronisation of informational, administrative, and operational technologies. To protect the sea, Bangladesh government should concentrate on protecting the oceanographic data, minimising potential loss and damage, liability,

insurance risk. In addition, perpetrators today are equipped with cyber capabilities that enable them to commit traditional crimes such as piracy, smuggling and terrorist plots in the sea at a grander scale.

The digital age has enabled governments to develop digital technologies that incorporate AI and robotics into processes making systems smooth, seamless, and more secured. As new innovations come through, Bangladeshi governments need to readily equip themselves with the latest technological developments to protect the seas.

Digital Transformation in Green Shipping

Shipping industries in the BoB today confront the challenges of operating efficiently and profitably while meeting the sophisticated need and demand of the customers through digitisation. The percentage of transport and logistics companies that rated themselves as ‘advanced’ on digitisation is just 28%. In addition to regular threats like fleet utilisation, shipping lines are now facing the challenges of changing environment due to increased digitisation and its impact such as digital darwinism and digital dwarfism.

Decision-makers in Bangladesh now should be more open to trend-setting digital ideas such as crew-less shopping to optimise efficiency. Systems will need to be integrated as companies will have to work in tandem with port authorities and coastguards for a seamless and secured digital experience.

A Concerted Effort

As discussed, a major portion of Bangladesh’s security and economic growth depends on the

secure use of BoB and its adjacent rivers and waterways. It is thus imperative to enhance our efforts and technical knowhow to combat the evolving threats and their potential perils in the BoB. In this regard, the government of Bangladesh has taken several policy measures and administrative steps to enhance the capacity of the naval staff, coastal guards, and supporting law enforcing agencies to combat naval crimes. For maximum impact, the government will, however require to adopt a more comprehensive and all-inclusive approach to better synergise and synchronise all institution-level strategies and action plans. For ensuring more maritime and coastal security, activities can be initiated by blending public-private partnership. These strategies and action plans can be realigned with our existing maritime security programs for putting a complete and cohesive national effort by integrating both public and private agencies. Furthermore, designated units and departments can develop, share, and integrate their sector-specific security threats, challenges, and battleplans in the marine domain. This integration mechanism of dealing with marine security hazards can be bolstered by inter-departmental cooperation.

Developing an Integrated Maritime Policy

Although Bangladesh does not have a robust policy on maritime security, due to the vast potential of natural resources in the BoB, it is necessary to develop an integrated maritime policy. The policymakers should focus on protecting the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and continental shelf from any maritime security threat. It should also provide a legal provision of preventing any

marine pollution including the protection of the living and non-living organisms. Such policy can also be instrumental in providing a research base for technology transfer, protection of the marine ecosystem, and prevention of global climate change. It is also evident that Bangladesh is likely to face increased naval competition in the coming days. A well-crafted marine and maritime policy measure can guide countering these obstacles, competition and potential geo-strategic threats.

Way Forward and Conclusion

UNCLOS's Articles 33 and 73 provide rights and permission to countries to engage and exercise necessary control to protect their maritime sovereignty. Under the bracket, Articles 110 (rights to visit) and Article 111 (hot pursuit) permit to fight any trans-national crimes by allowing random visits and inspections of ships and seaborne vessels that might be suspected of engaging in illicit maritime activity. The Articles also allow the enforcers to intercept foreign ships (which are roaming in the national maritime border) by warships or military aircraft. Although a friendly nation, Bangladesh government must put its effort in exercising these maritime actions to secure its marine backyard. At the same time, the government should also foster stronger regional and maritime cooperation by harnessing robust diplomatic relations with its neighbouring countries like India and Myanmar. Bangladesh government can also take the initiative to initiate and enact the 'Convention for Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Marine Navigation' adopted in 1988 which is yet to be signed and adopted by the South Asian neighbours. At the same time, the Security

Council's recent plea to criminalise robbery, piracy, and amend related national legislation should be brought into daylight for legal consideration.

Furthermore, to promote national maritime security, Bangladesh government can integrate the 'Look East Policy' in its foreign policy agenda which will also assist in diversifying Bangladesh's external relations. In addition to modernising the Mongla and Chittagong ports, the Sonadia Deep Sea Port should be resumed and Paira Sea Port should be developed fast. Developing technical capacity for deep-sea fishing and anchoring larger international shipping lines will enable the country to deepen its cooperation in maritime affairs with other littoral states and thus address the national capacity gap.

This can be further bolstered by forming a coalition between the littoral states in the BoB and countries from Southeast Asia. As discussed previously, BoB provides two crucial SLOCs, one

of which is harnessing the critical paths of countries from East and Southeast Asia. Bangladesh can consider developing a maritime partnership with these countries to build a robust framework to enhance maritime security in the sub-region which is considered to be the hotbed of seaborne trade and commerce.

It is evident that, for both economic and strategic well-being, Bangladesh will need to instate a strong security measure in the BoB. For this purpose, the country will have to put an all-out effort of adopting a stronger policy regime, build capacity for the law enforcement agencies, and strike a balance in maintaining a relationship with old allies and tying knots with new friends. The boundless maritime interests and benefits of Bangladesh can be extended to its oceanic backyard which will ultimately reshape and govern the next decades of the country.

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Gulf Imbrolio: - Changing *GE-OIL-ITICS*

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The present time is colloquially being called the Asian Century for all the right reasons. If the 19th century was Britain's Imperial century and the 20th was American, then the 21st century is becoming the Asian century. By 2020, the economic growth (in purchasing power parity terms) of Asian giants put together will surpass the rest of the world and that is likely to be the future trend as well.

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has played and continues to play a vital role in creating this Asian prosperity through the “road of development in the twenty-first century.” Today, the Indian Ocean has become a major conduit of international trade as it was until a few centuries back. While occupying almost 20 per cent of the earth's surface, the IOR is inhabited by 35 per cent of the world's population staying in 38 littoral states. Over 100,000 ships transit through the Indian Ocean every year, accounting for 66 per cent of the world's oil cargo, 50 per cent of container cargo and 33 per cent of bulk cargo.¹ India's 90 per cent trade by volume and 70 per cent trade by value is dependent on the Indian Ocean. The major fuel for growth for most of the Asian countries is oil. For the Asian countries, the supply of oil comes from West Asia—the Gulf region—while the major consumers, India, ASEAN, China, South Korea and Japan lie to the East. This oil, which fuels the growth of Asia is transported eastward from the Gulf via the Indian Ocean. The security of the production centres, as

well as its transportation across the sea lanes, is thus vital for Asia and any disruption could put a huge question mark on the emergence of the 21st century as the Asian century. Oil thus is the most important governing factor of geopolitics these days and owing to its criticality the word “ge-oil-itics” needs to be introduced into common strategic parlance.

Asian economies have grown to be heavily dependent on oil imports to satisfy their growing demand. Crucially, Asian economies purchase most of this oil from the Gulf. As a share of oil imports, the Gulf region accounted for 44% of oil imports for China, 63.6% for India, 86% for Japan and 77.1% for South Korea according to 2017 data compiled by the Observatory of Economic Complexity. Off late, some incidents impacting on oil security have exposed the vulnerability of Asian powers to events occurring in the Gulf. The mine attack, which blew off the hull of a Japanese oil tanker at a UAE port and 30 Indian sailors being detained by Iran who were on board a British tanker which was carrying the flag of Panama are cases in point.² But of even greater concern is the attack which took place on Saudi oil facilities on 14 September 2019. This attack has not received the attention it deserves, but if oil facilities continue to be targeted in the Gulf, the Asian century is unlikely to materialise any time soon.

The attack on Saudi oil facilities took place on 14 September through stealthy air attacks using

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drones and cruise missiles. The attack was claimed by the Houthi rebels in Yemen, but evidently, there are other powers behind the attack, using the Houthis as a front. This is a situation that should rightly be causing anxiety to both economists and strategic thinkers, but for some reasons, the danger signals are not being correctly read. If the conflict in Yemen escalates and spirals out of control, it would cripple the capability of Gulf oil suppliers and adversely impact the world economies, with the impact on the Asian economies being severely devastating. It is a matter of concern that as seen in the attack on the Saudi Aramco facilities, small budget precision aerial weapons could defeat heavily guarded installations of national importance. If it could happen in one of the heaviest guarded facilities in the world, then India needs to also pay attention to the security of its refineries (like Reliance refineries at our West coast). Attack on oil facilities will push up the price of oil which in turn will adversely impact India's economy and will have the potential to dent India's GDP growth rate. For example, according to Nomura, a Japanese financial holding company, an increase in oil prices by USD 10 per barrel will lead to a drop in India's GDP by 0.2 per cent points.³

This attack by drones and cruise missiles has brought out the lethality and accuracy of Airpower while defeating another pillar of Airpower which is air-defence (detection, identification, timely interception and destruction). This is a lesson which Indian policymakers, strategists and tacticians must learn fast and evaluate India's Airpower preparedness for this kind of attack from land or maritime borders.

Did it Happen Suddenly?

It took the world by shock when news of an attack on Saudi Oil installations in Abqaiq and Khurais hit the media channels. The **undetected** attacks carried out by unmanned aerial vehicles with high precision left people wonderstruck, especially as the attack was claimed by Houthi rebels. The sheer unexpectedness of such an attack being successfully mounted on a very heavily guarded facility by a small rebel force, albeit one that had external support, made some observers term the incident as a 'Black Swan' event. The attack disabled the largest crude processing facility of Saudi Arabia and disrupted Saudi oil supply capability by almost 50 per cent. The estimate was that the oil operations were down by 5.7 million barrels a day, which was approximately 5% of the daily global oil supply. James Rogers, a security expert with expertise in drones and a visiting research fellow at the Department of International Security Studies at Yale University, observed "It is quite an impressive, yet worrying, technological feat, long-range precision strikes are not easy to achieve and to cause the substantial fires in Abqaiq and Khurais highlights that this drone has a large explosive yield."⁴ It was a small budget attack by non-state actors (maybe state-sponsored) having strategic repercussions. Wim Zwijnenburg, a senior researcher on drones at a Dutch peace organisation analysed it further saying, "The drones gave the Houthis an edge because they were cheap to produce, hard to detect and shoot down, and able to cause damage and disruption hugely disproportionate to their cost. While the Houthis' exact capabilities are not known, they have developed over time."⁵

Was this attack possible without thorough planning and practice? A timeline of recent attacks on Saudi targets claimed by Houthis should prove the old proverb correct - 'with practice comes perfection'. This timeline has been obtained from the article titled 'Timeline: Houthis' drone and missile attacks on Saudi targets' published post the attacks on 14th September on the Aljazeera news platform.

- 5 January 2018: Saudi state-owned media said the kingdom's defence forces intercepted a Houthi missile over the Najran province, on the southern border with Yemen, before it could hit its intended target. The rebel group claims responsibility for the attack, saying on Twitter it had a "successful launch of a short-range ballistic missile at a military target in Saudi Arabia".
- 31 March 2018: Saudi Arabia said it intercepted a missile fired by the Houthis targeting the southern city of Najran.
- 24 June 2018: Saudi Arabia said its air defence forces intercepted and destroyed two Houthi ballistic missiles over Riyadh. At least six loud explosions were heard and bright flashes were seen in the sky over Riyadh. The Houthi-run Al Masirah TV said Burkan missiles were fired at the Saudi Ministry of Defence and other targets.
- 25 July 2018: Houthi rebels attacked a Saudi oil tanker in the Red Sea, causing slight damage, according to the Saudi-UAE-led coalition. The tanker was attacked in the west of Yemen's Hodeidah port but the Houthis' Al Masirah TV reported that the group targeted the Dammam warship off the western coast of Yemen.
- 9 August 2018: Saudi Arabia intercepted two missiles fired by the Houthis at its southern Jizan province, the official Saudi Press Agency quoted a military spokesman. Al Masirah TV said the Houthis fired several ballistic missiles at Saudi Arabia, targeting the border provinces of Jizan and Aseer.
- 3 April 2019: Coalition said it intercepted two drones launched by the Houthis towards the city of KhamisMushait.
- 14 May 2019: Saudi Arabia said armed drones struck two of its oil-pumping stations west of Riyadh. The Aramco East-West pipeline, stretching across the country to the port and oil terminal at Yanbu, was damaged in two places.
- 20 May 2019: The Saudi military said it shot down two ballistic missiles reportedly heading towards the cities of Jeddah and Mecca. The Houthis denied their missiles were targeting Mecca, a pilgrimage site some 70 kilometres from Jeddah and 50km from Taif. The group called to claim a tactic by Riyadh to rally support for its war.
- 12 June 2019: Houthi rebels fired a missile at Abha airport in southern Saudi Arabia, wounding 26 civilians in the building's arrivals hall, according to the Saudi-UAE-led coalition. The coalition said a projectile hit the arrivals hall at Abha airport, causing material damage. Three women and two children were among the wounded.
- 17 June 2019: Houthi rebels launched a drone attack targeting Abha airport, the group's Al Masirah TV said. There was no immediate Saudi confirmation of the attack.

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- 20 June 2019: The rebels hit a power station in Jizan province with a “cruise missile,” Al Masirah TV said. The coalition confirmed Houthi forces fired a “projectile” at a desalination plant in the al-Shuqaiq city but said no one was wounded and there was no damage caused to the facility.
 - 2 July 2019: Another Houthi attack on Abha airport wounded nine civilians, the coalition said. The Houthis said they “launched a wide operation aimed at warplanes at Abha international airport” with drones, according to Al Masirah TV.
 - 1 August 2019: Houthi rebels said they fired a long-range missile at the port city of Dammam in Saudi Arabia, hundreds of kilometres away from Yemen.
 - 5 August 2019: Houthi forces launched drone attacks on Saudi Arabia’s King Khalid Airbase and Abha and Najran airports, according to a spokesman for the group. The spokesman said the attack on Abha airport “hit its targets” and air traffic was disrupted at both Abha and Najran. However, the coalition says the drones were intercepted and downed.
 - 17 August 2019: A drone attack claimed by the Houthis sparked a fire in a remote oil and gas field in eastern Saudi Arabia. A Houthi military spokesman said the group targeted the Shaybah oilfield with 10 drones, calling it the “biggest attack in the depths” of the kingdom. Saudi Aramco says the attack caused no casualties or disruption to production.
 - 25 August 2019: The Houthis said they fired 10 Badr-1 ballistic missiles at Jizan airport, killing and wounding dozens. The coalition said it intercepted and destroyed at least six ballistic missiles fired by the group targeting civilians in Jizan, in the southwest of the kingdom. It gave no details about casualties or damage.
 - 26 August 2019: Houthi rebels claimed to have attacked a military target in Riyadh. According to a spokesman for the rebels, the attack was carried out with an armed drone. Saudi Arabia denied there was an attack by the Houthis.
 - 10 September 2019: The coalition forces intercepted a drone over Yemen’s Saada province, Saudi Press Agency reported.
 - 14 September 2019: Drone attacks claimed by the Houthis caused fires at two major oil facilities run by Saudi Aramco.⁶

The reported 18 attacks before the most effective attack on 14 September simply tell that Houthis were progressing in both technology and intention to threaten the Saudi regime. All the previous attacks were carried out using aerial weapons like cruise missiles or drones. Hence Saudi security forces were well aware of the capability of the Houthi rebels and should have been better prepared to intercept the attack of 14 September. In any case, they should not have been taken by surprise. The features of this attack like well-chosen targets to cause maximum damage to Saudi reputation, deliberation on centres of gravity (CsOG) in the target system (crude oil stabilisers, natural gas storages), distance; direction and pattern (ultra low level) and time chosen etc show that the planning was done by skilled air

attack professionals.⁷ Whosoever was behind this attack, one thing is clear; this did not happen all of a sudden. This was not a Black Swan event. This was a Grey Rhino event.⁸

This attack has brought out that non-state or state-sponsored non-state actors have acquired sophisticated systems that can impact the global economy and cause collateral damage of unprecedented nature. The threat in the Indian context is real with Pakistan sponsored non-state actors looking for opportunities to cause collateral damage within Kashmir and across India. The drone attack can target high-value national leaders, critical infrastructure, power grid system, oil refineries, military installations and population centres. Drones are highly versatile and can deliver explosives, biological, chemical agents, and also act as the eyes and ears of the terrorists.⁹ And this is not mere speculation because recently drones from Pakistani side have carried out missions of dropping weapons in Punjab. A large number of AK-47 assault rifles and grenades dropped in Amritsar by heavy-lifting drones that came from across the border, is speculated to be aimed at creating trouble in Jammu and Kashmir. The drones carried out eight ‘sorties’ in 10 days in the month of September to drop the weapons, including satellite phones. These flying machines with a capacity to carry up to 5 kg flew fast and low to evade detection.¹⁰ Since then, activities of these drones have increased on India’s western borders and security forces are being put on alert. If one can see the similarities in the pattern of usage of drones by non-state actors against a state, it shall appear as the beginning of a larger plot against India. Indian security forces thus need to prepare to negate any such threats.

Safety of the Gulf

Presently, the US has a strong naval presence in the Gulf (and in IOR as well) and has traditionally safeguarded its energy security (including SLOCs) and that of its allies. However, its relative energy dependence on the countries of the region is diminishing with the exploitation of shale oil and gas at home front and it is no longer dependent on oil from the Gulf. However, the US continues to provide a security umbrella over the region, though it now seeks greater contribution from both India and China the security architecture. During the last few years, discussions with the US have brought up the issue of India and China being free riders, depending upon American naval assets to protect their access to energy supplies from the Gulf without making any significant contribution themselves.¹¹

The more worrisome fact is that none of the big Asian economies has vocally raised the level of concern on the deteriorating security environment in the Gulf. If the Saudi oil facilities can be attacked, so can the facilities of Iran, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait and others. If such an eventuality were to occur, then the Asian economies would be crippled. The shy response of the four Asian powers surfaces the absence of any strategy in Asia’s capitals for dealing with security in the Persian Gulf if, or when, the Americans decide that they no longer want to get involved.¹² These four powers—India, China, Japan and South Korea are all heavily dependent on oil imports from the Gulf for meeting their energy requirements. While the latter three claim to have sufficient cushion of strategic reserves, India’s oil reserves are inadequate to cope with such turmoil in oil supply

from western Indian Ocean Region and would place in jeopardy, India's dream of becoming a USD five trillion economy by 2024. In all senses the future of geopolitics in the region will be controlled by "ge-oil-itics".

The recent events in the Gulf should act as a wake-up call to India to review its role in the IOR in light of a reduced American presence and an ever-increasing Chinese footprint. It is thus time to strengthen India's defence policy while focusing on an Air and Naval Power doctrine for maritime

security. India's maritime borders are exposed from three sides and there are many high-value assets located on Indian coastlines. Given the limited assets and constraints of the defence budget, conventional and non-conventional aerial threats can only be tackled through a rejuvenated Air-power philosophy focused on better integration of naval and air force assets. It would not only give India an insurance for its predicted economic rise but also give assurance to neighbouring IOR countries for mutual growth.

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Afghanistan: Continuing Mayhems and an Uncertain Future

Lt Gen Kamal Davar*

“ Afghanistan has to be rescued from itself.”

—Pakistani author Ahmad Rashid

“The US doesn’t lose wars, it loses interest.”

—Former US Defence Secretary J.Mattis in his speech to Jamestown Foundation

Spiraling bouts of recurrent fratricidal violence, persisting political instability, a feeble central government and the machinations of regional powers pursuing their transient and petty agendas have, once again, put impoverished hapless Afghanistan at the crossroads of its destiny. Since November 2001, with the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom, the USA has been the major player in Afghanistan, in its efforts to rid the state of becoming a launchpad for global terrorists. That the US is now preparing to exit Afghanistan, without its end objectives being even partially achieved, portends a grim future for Afghanistan. To further exacerbate matters, Pakistan, Afghanistan’s ‘Islamic brother’ to its east and south, has since decades been the major factor contributing to Afghanistan’s tribulations, which is a universally accepted strategic reality.

India, with whom Afghanistan has sustained civilisational, cultural, economic and political linkages since millennia, today stands somewhat isolated in the churning for Afghanistan’s future. This is rather surprising as, in recent years, India is among the very few nations whom the Afghan people respect. Over the past few years, India

has given over USD 2 billion (excluding another 1 billion in the pipeline) in developmental assistance and educational aid and also some modest military aid to Afghanistan, including training of its personnel.¹ That India has scrupulously limited itself to solely the export of soft power to Afghanistan has been well received by the Afghans.

Pakistan, with its decades’ old stratagem of seeking ‘strategic depth’ in Afghanistan, endeavouring by all means to have a pliant regime in Kabul, has successfully managed somewhat to keep India out of the current discourse for Afghanistan. Ironically, India’s strategic partner, US, is largely to blame for India’s marginalisation, as the US is banking on Pakistan to assist it in its current parleys with the extremist Taliban. The US appears overtly keen to exit strife-torn Afghanistan after 18 years of the longest and still unfinished war in its history and hopes that Pakistan will be able to help it to accomplish an early exit. It is a historical fact that quite a few of the US’s military involvements overseas have been unsuccessful, the examples of US intervention in Vietnam, Venezuela and Iraq being cases in point. If the US departs from Afghanistan with its mission unfulfilled, it will be yet another instance of the

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US not achieving its strategic aim, despite a prolonged military campaign.

Current American Dilemma in Afghanistan

Former US President Barack Obama, as part of his foreign policy objectives, had attempted to exit US military presence in Afghanistan. In May 2014, he had announced plans to pull virtually all military troops out of Afghanistan by 2016. Now President Donald Trump has also made his intention clear of pulling out US troops from Afghanistan, despite the conflict not having achieved US aims to set in late 2001 when the US had launched its operations in Afghanistan. To eliminate the terrorists and locate their kingpin Osama bin Laden, the forces deployed by the US and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were more than 100,000 troops by 2010. Gradually, the overall force levels have come down and now, just over 14,000 US troops and 17,000 troops from 39 other NATO allies remain in Afghanistan.² The Afghan conflict has been costly, both in terms of human and financial costs. The US military has suffered over 2,400 fatalities and in terms of treasure, the cost has been a staggering USD 800 billion-plus, with an additional USD 105 billion as the cost for rebuilding. The US, fighting the longest war in its history, is by any standards financially weary and militarily fatigued. Thus, over the last few years, it has not hesitated to open up channels of communication with the extremist Afghan Taliban—its main foe in Afghanistan.

Many rounds of talks between the US and Taliban representatives have taken place in Doha and with the delegations of other nations in Bonn,

London and Moscow, over the past 3-4 years, to arrive at a mutually agreed formula for the US to exit and restore a semblance of normalcy to Afghanistan. Negotiations between the Taliban and the US have largely concentrated on the timeline for US troops withdrawal, the parameters for a ceasefire, intra-Afghan negotiations and obtaining serious assurances from the Taliban to cease all violent acts besides not giving any shelter to any terrorist group. Regrettably, the Taliban had refused to meet with the Afghan government officials, though they did meet a few of them informally at Moscow in 2018. With each passing month, the Taliban has been indulging in an orgy of violence as they feel that creating greater mayhem would considerably increase their leverage in the talks.

The ninth round of talks had commenced on 22 August 2019 between the US delegation and the Taliban's political office in Doha, Qatar. The day previous, US envoy to these talks, Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad (himself of Afghan origin) informally met Mullah Baradar, the co-founder of the Taliban in a one-to-one interaction. The result of these talks, which carried on for over a week, have not been divulged so far except for a tweet from Khalilzad, which read "*We are at the threshold of an agreement that will reduce violence and open the door for Afghans to sit together to negotiate an honourable & sustainable peace and a unified, sovereign Afghanistan that does not threaten the United States, its allies, or any other country.*"³ However, TRT World, a Turkish news channel, quoting Kabul based Tolo News, stated that as soon as the Agreement details are officially made public, US troops would vacate

seven bases within 135 days of the Agreement.⁴ Not surprisingly, and in conformity with their old tactics, the Taliban had launched over the weekend, while the talks were on, two major attacks on the northern cities of Kunduz and Pul-e-Khomri. Besides, the former Mayor of Faizabad, Gen Nazir Mohammad Neyazi along with several others were killed in an explosion caused by an embedded mine in Badakhshan on 1 September 2019. This was the second attempt by the Taliban to eliminate Neyazi, who was one of the uprising forces commanders in Badakhshan, after failing to do so in an earlier attempt by a suicide bomber in 2017.⁵

Twice delayed, many analysts across the world had expressed little confidence in the elections, scheduled for 28 September 2019, taking place at all due to the ongoing peace talks between the United States and the Taliban. This changed when President Trump called off the talks with the Taliban on 7 September 2019, after a US soldier, Sgt Ellis Barreto was killed in a suicide car bomb attack carried out by the Taliban in Kabul. The explosion also killed 11 other people. “What kind of people would kill so many to seemingly strengthen their bargaining position? They didn’t, they only made it worse!” Trump tweeted.⁶ The elections went ahead as scheduled, though threats from the Taliban kept most Afghans away from the polls. On the positive side, the election did go through despite the Taliban and Pakistan doing their utmost to have the elections cancelled.

Pakistan’s Continuing Duplicity and Intrigues

As with India since 1947, Pakistan’s relationship with its ‘Islamic brother’ Afghanistan

has been characterised by a roller-coaster ride. Most ordinary Afghans believe, since decades, that had it not been for Pakistan’s myriad machinations inside their nation for more reasons than one, Afghanistan would have been politically stable and blessed with a sustainable democracy. According to most analysts, Pakistan’s much talked about ‘quest for strategic depth’ in Afghanistan and its enduring endeavours to have a pliant regime in Kabul has led to Afghanistan’s continuing instability and untold violence in that hapless nation.

As is universally acknowledged, Pakistan, since years, has supported the fundamentalist Afghan Taliban and various extremist warlords including the Haqqani network and al Qaeda elements. Though he changed tack to a certain extent recently, US President Donald Trump has frequently chided Pakistan’s duplicitous role in Afghanistan with their supporters in that nation targeting US and ISAF soldiers. Dr Marvin Weinbaum, Director for Pakistan Studies at the Middle East Institute, Washington DC, has succinctly commented that “...a pure Islamic state in Afghanistan not only promised to neutralise Pashtun irredentism but also helped to train and indoctrinate jihadis for the struggle against India in Kashmir.”⁷ One aspect which appears to not having been much discussed is of Pakistan’s policy towards Kabul, that it aims to nullify all efforts by rebel Pashtuns for carving out an independent ‘Pashtunistan’ and ensuring the sanctity of the Durand Line, the 1893 international border between Afghanistan and then British India. Successive Afghan governments, right since the drawing of the Durand Line, have never recognised its legal validity—a fact which has

made every government in Pakistan more than uncomfortable.

Pakistan, since years, has been subtly causing problems to the democratically elected regimes of earlier Afghan president Hamid Karzai and now of President Ashraf Ghani by clandestine support to the extremist Taliban. With the current Afghan presidential elections scheduled on 28 September 2019, it is widely speculated that Pakistan will do their utmost to have these elections postponed/ cancelled and hope for a Taliban led the government to be installed as a result of the current parleys between the US and the Taliban which Pakistan is ostensibly facilitating. As regards Afghanistan affairs are concerned, Pakistan is back in the reckoning, after Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the US on July 2019. At a joint press conference subsequently at the White House, the mercurial US President Trump, alluding to Pakistan's role in Afghanistan, declared "I think Pakistan is going to help us out to extricate ourselves".⁸ To stay in the good books of the US, the Pakistan government is doing its best to influence the treacherous Taliban to agree to some formula with the US which will enable the US troops, not delay further, their planned exit from Afghanistan. In the coming days, PM Imran Khan is hosting the Taliban leaders in Islamabad. Last year, the Pakistan government had quietly released the co-founder of the Afghan Taliban, terror kingpin, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar from its Karachi prison. Mullah Baradar is now one of the chief negotiators for the US-Taliban rapprochement. The Ashraf Ghani led Kabul government is naturally wary of Pakistan's machinations and rather disappointed with the US

hurry to quit Afghanistan in its current state of being still grossly violence-reeked and politically unstable.

Russia and its Changing Role in Afghanistan

A Putin-led resurgent Russia, over the last three years in particular, now sees itself as a major player in Afghanistan's emerging contours, despite having been indifferent all these years since the Americans had stepped into Afghanistan in 2001. The then Soviet Union, after a 10-year stay in Afghanistan from 1979-1989, had to vacate Afghanistan, thanks to the collective efforts of the Americans, their supported Mujahidin and the Pakistanis. That in later years, the Mujahidin got transformed into the Taliban who are now being wooed by their earlier enemies is another example of strange bedfellows getting together in the ugly world of geopolitics! The Taliban are no longer considered as untouchables by the Russians who feel that the Taliban are also legitimate stakeholders in mainstream Afghan politics. Importantly, for the Russians, the Taliban would be a bulwark against ISIS presence now spreading from Afghanistan into the Central Asian Republics. That the Russians wish to take over some strategic space in Afghanistan, consequent to the US exit, is understandable.⁹

The Russians have been organising some multilateral conferences over the past two years with several stakeholders for resolving Afghanistan's problems. However, they have had to postpone one important conference they had scheduled in early September 2019 as the US pulled out from it and the Ashraf Ghani government too

wanted some more time to configure an internal consensus before attending this conference. Media reports do talk of Russia and even Iran secretly confabulating with Taliban leaders for a solution to the Afghan conundrum. These initiatives have understandably not gone well with the Kabul government who have warned these nations not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Notwithstanding all these current differences, Russia sees itself as a major player in Afghanistan once the US makes its exit.

Status of the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG)

Afghanistan has witnessed a large variety in the systems of governance over the past decades—from monarchy to communist rule, the Soviet intervention to Taliban rule and then democracy from 2004 till date. After President Hamid Karzai's tenures in Kabul, the NUG was formed in 2014 after great pulls and pushes from different contenders. Its performance over these years has been characterised by major policy differences, especially between President Ghani and the CEO Abdullah Abdullah. Last year (2018), even the high profile NSA, Hanif Atmar, also parted ways with his president. Nevertheless, despite the US also marginalising Ashraf Ghani in their talks with the Taliban, the Afghan president has braved varied challenges to his fragile government from many quarters and is now ready, once again, for the presidential polls on 28 September 2019. Like his predecessor Hamid Karzai, Ashraf Ghani has always been grateful to India for its developmental assistance to their nation.

The campaign of 18 candidates for the Afghan

presidential elections held on 28 September 2019 had been in full swing since July this year. While the Election Support Group comprising donors like the European Union, US, UK, Germany, Sweden, Japan, NATO etc had strongly advised the Kabul government to ensure the independence and autonomy of the election conducting agencies, there were complaints by many lesser-known parties and candidates about Ashraf Ghani appointing many officials close to him to oversee the elections. Post the elections, the two front-runners, incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and his coalition partner Abdullah Abdullah, both claimed that they had enough votes to win, but that would be determined when the final count is declared on 07 November. If none of the candidates gets 50 per cent of the votes, there will be a run-off between the top two candidates. Whether the results will be widely accepted has to be seen. Of the 9.6 million voters, only 2.1 million voted—a mere 22 per cent. With peace talks called off, the future of Afghanistan remains uncertain. At the United Nations on 30 September, Afghanistan was represented by its National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib. On the world stage, Mohib sent a message to the Taliban, "Join us in Peace or we will continue to fight".¹⁰ The Taliban are unlikely to heed the call.

Options for India in Afghanistan

As mentioned earlier in this paper, India enjoys the respect of the Afghan people for its non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and sincere efforts in assisting the nation's development. However, with the Taliban now likely to become a major stakeholder in the future of Afghanistan, India faces a Hobson's choice in its

political preferences in the emerging contours of Afghanistan. By any standards, India now faces a quandary in the options it can formalise in its Afghan policy in the foreseeable future. Many Indian security analysts opine that India may have to review its options with prudence and alacrity in the coming months and recalibrate its policy for Afghanistan. That the Taliban, Pakistan and China would like to continue isolating India in future Afghanistan affairs, as hitherto-fore, is a foregone conclusion. Notwithstanding India's discomfiture with the current trends in Afghanistan's emerging political contours, the following steps are recommended:

- India must support by all measures it can muster, for democracy to find its feet in Afghanistan. It should identify Afghan leaders and those tribal chieftains who believe in the unity of their nation and democracy.
- It must establish strong channels of communication with the likes of Abdullah Abdullah and other like-minded Tajik leaders of the former Northern Alliance.
- India should endeavour to forge a consensus with the likes of Russia, Iran, Germany and the EU, CAR's and also the US which will continue to play a significant role in Afghanistan's reconstruction even after the draw-down.
- India must impress upon various agencies of the UN to continue their good work in impoverished Afghanistan, especially in the areas of elimination of cultivation and smuggling of drugs. Education and empowerment of women will take a hit if

the Taliban gets into a major role in the coming months and international agencies will have to thus play a vital role in ensuring that their earlier pioneering work does not get washed away.

- India must provide lethal military equipment to augment the combat capability of the Afghanistan National Security Forces, provided their command and control rests with a democratically elected government and not with the Taliban.
- India should utilise, in its soft power exports to Afghanistan, the genius of the huge Afghan diaspora now settled in India.
- India must not be in a hurry to establish any linkages with the extremist Taliban who, if they come to power, will take Afghanistan back to the dark ages.
- Indian intelligence agencies in concert with the Afghan intelligence agencies must keep a watchful eye on the activities of the ISIS, remnants of the Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network elements in Afghanistan who appear to be lately showing considerable interest towards the Indian state of J&K.

Conclusion

It is indeed a pity that the world's sole super power is again committing a strategic blunder in the region by virtually abandoning Afghanistan where, ironically, the first global war on terror was launched. Notwithstanding the so-called electoral obligations of President Trump in 2020, the compulsions of geography and geopolitics are too grave for India if Afghanistan falls, once again, to political instability and the establishment of an

extremist regime. The coming months portend serious security challenges for India from the land of the Hindu Kush. It will thus require all of India's

strategic wisdom and a firm resolve to thwart all threats which may emerge from an unstable Afghanistan of the near future.

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Tackling Naxalism: A New Approach

Shubhramshu Choudhary*

Editor's Note: *This article is based on the author's firsthand account and fieldwork in the region.*

When Mr Lahre, a Forest Sub Divisional Officer in Kawardha district of Chhattisgarh, was identified for taking a bribe of Rs. 99,000 from 33 Baiga primitive tribals of Bhangitola village in return of promise of land rights under Forest Rights Act, he returned the money and made a public apology. He broadcast his apology through the same medium that identified him – CGNet's Bultoo Radio. In fifteen years of operation in Chhattisgarh, this network has solved more than 1000 cases. These have covered a variety of issues, including land rights, missing pensions, broken water pumps and electricity substations, and closed schools. The most dramatic success was in a case of quick intervention to prevent a cholera outbreak.

The common thread in all these cases is that they reconnect citizens to the state, in remote forest areas where Maoists have successfully exploited the failure of state institutions. Through the practical use of communications, CGNet has provided a narrative that directly confronts the claims of the Maoists, particularly in the issue of land rights. The most powerful recruiting call for the Maoists is that they alone will secure land for tribal people. CGNet has shown a way of challenging this. If was scaled up, alongside other confidence-building measures, it could provide a powerful new tool to re-establish order and stability

in left wing extremism (LWE) affected regions.

Bultoo Radio

All of these cases were brought to CGNet by individuals, recruited and trained one by one to tell the stories of their communities by phoning a toll-free number, pressing '1', and recording. After the stories are edited into bulletins, they are rebroadcast, and they can be heard by calling the same number and pressing '2'. In many places where there is no mobile signal, one person will travel out, record the bulletin, and neighbours hear it through Bluetooth. The word Bluetooth simplified, has led the medium to be popularly called 'Bultoo Radio.'

The cases are dealt with when other people call concerned officials to alert them to the problem. Its success became clear when officials started to call to say they know there is a such-and-such problem, but "please don't put it on Bultoo Radio, we are dealing with it." This shows that the system has been successful to redress grievances, and more enlightened officials recognise the value of an early warning system that can alert them to problems. But what other potential does it have?

Communications – the missing link

Up until now India's response to the LWE challenge, and in particular the revolutionary threat

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posed by the CPI (Maoist) party, has understandably been mainly focused on security. This is allied with development initiatives and respect for rights¹. But this approach ignores the potential of communications. Where mentioned in the Home Ministry's existing policy, communications are seen in a top-down way, involving 'Tribal Youth Exchange programmes organised by NYKS, radio jingles, documentaries, pamphlets etc.'

Bultoo Radio is different because it is bottom-up. All of the matters raised come from the people. It provides a 21st-century approach to counter-insurgency – through communications of the people, by the people, for the people – and by connecting marginalised people to the state, it could be the first building block in a new way of changing the dynamics of the Naxalite issue.

How a New Communication Strategy would Work

It is important to stress that a new communication strategy is not a replacement for police action and development work. It would work alongside them. But it would compete directly with Maoists in an area where they are strong – through Gondi language and culture. The Maoists have persuaded forest-dwellers that only they can give them their rights. We need to assure them that is not true, and their rights are already granted to them.

Gondi is the common language of the Maoist movement in Dandakaranya forest, which includes parts of the states of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. But we as a nation have not invested in the language yet. Although more than

1.2 crore Gond tribals live in Central India, there are many variants of the language, and no commonly agreed dictionary. (The handful of existing websites in 'Gondi' use one of the dialects that are not universally understood across the region.)

Five years ago CGNet brought together representatives from several Gond sub-tribes, and after many days of deliberations in workshops since then, they have agreed on 3000 words in a new shared Gondi – more than enough for normal communications to take place across scattered groups who could not otherwise communicate to each other. But with scarce resources, it is hard to build on this success.

This language vacuum has left a space filled by Maoists, who communicate locally invariants of Gondi, while the leadership can communicate in Hindi. This is a classic tactic of divide and rule, and it gives the Maoists a clear field to tell forest-dwelling people that they need to fight to continue to live in the forest.

The biggest failure of communications by the state has been to allow the Maoists to have this narrative, and not to counter it by spreading the word on the Forest Rights Act, a far more progressive legislation than in many countries facing a similar issue. The Maoists successfully conceal the right of settlement already granted to forest-dwellers through the FRA.

The priority in putting communications into a counter-LWE strategy is to invest in Gondi language platforms, once a shared language is formalised, and to translate the Forest Rights Act, and scale-up registration procedures to the language, so that forest-dwellers can take the state

at its word. This move alone would have a significant effect in showing that India is on the side of its people currently caught in a Maoist net. Alongside it, there needs to be an investment in oral website technology to give access for non-literate people to state services and the outside world not mediated by Maoists, something like a 'Voicebook' to go alongside Facebook. The more traditional 'top-down' communications techniques have value too and need to be employed more tactfully to advertise the FRA in Gondri to spread awareness.

Next, there needs to be a full survey among Internally Displaced People (IDPs), those displaced to neighbouring states in fighting, particularly at the time of the Salwa Judum in 2005, and quickly processing the applications of those who want to return. CGNet has carried out a partial survey, in which more than half of those displaced would like to remain where they are, in situ, and not return to their ancestral villages. At a meeting on July 2019 of concerned officials bringing together the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, and invitees from the affected states, it was decided that clauses in the FRA giving in situ rehabilitation, or alternative land away from ancestral land for evicted people, would apply in this case. Section 3 (1)(m) of the FRA provides for recognising the land rights of forest dwellers who were evicted or displaced before they could get land titles under the law.

This process is complicated as it will require agreement both from the state where the people are resettled, as well as the state they left some fifteen years previously. But again, a move in this area would show that the Indian state cares about

tribal people in this region as equal citizens under the law, challenging the revolutionary rhetoric of the Maoists.

Beyond these individual rights, there needs to be consideration of providing Habitat Rights for the entire region of Abujmaad, which can be applied since Abujmaadia tribals are a PVTG (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group). Abujmaad in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh is the epicentre of the Maoist movement.

The name Abujmaad is contested: it is an outsider's name as it means 'unknown hills.' This area has never been surveyed, including even in colonial times, as the British defined it as a "No go area" with as little interference as possible. The Chhattisgarh state government has announced a survey to be able to grant individual and livelihood rights under the FRA, not Habitat Rights. But without better security, this survey is currently stalled. Agreeing that the area would be eligible for Habitat Rights would get round the need for a formal survey, which can be carried out when the granting of such rights were successful, alongside other policies, at detaching the people from the grip of the Maoists.

People's Voice for Peace

CGNet pursued an initiative to survey IDPs in neighbouring states and is working to secure Habitat Rights for Abujmaad, because these were demands from a series of meetings held since early 2018 in an attempt to listen to authentic voices from the forest. These so-called 'Bastar Dialogues' have led to several other actions – some predictable, and some more unexpected. Out of the first meeting came the idea of a 'Pad Yatra', a

200km foot march, symbolically along one of the routes the Maoists took when they first decided in 1980 to move into the Dandakaranya forest. The yatra set out on the start of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

At the end of the march, the tribal leaders requested to meet the Maharani of Bastar, the current queen mother. Former Maharaja Prabir Chandra Bhanjdeo was killed by the state in 1966 when he was fighting for the rights of tribals. The marchers' main demand was for the release of tribal people caught up in police searches and held in jail who have never been charged with terrorism-related offences. This issue is of particular importance since prisoner releases were promised in 2009 in exchange for an Administrative Officer (IAS) held by the Maoists. Securing these releases would be a significant confidence-building measure.

The second demonstration, a 300 km cycle yatra, from Jagdalpur in Bastar to Raipur included many displaced people and demanded the right of return and rehabilitation for IDPs – again a demand that came from listening to the people in the Bastar Dialogues. Other initiatives requested by the people themselves include working among former Maoist fighters released from jails, to rehabilitate them and to specifically work with the families of Maoists. This is aimed at securing their agreement to request those fighting to lay down their weapons. This has been tried in Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, but not in Chhattisgarh.

Culture

In the oral culture of the forest, songs and poetry are highly prized and a means of reaching out. The state needs to recognise this in constructing

successful counter-LWE policies. As the saying goes – ‘the Devil has all the best tunes’, the Maoists have been very successful at working through songs and story-telling with the tribals. They call thousands of people to large festivals in jungle-clearings – ‘Bhumkals’ – drawing inspiration from the Bhumkal rebellion, an anti-colonial uprising in Bastar in 1910. In the Maoist narrative, modern police actions are repeating the oppressive actions of the British, caricatured in silhouetted puppet shows.

The state needs to find its ways of tapping into such traditional arrangements to break this Bhumkal narrative. More than half of the calls to CGNet's toll-free number are songs and poems – some traditional, and some more modern. Many of the poems come from one illiterate cow-herder who has a gift for putting his ideas into verse. And to spread the word on Bultoo Radio, a song and dance team goes from village to village with a puppet show. This is just an initial step to revive the former dance-drama form of the Gond tribals called Gondwani which needs further strengthening.

Listening to cultural needs can have its rewards. After the cycle yatra, IDPs present decided that they would apply for land rights under the FRA, but first, they needed to apologise to their village gods, for abandoning and not caring for them, and they sought forgiveness to leave. So they held a Pen Pandum – ‘Festival of the Gods’ – beginning with a long session of prayers by five native priests, led by Sher Singh Achala. He invoked the gods of 644 abandoned villages, asking for support for those displaced by conflict, as they look for more settled lives.

After dancing late into the night, the next day the first application forms for new homes were completed by 350 people, before the drumbeat began again, the drums borne by men wearing headdresses with giant horns, and the dancing went on for another night. This was a cultural event with serious political intent at its heart.

Another scheme which has been trialled in a small way is the mapping of forest areas to mark out sacred sites. If there is to be industrial development and mining in the forest, then awareness of these sacred sites would potentially reduce conflict with tribal people. This would be a way of providing security without needing so many weapons, since people's needs were respected, and they would not feel a need to take up the gun against industry and mining. Industrial development in these areas is never going to come without a challenge and at some personal cost – but mapping sacred sites would remove one element of potential conflict.

To listen better to tribal needs, one solution might be for the state to invest in tribal traditions to harness their capacity for positive change. This might include the revival of Gotuls – youth clubs in tribal villages which engage in peer-to-peer learning. A central Gotul Institute on the PPP model would also address language, culture and religious issues. This institute could run phone-based grievance redress platforms in Gondi and other local languages, bringing CGNet's Bultoo Radio under its roof. Gotuls should be linked with internet, phone and Bluetooth wherever possible.

Window of Opportunity

It is important to realise that there is currently

a window of opportunity to take on the Maoists, which may not be open forever. The Maoist movement has reached stagnation. The strategy to use the forests as a 'rear area' for the revolution that was planned for cities has been seen to fail since the headquarter was moved into the forest in 2004. The recruitment boom among Adivasis caused by the aggression of the Salwa Judum campaign has ended.

The growing number of genuine surrenders reveal a new mood among Adivasi supporters who make up 99% of the Maoist force but have no representation among the top leaders. All of the 1% non-Adivasi Maoists are leaders in their sixties. The top leaders are even older and more than half of known Central Committee and Politburo members have died, or been killed, arrested or surrendered in the last few decades. There is a sense of urgency to secure progress while there is still some central control, before the movement fractures further into criminal gangs, competing to extract protection money from big businesses.

The Adivasi community function on collective consciousness and decision-making process. That was the reason few joined the Maoists until the 1990s, post which a collective decision from the community gave the go-ahead. There are indications now that the Adivasi collective consciousness is changing its mind and giving a signal that enough is enough. With 2020 marking the anniversary of forty years since the Maoists arrived in Dandakaranya to set up a 'rear area', Adivasis are asking if it is time for a change. The challenge is to find a way of that voice transforming a general will to action.

Recommendations

In conclusion, this is a summary of the recommendations that have emerged from the people themselves as a way of bringing a communications element to bear in stabilising Bastar and connecting citizens to the state, to reduce the capacity for Maoists to operate.

1. Expand Bultoo Radio to each LWE affected block of the country in local dialects
2. Invest in Gondi platforms and spread the word about the FRA and similar pro Tribal laws like PESA and 5th Schedule
3. Survey IDPs and apply Section 3(1)(m) of the FRA to allow in situ rehabilitation.
4. Consider Habitat Rights for Abujhmaad alongside individual and Community rights
5. Release tribal people held without cause and not expected to face terrorism charges.
6. Work with released Maoists and the families of Maoist fighters.
7. Work to build cultural resilience among forest people – break Maoist Bhumkal narrative. Consider setting up cultural ‘Gotul’ institute for Gondi people and develop Gondwani dance drama for performance in tribal villages to also discuss peace.
8. Consider mapping of important tribal religious sites.

References:

- 1 The strategy is outlined here: https://mha.gov.in/division_of_mha/left-wing-extremism-division



Calibrating the Peace building Process: A Case Study of Manipur

Soumya Chaturvedi*

Nestled in the north-eastern frontier of India, the state of Manipur has a unique geopolitical experience. Blessed with a diverse range of flora, fauna and topography, Manipur also harbours a multitude of ethnic communities. However, hostile relations amongst the ethnic communities such as Nagas, Kukis, Meiteis and Pangans rooted in the societal history coupled with strategic geographical positioning and decades of political neglect in the post-independence experience, have adversely impacted on the state. Arguably, since 1964, Manipur has been the victim of an insurgency fuelled by outfits divided on ethnic lines and sustained with the support of local and international benefactors. The insurgency has been responsible for violence that has resulted in thousands of deaths over the years, cross-border smuggling of arms, extortions and political black-mailing, eventually compromising national security.

The active presence of military and reorientation in the approach of central and state government has assisted in reducing the intensity of the conflict in the recent past. Nevertheless, Manipur is far from the success story of Mizoram or Tripura. Due to geopolitical realities of the region, the classified Peace Accord signed with Nagas in 2015 had an indirect contribution in reducing the intensity of insurgency in Manipur. In this context, it is imperative to evaluate the current status quo

of the situation in Manipur. Further, to simultaneously prepare the ground for sustainable peace, it is equally important to calibrate existing and potential peace-building measures. This article is an attempt to analyse the state of insurgency in Manipur, while specifically focusing on the factors that need to be acknowledged and incorporated with suitable indigenous modifications for a sustainable peace-building strategy.

Ethnic Fabric of the State

The ancestral heritage of Manipur goes back to Vedic times. Amongst other ancient texts, Manipur also finds a mention in Hindu scriptures. In the Mahabharata, the Adi Parva mentions warrior prince, Arjun to be married to Chitrangada, the daughter of Manipuri king, Chitravahana. Ashwamedha Parva also elaborates on king Babhravahana, the son of Arjun and Chitrangada as the successor to the throne of Manipur. Writings from the times of king Bhagyachandra mention tales of the Manipuri community embracing Vaishnavism while also enjoying the liberty to practice their indigenous culture.¹ Many such folklores exist within the region validating the presence of Hindu culture and indigenous tribal practices. Chronicled in Puwaries, the ancient and medieval history of Manipur is engrained in Poreiton Khunthokpa, Cheitharol Kumbaba, Ningthou Kangbalon, Panthoibi Kongkul, Ningthourol Lambuba, etc.²

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Manipur has been the homeland to a large number of tribes spread across sixteen districts. Of these, thirty-four tribes in Manipur are recognised as Scheduled Tribes under the Indian Constitution.³ In 1981, the state government of Manipur regrouped these tribes into four communities, namely, (a) the Naga group, (b) the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group, (c) the intermediary group and (d) the non-local tribes.⁴ However, attributing to several factors, including political motivations, these tribes have been reorganised. Thus, the major communities in Manipur, also relevant for analysing the conflict in recent times are (a) Nagas, comprising of nearly 3.50 lakh, (b) Kukis, comprising of nearly 2.90 lakh, (c) Meiteis, comprising of nearly 13.50 lakh and (d) Pangans, comprising of 1.60 lakh of the total population as in 2001.⁵ Meiteis and Pangans majorly reside in the valley districts, whereas the Nagas and Kukis reside in the hill districts.

Summarising the Conflict

Before officially integrating with the independent union of India on October 21, 1949, the kingdom of Manipur was a British protectorate after having lost the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891. The erstwhile kingdom of Manipur was governed under a well-defined form of governance based on constitutional monarchy. The written constitution was called 'Loyumba Shilyen' and was enforced since 1110 CE.⁶ The administrative structure followed in the kingdom resembled that of a modern parliament, where two representatives from each of the thirty-two divisions were selected by the monarch, called 'Phamdou Humphumari', along with ten regional chiefs called 'Ningthou

Pongba Tara', who assisted the king in administration.⁷

After a long lineage of rulers and losing the Anglo-Manipur war, multiple factors forced the British to hand over the sovereignty of Manipur to Maharaja Budhachandra Singh on August 28, 1947. After nearly two years of administration with elections and a legislative assembly in place, Maharaja officially signed the Merger Agreement with India on September 21, 1949. Without giving due regard to the existing socio-political and governance matrix of the state, Manipur was made a 'Part – C' state, almost a present-day equivalent to a Union Territory. In 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru ceded Kabaw Valley, a disputed border territory to erstwhile Burma, without consulting the Manipuri people or the royal family. Cumulatively regarding these episodes as an insult to the proud historical and cultural identity of Manipur, demand for statehood surged. Succumbing to the demands, the erstwhile central government granted statehood to Manipur in 1972, nine years after granting statehood to Nagaland, another insurgency-impacted state neighbouring Manipur. This relative delay along with the 'Part – C state' categorisation added fuel to the existing anger and discontent amongst the people in Manipur.

In the events leading to pressurising the erstwhile central government, formation of several separatist groups from 1964 onwards plays a significant role. With outfits such as United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), etc. the demands ranged from statehood to nationhood.

Several outfits aimed at achieving independence from India and forming a separate country of Manipur through armed struggle. Formation of multiple outfits and increased armed militancy forced the government in 1980 to declare the entire state as 'disturbed area' and provisions of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958 were imposed. In addition to the militancy in Manipur, the 1990s witnessed a surge in the Naga nationalism movement. As a considerable population of Manipur comprises of Naga tribes, the movement gained sympathy amongst these tribes. This led to the formation of distinct groups of Nagas and Kukis. While the Naga outfits aimed at segregating the territory of Manipur comprising of Naga inhabitants and merging it with the greater demand for Nagalim,⁸ the Kuki outfits aiming at protecting their interests consolidated themselves into guerrilla groups. Manipur witnessed intense ethnic violence in the 1990s between different ethnic armed militias.

In recent times, an ambush of the convoy of Indian Army in Manipur by National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), a Naga militant outfit led India to conduct 'cross-border raids', inflicting significant casualties to the NSCN-K in 2015.⁹ Two months later, the present government led by Prime Minister Modi signed a Peace Accord with Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak Muivah (NSCM-IM), another Naga Militant outfit, bringing considerable stability to the Manipuri valley and the region at large. In 2008, a 'Suspension of Operation' agreement was signed between the central government, state government and two Kuki militant outfits, KNO and UPF. This ceasefire was further extended by six months in August 2019.¹⁰

Concerns over Combating the Insurgency

2018-19 has witnessed a decline in the number of incidents from 167 in 2017 to 127 in 2018. However, the 127 incidents in Manipur constituted 50% of the total number of incidents in the North-eastern region. There was a tremendous decline in the total number of civilian deaths due to insurgency, from 23 in 2017 to 8 in 2018. Further, the operations resulted in the arrest of nearly 400 militants, neutralisation of 10 militants and recovery of nearly 100 weapons. The Meitei insurgency alone accounted for 57% of the total insurgency in Manipur.¹¹ Although, the intensity of armed violence attributed to militant outfits has seen a relative decline in recent times, ethnic tensions remain prevalent and AFSPA continues to be imposed on the state.

The decades of neglecting the indigenous cultural identity and the geo-strategic positioning of the north-eastern quadrant of India has made it a breeding ground for militant activities. Over the years, there has been some success in neutralising a few insurgency movements in the region. It becomes imperative to analyse the factors that make the case of Manipur different from the details of these success stories, while also understanding the rationale that makes fostering peace difficult in Manipur.

Tripura became a victim of the first wave of insurgency in the 1970s when fragments of tribal Tripuris pitched an armed militancy against the immigrant Bengalis, demanding a separate state of Tipraland amongst other things. Similar to other insurgencies in the region, the insurgency in Tripura had logistical and monetary support facilitated

through porous trans-border corridors with the neighbouring countries.¹² A comprehensive strategy was developed and implemented over the years to combat this menace. This multi-pronged approach focused on gaining area-domination were conducted majorly by paramilitary and state police forces including the tribal Tripuris. The meticulous planning of counter-insurgency operations was supplemented with psychological interventions aimed at confidence-building and providing a healing touch. Measures such as highlighting the hypocritical and corrupt behaviour of insurgency leaders, special recruitments in the affected regions, incentivising rehabilitation packages with monetary benefits and civil skill training, etc. were undertaken.¹³ These initiatives were backed with immediate attention to development and governance in the areas where domination was successful by the security forces.

Another ethnically driven insurgency in the region was seen in Mizoram. The sense of alienation by the Assamese government reignited the ethnic solidarity within the Mizo community living within the erstwhile state of Assam. The Mizo Union demanded a separate state for Mizos within the Indian Territory, while the violent insurgents from Mizo National Front were firm on their demand for a separate independent Christian country of Mizoram. Similar to the case of Tripura, the insurgents here also enjoyed trans-border support from the neighbouring country. The negotiations led by Mizo Union with the central government resulted in the formation of Mizoram as a Union Territory. The Mizo Accord of 1986 brought an end to the use of violence and secessionist demands by Mizo National Front and

Mizoram was made a state within India, instead of a Union Territory.¹⁴ Despite being the only incident in the history of independent India where the government ordered airstrikes against its people in 1966, the state of affairs in Mizoram have been largely peaceful for nearly three decades.¹⁵ The successful negotiations in not only ending the insurgency but also sustaining peace are credited to several factors including lucrative surrendering policies, lack of 'spoilers', forming and advocating a 'pan-Mizo identity'.¹⁶

In Tripura, there was almost no insurgency-related violence in 2018, while very few incidents of violence took place in Mizoram. Another ethnic demand of autonomy within Mizoram that survived after the surrender of Mizo National Front by the Hmar community further weakened with the surrender of 114 cadets.¹⁷ By and large, it can be safely concluded that both the states are free from the havoc of insurgency-related violence. While in cases of both, Tripura and Mizoram, the ethnicity within the insurgent groups was homogenous, the case of Manipur is significantly different. In Tripura, the insurgent groups comprised Tripuri tribals. In Mizoram, although there were groups other than the Mizos such as Hmars, the most powerful insurgent group in terms of material and knowledge capabilities including international networking were those of Mizos. Manipur, on the other hand, has accommodated multiple ethnic groups, with most of them possessing strong material and knowledge capabilities such as Meiteis, Nagas, Kukis, etc.

Furthermore, while there might have been differences in demands for power-sharing ranging from a separate state to an independent country,

there were little disagreements on the territorial extent of the possible new entity. On the contrary, in Manipur different ethnic groups differ in their territorial demands. The Nagas aim at fracturing the contours of Manipur and integrating the Naga inhabited areas with other areas and forming the Nagalim. Similarly, the Kukis, Meities and other groups are protecting their respective ethnic identities and interests. Thus, the Manipuri bowl has far too many different groups with different demands, while being strong and powerful in their own right.

The Naga Peace Accord and other ceasefire arrangements with other ethnic insurgent groups have temporarily made the state of insurgency-related violence stale meat in Manipur. However, a permanent solution is yet to be achieved. The central government, if forced to accommodate the Naga insurgents with leniency, the issue of transitional justice¹⁸ may be missed completely or given a token mention in the final peace deal. This may infuriate the Kuki insurgents, who owed their *raison d'être* at some point to the violent deeds of Nagas. Apart from transitional justice, the issue of territorial demands is also pressing. While a lot is dependent on the details that make their way to the final peace settlement with Nagas, the government needs to proceed in a multi-pronged approach to prepare the state of Manipur for sustainable peace irrespective of the arrangements reached in the final peace agreement. The success stories of Tripura and Mizoram obviously cannot be used in the case of Manipur as the operating environment is different, but the lessons learnt could be used to facilitate a comprehensive and sustainable peace-building,

Peace-building in Manipur

Unlike the popular misconception about peace-building being a post-insurgency or post-conflict concept, it is being acknowledged as a means to end a conflict-like situation. Thus, peace-building measures are identified as tools to end a conflict that do not end with the conflict. Their application continues with required modifications after the armed conflict has ended to sustain peace in the society. Such measures help in preparing the society for a post-conflict life, while also nudging them into cooperating by giving up their popular or public support to the insurgents. Once the insurgent groups lose public legitimacy, gaining area-domination becomes relatively easier for the security forces.

Widely considered to be an academic endeavour with no policy relevance, categorisation of the conflict is one of the more important steps after acknowledging the existence of a disturbing situation. Understanding and addressing the root cause of any conflict is the most popular rhetoric. However, generally, it is seen that this addressing is missed in the policy designs. Categorisation of the conflict assists in prioritising aims and means to achieve the same. The Manipuri insurgency in its full-blown proportion commenced with the state's neglect in respecting the strong and self-efficient form of governance written boldly in the Manipuri history. This was coupled with years of neglect leading to economic deterioration. Thus, the most obvious conclusion would be to boost economic development and ensure accountable and transparent governance to bring sustainable peace in the valley. An important element missed in this conclusion is the *constructivists* approach to

analysing a situation. In the case of Manipur, it is the concept of 'identity'. The insurgency, in its earliest form was a response to the insecurity about the Manipuri identity and ethos. Over the years, this fight to preserve the identity has been fractured to imbibe different ethnic overtones. Thus, the conflict in Manipur is an ethnic identity conflict. Any form of developmental projects, economic and governance measures, peace-building policies will fail in the state if they do not involve the ethnic identity considerations. It may be argued that leaders of insurgent groups are corrupt sell-outs working only to retain parallel power and extort the government and thus, ethnic considerations may be dismissed from the policy designs. However, these leaders have gained public legitimacy by igniting ethnic superiority and solidarity in the masses. To gain back their trust and encourage them to adopt the mainstream peaceful way of living, peace-building policies should address the ethnic interests to provide psychological healing to the masses as seen in Tripura.

Once the relevance of identities is given its due regard in the conflict analysis, the next important consideration is to analyse the existing power-sharing designs and calibrate the need to redesign them. The term 'power-sharing' in the present context, is not restricted to include recruitment for political posts in different regions of Manipur, but also educational and other seats. The political power-sharing designs may be inspired from the consociationalism, centralism or other such designs depending on the ground Manipuri realities. Ethnicity-based accommodative educational and recruitment policies, not just limited to handful ethnicity but embracing the larger

population must be sought for. It is equally important to give due regards to the language, culture and other attributes within the different ethnic tribal community. Nevertheless, drawing from the experiences in Mizoram, a conscious effort should be made to integrate the different ethnic communities to believe in 'a pan-Manipuri identity,' while also respecting their individual ethnic preferences.

Collective memory is an important political tool for peace-building.¹⁹ How does a community recall its history has a significant impact not only in sustaining peace but also in fostering peace, especially in the multi-ethnic conflict-like matrix? In Manipur, for instance, how the prevailing ethnic tensions and history are taught will shape the minds of an entire generation. Undue weight to one community's narrative will create discontent in the minds of the other communities making them more susceptible to hate and violence-inciting insurgent leaders. The state needs to devise a strategy that while celebrating the rich tapestry of cultural history, and also acknowledges an unbiased account of their sufferings and hardships in a manner that does not fuel resentment in the masses.

It is not to argue that the peace-building design should be focused only on the narrow consideration of ethnic issues. The land is considered as a capital and a major portion of the insurgency is to deal with consolidating or monopolising power over the land. Thus, factors of socio-economic development and governance as aids to peace-building cannot be neglected. It is important to ensure that essential civic amenities such as healthcare, drinking water, medical aid, educational and vocational centres, etc. are delivered to the last person in the supply chain. It is equally important to ensure that the

services and benefits are tangibly delivered and the quality is controlled through strong and committed governance and workforce. Amongst the larger scheme of peace-building policy, it is imperative to approach Manipur with a multi-pronged strategy taking the different subtleties into account, while delivering on both physical and psychological ends.

Conclusion

A thorough unbiased understanding of the conflict grounded in realities and a pre-designed intensive comprehensive peace-building strategy are two important, if not the most important pre-requisites for achieving sustainable peace. Instead of only responding to the events, it is imperative to design a multifaceted strategy which incorporates the current situations as well as a foresight for potential issues in the future. Political tensions with violent past is not a conducive environment for

growth, development and more importantly national unity. However, in a multi-cultural setup, clashes are an obvious product of human nature. Thus, it is imperative to give due respect to their history, culture and show sensitivity towards their needs, while creating a conducive environment to express discontent civilly. Further, it is important to involve the local tribal ethnic communities as stakeholders in policymaking. The tribal ethnic way of living has largely been secluded. What may mean development to the broad corridors of urban civilisation, maybe an intrusion to the insurgency-infested tribal communities. An organic indigenous approach towards peace-building should be adopted in addressing the root cause and complexities of the conflict. An interesting area of further research with consequences in Manipur security and the area at large would be to devise an organic indigenous approach to deal with transitional justice in the Naga peace settlement.

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India-Japan: The Emergence of Strategic Relations (2015-2019)

Rami Desai*

History of Indo-Japan Relations

The relationship between India and Japan is as old as history itself. However, if we were to define the timeline it is believed that it was around the 6th century that Buddhism made its way to Japan. In ancient times, Indian traders as well as spiritual and religious ambassadors, helped Buddhism spread via China and Korea to Japan, inadvertently becoming a major component of Indian soft power and diplomacy. However, it is only recently in the 21st century that India has confidently started accepting and revisiting these ancient friendships that she had once forged with distant cultures.

Today, the interest of the common man is palpable with new books, documentaries and discussions on India-Japan relations. The recently released documentary “Indian Deities Worshipped in Japan” funded by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and directed by the well-known art historian Binoy K. Behl reveals the influence of not just Buddhism but also Hinduism in Japan. Primary evidence of Nipponization of Hinduism in Japan is found in the Japanese “Seven Gods of Fortune” out of which four are Hindu deities - Lakshmi (Kichijoten), Sarasvati (Benzaitensama), Kubera (Bishamon) and Shiva (Daikokuten). Apart from these deities, Yama, Ganesha, and Garuda also play a central role in Japanese spirituality. Yoga and the influence of Sanskrit on the Kana script, as well as cuisine have all stimulated the relationship shared by both the countries.

Though for many centuries, we may have overlooked the importance of India-Japan relations, it was post World War II on 28th April 1952 that Japan signed a Peace treaty with India—one of the first treaties that Japan signed, re-establishing and encouraging diplomatic relations between the two countries. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have enjoyed cordial relations. Japan has realised the strategic importance of India and India has been greatly benefitted by Japanese technology and the Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) extended by Japan. The recognition of the future possibilities with India being a geographic anchor and Japan being a development anchor has made both the countries key actors in the Indo-Pacific region.¹

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategic framework as well as India’s Act East Policy is certainly of great importance to the entire Indo-Pacific region but relies heavily on the role of India and Japan. These relations are today based on common interests, values and vision rather than solely relying on mutual benefit. Both these frameworks also place India and Japan at the forefront of maritime security and stability, economic growth and technological development in the region.

Recent Relations

The personal rapport between the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the Japanese

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Prime Minister Mr Shinzo Abe, has further led to the development and strengthening of the relationship between the two countries leading consequently to the effectiveness of the bilateral ties maturing at an unprecedented rate. For instance, Japan had expected India to improve the business environment for Japanese companies functioning in India and India responded by establishing the “Japan Plus” office in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as a “one-stop” location for resolving problems faced by Japanese companies. This was accomplished within six months of PM Modi’s government coming into power.

India is one of the largest recipients of Japanese ODA loans for the past few decades. Delhi Metro is one of the most successful examples of Japanese cooperation through the utilisation of ODA. In 2018, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed loan agreements with the Government of India in Delhi to provide Japanese ODA loans of up to a total of 115.45 billion yen for the following two projects.

- Construction of Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (loan amount: 89.547 billion yen)²
- Kolkata East-West Metro Project (III) (loan amount: 25.903 billion yen)³

The Shinkansen system that forms the basis of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail is the topmost railway system around the world in terms of its safety and accuracy. Japan and India confirmed that the railway’s operation would commence as early as 2023. The high-speed railway projects not only have a developmental and strategic significance for India but also a geo-strategic one for Japan. The Shinkansen system

has been a reminder to the world of the reconstruction of post-second world war Japan into an economic and technological superpower. However, Japan’s only successful sale of the high-speed rail before India has been to Taiwan, due to the competition it faces from China. China’s high-speed rail, the Shanghai Maglev is the fastest in the world and cheaper but not safer than the Shinkansen.

Nevertheless, the Shinkansen in India has highlighted the closeness shared by both the countries in the Indo-Pacific region thereby claiming their stronghold concerning a rather expansionist China, a country that both India and Japan have territorial disputes with. China’s economic clout in the region through investment, infrastructure and connectivity has been seen by many as the growing Chinese hegemony in the region. For example, China in the high-speed rail technology sector has signed deals with Indonesia and Thailand.

In terms of human resource development in India’s manufacturing sector, Japan announced its cooperation of training 30,000 Indians over the next 10 years under the Japan-India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM). This initiative will encourage Japanese style manufacturing skills and practices, enhance India’s manufacturing industry base and contribute to “Make in India” and “Skill India” Initiatives. JIM and the Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC) in engineering colleges will be designated by Japanese companies in India. In the summer of 2017, the first four JIMs started in the States of Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, and the first JEC was established in the State of Andhra Pradesh aimed at training and

cross-flow of Indian and Japanese students and young professionals. In 2018, JIM registered 100 per cent placement for its first batch of students.⁴

In 2017, during PM Abe's visit to India, 15 more MOUs were signed in the areas of connectivity, investments, civil aviation, Japanese language training, disaster risk management, science, technology and sports. In 2018, 32 more MOUs were signed ranging from Currency Swap Agreement, India-Japan Digital Partnership as well as implementing an arrangement for deeper cooperation between Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (SDF) and the Indian Navy amongst various other sectors. Similarly, the ambitious 1,500 km long Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) — a USD 100 billion project— was developed by both governments with a level of persistence that has again proven naysayers wrong. Encouraged by the DMIC, additional industrial corridors are being developed in India.⁵ Prime Ministers Abe and Modi have also adopted the Tokyo Declaration, elevating India and Japan's bilateral relationship to the "Special Strategic and Global Partnership". While security collaborations are of primary focus, the partnership has also encouraged further Japanese investment in India. The target has been set to double Japanese FDI within five years, with Japan pledging to provide India with USD 35 billion in private and public financing.

Japan-India "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" benefits both Japan and India's mutual interests in stable economies in the Indo-Pacific region. It also endeavours to work towards a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). However, there is the red tape that needs to be addressed

for this partnership to be a successful and long-lived one. To begin with, India will need to clear out the bureaucratic red tape for Japanese companies to enter. Even though the "Japan Plus" office has been set up to assist Japanese businesses, internal issues need to be addressed like labour market reforms and land acquisition amongst many others.

Leveraging existing economic partnerships should also be at the forefront. For instance, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA), a free trade agreement, has been signed by India with ASEAN; Japan has signed a CEPA with ASEAN and Japan and India have signed a CEPA with each other. However, this agreement has been completely under-utilised. CEPA has been described as the most comprehensive of all such agreements concluded by India, covering trade in goods and services, movement of persons, investments, intellectual property rights, customs procedures and other trade-related issues. The CEPA envisages abolition of tariffs on over 94 per cent of items traded between India and Japan over a period of 10 years.⁶

If CEPA could be leveraged, then all the concerned countries would benefit from each other. "CEPA could be made active by co-designing trilateral alliances on a case-by-case basis. Japan and India have demonstrated the ability to work well in trilateral structures on security (the Malabar exercises with the United States), and must now extend this ability to form trilateral alliances on the economic side as well. For instance, economic trilateral agreements with American corporations for equity investments and industrial expertise in projects where both India and Japan need to

“import” technology or capital; or with France in Francophone Africa, which has remained an elusive market despite India’s significant diaspora in English-speaking Africa; or local partners in the FOIP, who will be critical in mitigating project-specific risks. This will be vital to ensuring that the FOIP does not become more of a geo-strategic security framework devoid of an economic pillar of sustenance”.⁷

India- Japan Security Collaborations

To pursue economic, strategic or cultural co-operation, India and Japan will have to actively maintain balance in the Indo-Pacific region. With rising tensions in territorial disputes with Japan’s neighbours, PM Abe has advocated closer co-operation between the two countries. Japan realises that a strategic alliance with India is likely to transform the security environment of the region.

In 2016, this led to the signing of a nuclear deal between India and Japan. Japan has signed such a deal with a non-signatory of Non-Proliferation Treaty for the first time. The deal gives Japan the right to supply nuclear reactors, fuel and technology to India which is aimed to help India build six nuclear reactors in southern India, increasing nuclear energy capacity ten-fold by 2032. By doing so, Japan reinforced to the world its faith in the Indian government and its ethos, knowing well the strategic criticism of the same. Japan also revealed its strong will to support India achieve its economic rise that without ample energy resources would be impossible. For India, her economic and developmental aspirations need to be fuelled by massive energy resources. Nuclear

energy is the only option that India has that could fuel her ambitions without producing large scale carbon emissions.

There has been scepticism and criticism on the India-Japan nuclear deal, but India is a mature and responsible democracy. Even though it is not a part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, India’s record has proven her reliability. And, even if the international community officially recognises India as the ‘sixth nuclear great power’ — along with US, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China — this will not necessarily prompt other great powers to claim the ‘seventh’ or ‘eighth’ position in the near future.⁸

The possibility of countries like North Korea, Pakistan and Iran becoming nuclear powers have and will continue to be problematic as these countries are involved in underground procurement. Their intentions are unclear and their geographical proximity to both Japan and India remains a matter of concern. This is amplified by the fact that China is supplying nuclear plants to Pakistan. Nuclear deterrence for both the countries is imperative and a shared concern at this point in time.

The other concern for both countries is the importance of balancing power in the Indo-Pacific region. China in this respect is going to continue being the primary focus for both the countries. The changing US-China dynamic and their ongoing economic war is an additional challenge. The desire of the United States to play a central role in peacekeeping in Asia and build and benefit from regional economies has concerned China who sees itself as the rising power challenging the dominant position of the US.

India and China too have had many border skirmishes and the border disputes remain intractable. From June to August 2017 there was yet another standoff at Doklam with China, this time involving Bhutan. Japan, gave a strong message to China in support of India. That too when powerful countries like the US and Australia chose to take a neutral stand. Japanese Ambassador to India in a strong statement said that no country should change the status quo. During this time, there were the Malabar exercises taking place and Japan dispatched the largest helicopter carrier Izumo to join the US and Indian carriers. Chinese media was quick to warn India and stated that India should not be depending too much on Japan.

The Malabar Exercise which began as a US-India naval drill back in 1992 has become a key platform of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. Today, with Japan's inclusion not just as a guest observer but as a permanent participant, the Malabar Exercise is seen as a platform for the convergence of allies against China's assertiveness in the region. Its success can be determined by the fact that in the last two decades from a bilateral exercise it has elevated to a trilateral exercise and hopefully a quadrilateral one in the future.

China's defence budget is three times that of India's. The 2019 defence budget for China is about USD 177.61 billion. To counter the increasing Chinese defence budget, Japan and India must cooperate more closely. Viewed from this angle, Japan-India cooperation at the Indo-China stand-off at Doklam is an exceptional diplomatic example. Both countries should only elevate such co-operation in the future.

Japan has also been supportive of the present Indian government and has worked with India in many areas to limit and balance the expansion of China. India and Japan have agreed to implement the Trincomalee port development project which decreases the importance of China's Hambantota port project in Sri Lanka. In Iran, India has collaborated with Japan to develop the Chabahar port project which decreases the importance of the Gwadar port project in Pakistan.

China has always wanted other countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh amongst others to support its position. China's Belt and Road Initiative with an approximate budget of USD 1 trillion for infrastructure building announced in 2013 by President Xi Jinping has attracted many countries. The State-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), states that it has over 700 projects in more than 100 countries, valued at over USD 100 billion. One such project is the Port City Colombo in Sri Lanka. However, what these countries may have overlooked is that the CCCC has been mired with controversy and difficulty. The Hambantota port, for instance, has barely had any container traffic and has left Sri Lanka in debt and the port in virtual disarray. When Sri Lanka could not pay the loans it took to build the port, it gave the port to China on a 99-year lease. This by many is also seen as a debt trap.

Similarly, due to China's hasty approach to set up high-speed railway projects in South East Asia, the Indonesian project has seen a considerable delay. China seems to have overlooked the religious, cultural and economic issues specific to these countries that can create project delays or failures. There is even a question on the route that

the high-speed railway project in Thailand is slated to take. Thai analysts fear that the route may not have the potential economic benefits as claimed. Analyst Siwat Luangsomboon from Thailand's Kasikorn Research Centre said that assuring profitability of the route could prove challenging. "From China's perspective, the route is beneficial in terms of technology costs and infrastructure. But in Thailand and Laos, two countries with a much smaller area, the route may not pass areas that are production bases or where there is high population density, which will affect long-term train services."⁹

India has always been a contender to China's influence in the region and with Prime Minister Modi's government, China is wary of India's growing ambition in the Indo-Pacific region. This was evident after the results of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in India. In an unprecedented reaction, the Chinese Vice-President Wang Qishan visited Pakistan to offer security assurances to ensure the integrity of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the most important stretch of the Belt and Road Initiative. The diversification of CPEC is being seen as a reaffirmation of China's backing of Pakistan. "No matter how the international landscape changes, China and Pakistan will always stay iron brothers that trust and support each other," Wang said at a meeting, noting that Beijing had always supported Pakistan in its "core interests".¹⁰

However, to counter this initiative, the most important joint project between India and Japan has undoubtedly been the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor and India's strong refusal to join the "One Belt One Road" summit as China is building a road

through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. This is also a reminder to China that PM Modi's government has created a new geo-political narrative.

The US-2 Deal

The ShinMaywa US-2 - a Japanese large short take off and landing STOL amphibious aircraft designed for air-sea rescue (ASR) work which can also be used as a firefighter taking 15 tonnes of water, if sold to India can have strategic and economic implications for India and Japan. The negotiations may be delayed but if it is concluded, the impact of the deal will greatly benefit both the countries. For Japan, this would mean breaking into new markets. Japanese public opinion, as well as the government, is presently divided on the export of defence equipment. But PM Abe is seen as a strong ally of India and Tokyo has seen a clear shift in its security policy under his regime. His keenness to strengthen India will strengthen Japan's regional influence as well. With President Donald Trump's government, Japan has been under pressure. With the overtures to North Korea and the US government's new economic policies, there is uncertainty about the Trump government's commitment to U.S allies. In case the Trump government decides to re-frame U.S-Japan security pact, Japan will need an additional ally in Asia and that ally can only be India.

India, on the other hand, will benefit by speeding up the Indian Navy response in and around the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a major strategic area from a geopolitical viewpoint. This US-2 sale has critical strategic potential as it can also be used as a solid symbol of India's presence and power projection. Also, if the US-2 deal is concluded, it

will give India more access to Japan's sophisticated defence-related technologies. Furthermore, Japan's ShinMaywa industries have also offered to set up production in India under the "Make in India" initiative. This would not only be a landmark deal for Japan, as it would be the first major export for Japanese defence but would also boost the "Make in India" initiative by partnering with Mahindra Defense Systems, part of the Mahindra Group, India.

If security cooperation between Japan and India is an important priority, they must not hesitate in promoting the conclusion of this deal, thereby opening the way to strategic benefits for both countries. Many analysts consider this deal dead due to the delay. But taking into consideration the benefits of the US-2 deal for both the countries, it may not be wise to disregard it just yet.

Apart from the US-2 and Nuclear deal, there is a lot to look forward to with the India-Japan partnership. As projected, India and Japan being the emerging balancers in the Indo-Pacific region, can begin with supporting countries with border disputes with China around the South China Sea. They can spearhead various trilateral dialogues with other vested countries like Singapore, Philippines, and Vietnam amongst many others. Both the countries can lead the way in securing the Indo-Pacific while co-operating and assisting other countries in the region.

The US-2 deal and the Malabar Exercise are not the only collaborations that both the countries are looking forward to. There is a clear vision outline as seen in the outcome of the 2018 Annual Summit meeting between India and Japan which further identified areas of interest in maritime

security. For instance, the Summit vision statement outlined the Agreement for Maritime Domain Awareness. At the outset, this agreement is focussed on commercial shipping but it could in the future provide immense information on maritime movement, intelligence sharing and other security partnerships. Another agreement that identified the future joint co-operation objectives was the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) which states that it "will enhance the strategic depth of bilateral security and defence cooperation". It further emphasises the importance of this agreement by stating "mutual logistics support in the Indo-Pacific Region contributes to regional peace and stability." Japan has signed similar agreements with the U.S and some other countries. Agreements like these enhance a navy's ability to monitor a large region by using each other's bases around the world.

Furthermore, Japan has the potential to share further technology with India. For example, to protect India's aircraft carriers, India must address China's anti-ship ballistic missiles, which can attack India's aircraft carriers at any time. Therefore, New Delhi needs a sea-based missile defence system. Under the joint Japan-U.S. development of sea-based missile defence systems, Tokyo is taking the lead on developing important components. Consequently, Japan and India, along with the United States, can potentially cooperate in the missile defence sector. Because missile defence systems are closely related to space technologies, the possibility exists that Japan-U.S.-India cooperation in the missile defence sector will extend to cooperation in space as well.

Moreover, minesweepers are an important tool

for India to deal with Chinese submarine incursions because submarines can deploy sea mines, providing a powerful area denial capability. Japan has good know-how and equipment to dispose of sea mines. In fact, since its involvement in World War II, Japan has had to sweep sea mines for more than 65 years after the war. In 1950, Japan participated in the Korean War to sweep sea mines. Furthermore, in 1991, Japan sent minesweepers to dispose of mines after the Gulf War. As a result, under the Japan-U.S. alliance, the United States counts on Japan's mine-sweeping expertise. Japan is proud of its world-class know-how in minesweeping.

Finally, Japan's submarine detection sensors are sophisticated because Tokyo has placed an emphasis on detecting Russian submarine activities since the 1980s. Japan's systems are world-class in this regard. Therefore, to address China's naval activities in the Indian Ocean, Japan-India strategic cooperation in this area can also be extremely effective and useful.¹¹ China's military is by far the most powerful in the South China Sea. Therefore, it becomes crucial for other countries in the region to develop further collaborations with each other, to work closely in areas of development and security and to create policies that will promote strategic cooperation. These steps will also allow South East Asian countries to forge bonds based on mutual trust and understanding.¹²

Japan is looking out for India because India has the potential to become a trustworthy security partner for the Japan-U.S. alliance. India-Japan partnership can have both a positive impact on regional stability and trilateral India-Japan-U.S. cooperation can also play an important global role.

The future of India-Japan Bilateral Relations

India and Japan share the hope of maintaining peace and security in Asia and are encouraged by their mutually warm relations since India's independence. With both governments led by strong security reformists, the route to regional safety and peace is beginning to be defined.

Japan realises that it may not be enough to rely on the US for key security and economic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. With President Trump's government withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and there being further bilateral hitches, Japan needs to create a balancing act. This, of course, does not mean that the dependence on the US should decrease but that Japan would benefit from harnessing other friendly countries to counter China. Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF) has various limitations and as the Japanese have been raised largely as pacifists, this is a delicate situation. India realises that for her growing infrastructural and technological requirements, Japan is a strong partner with a history of success and achievements in these sectors. But to maintain good relations with Japan, India will also have to consider maintaining relations with the US.

The India-Japan relationship is important from any lens, be it economic, security, geopolitical or even cultural. Beijing, Tokyo, Washington and New Delhi are probably the most vested in this emerging relationship. India is a dormant superpower in terms of human resource, economy and defence and Japan appreciates this and realises the potential of India against an assertive China. India, with Japan's aid for infrastructure development and defence

partnerships can enhance its productivity, economic growth and industrialisation. Japan's ODA can help India like no other aid from any other country. If India continues to value its relationship with Japan and appreciates the role that it has played in elevating India's global status, it won't be long for Japan to be India's top strategic partner, potentially at the same rank as the US or Europe. However, this will not undermine or substitute India's many other strategic partnerships; if anything it will complement them. The future holds many possibilities for strengthening networks in South East Asia. The FOIP framework is being pushed with determination by both the countries. Japan's involvement in infrastructure building in the North East Region of India is one such example of the FOIP framework being put into action. The main aim of the project is to increase trade between India and South East Asia but infrastructural development in the region will also allow for easier movement for the Indian Army that will be able to deploy forces and supplies faster to the border area in case of emergencies.

Most recently, from 2 May 2019, one of the most significant multilateral activities took place on the South China Sea much to China's dismay. Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force, Indian Navy, United States Navy and the Philippines Navy sailed together for the first time. The vessels included some of the finest and largest in their fleet. The Indian Navy included destroyer INS

Kolkata and INS Shakti, Japanese side included the Japanese lead ship of the Izumo class helicopter destroyer, JS Izumo, in addition to the destroyer JS Murasame, the US Navy's Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer and USS William P. Lawrence and Philippines patrol vessel BRP Andres Bonifacio. They engaged in communication and formation exercises, passenger transfers as well as leadership exchange aboard JS Izumo.

Multilateral exercises like the above will allow countries with a common vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific region to create networks, increase familiarity and trust, and have an opportunity to train together. Inadvertently, the message that it also gives to China is that the FOIP is not just a term but an actionable plan. Later in 2019, India and Japan have also agreed to hold a 2+2 dialogue between the defence and foreign ministers of the two countries. The 2+2 dialogue is also a testament to this emerging friendship and vision of both the countries for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region that is fair and inclusive, thus limiting the aggressive posturing by China.

However, with China, both countries will continue their economic and strategic pursuits irrespective of their concerns with its assertiveness. But the common historical, cultural, economic, geopolitical vision shared by India and Japan will finally form a formidable union that can determine the future of the FOIP framework.

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4th Indian Ocean Conference - IOC 2019

03-04 September 2019

Team IOC, 2019*



Inaugural session of the 4th Indian Ocean Conference

Maldives

4th Indian Ocean Conference - IOC 2019 was organised by India Foundation in association with the Foreign Service Institute of Maldives (FOSIM), and S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore on September 3-4, 2019 in the Maldives. The theme for this edition of the Conference was “**Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges**”.

The Conference was addressed by speakers from over 36 countries including Ministers from 17 countries, and officials from 15 countries it was also attended by delegates from over 40 countries.

First Day of the Conference started with parallel discussions on sub-themes of Navigational

Security, Terrorism and Marine Ecology. The first symposium on Navigational Security was Chaired by Capt (IN) Alok Bansal, Director, India Foundation. The speakers were Dr Sanjaya Baru, Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, India; Vice Admiral Anup Singh, Former C-inC, Eastern Naval Command, Indian Navy; Phil Midland, Former Naval Officer, USA and J B Vowell, Deputy Director, Planning and Policy, Indo-Pacific Command, USA

The second parallel symposium on Terrorism was Chaired by Prof S D Muni, Professor (Emeritus), School of International Studies, JNU. The session was addressed by Ms Prabha Rao, Executive Director, South Asian Institute for Strategic Affairs (SAISA), India; Admiral Jayantha

**Deeksha Goel, Siddharth Singh, and Soumya Chaturvedi are Senior Research Fellows at India Foundation. Devrath Jhunjunwala is an intern with the Foundation.*

Perera, Admiral, I M F and Former Commander of the Sri Lankan Navy; Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, Former GOC, 15 and 21 Corps, Indian Army and Dr Klaus Lange, Director, Institute of Transnational Studies, Germany

The next two parallel symposium were on Navigational Security and an Ambassadors' Panel to discuss the developments in IOR. The session on Navigational Security was Chaired Dr C Raja Mohan, Director, Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore and was addressed by Ms Preeti Saran, Former Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India; Ms Nisha Biswal, President, US India Business Council, USA; Dr Yan Yan, Director, Research Center of Oceans Law and Policy, National Institute for the South China Sea Studies, China and Mr Sinderpal Singh, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the South Asia Programme, Institute of Defence and Security Studies, RSIS, Singapore.

The Ambassador's Panel was chaired by Mr Rajiv Sikri, Former Indian Ambassador. The panel was also addressed by Amb Shin Bong-Kil, South Korean Ambassador to India; Amb Rita Giuliana Mannella, Ambassador of Italy to Sri Lanka; Amb Vicente Vivencio T. Bandillo, Ambassador of Philippines to Bangladesh and Amb Southam Sakonniyom, Former Ambassador of Lao PDR to India.

Inaugural Session

The Inaugural Session of the Conference was addressed by H.E. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of Maldives; H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister, Sri Lanka; Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore; Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs

Minister of India and Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of Maldives.

Dr S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, delivered the Welcome Address at the Inaugural Session of the Conference.

Addressing the Inaugural Session of the Conference, **H.E Ibrahim Mohamed Solih**, President of Maldives spoke of the importance of navigational security to the security and well-being of the Maldives. He then spoke of preserving the integrity and diversity of marine ecology as another crucial priority area for the collective security of the region. Particularly alarming for the Maldives has been a steep decline in the Indian Ocean's fish stocks. He concluded by reiterating the commitment of his government to engage proactively on every single one of the substantial policy issues relevant to the Indian Ocean.

H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister, Sri Lanka commenced his address by highlighting that the world is becoming increasingly uncertain and is facing a triad of critical threats. One of the most critical is the possibility of the downturn of the global economy since the financial crisis. The global dynamics are shifting and the rise of new powers is creating an asymmetric bipolar world with the US and China leading these tensions. With the increasing competition amongst many players, maritime players need to realize the risk associated with destabilizing the maritime order as there is a binding economic order that necessitates a greater degree of restraint and cooperation.

Recalling the first edition of the Conference in 2016 **Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore** said that, there



Keynote Session addressed by Dr S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, India and Mr Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister, Maldives.

were already signs of fraying is the existing international order. The collective commitment to international security and multilateralism had started to waiver and, to add to this, the ongoing evolution of the 4th Industrial revolution and the changes it demands our citizens poses a greater challenge. He concluded by saying that we all want an India Ocean built on Peace, Security, Stability and Security. It has remained committed to facilitating dialogue, building trust and strengthening multilateral institutions.

Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of Maldives, delivered the Vote of Thanks and expressed gratitude on behalf of the Organising Committee of IOC 2019, towards all Heads of States, Ministers, Officials, Scholars and all other

dignitaries for having graciously accepted the invite to attend the Conference.

Conference Keynote Session

The Conference Keynote Session was addressed by **Dr S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister, India** and **Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister, Maldives**

Delivering the Conference Keynote Address Dr S Jaishankar reaffirmed that India will no longer be limited in the pursuit of its interest in its immediate neighbourhood. The is being reflected in the forging of security relationships in the Pacific that parallel growing economic engagement. He justified India's expanding interest in the region by highlighting that India's core-interests lie in the



Session 1 being addressed by the Cabinet Ministers of six countries.

Indian Ocean and thus a presence beyond also contributes to ensuring a peaceful periphery. Talking about the SAGAR vision, he drew attention to the fact that, SAGAR derives a more active and outcome-oriented Indian approach that enhances this influence by delivering on partnerships.

Taking the stage to address the Conference Keynote Session, Foreign Minister of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid spoke of the geostrategic significance of the Indian Ocean Region and the need to protect and uphold the rule of law. He then elaborated on the foreign policy vision of President Ibrahim Mohammad Solih's government which seeks to cultivate healthy and mutually beneficial partnerships with all its neighbours and ensure security in the Indian Ocean. The Maldives is thus working towards the safety, stability and security of the Indo-Pacific region and towards

ensuring freedom of navigation, maritime security and addressing the hindrances such to freedoms including piracy and organised crime.

Session 1

The first Plenary Session of the Conference was addressed by Cabinet Ministers of Seychelles; Mauritius; Bhutan; Nepal; UAE and Timor Leste.

The **Designated Minister from Seychelles, Macsuzy Mondon** began her address by emphasising the importance of the blue economy for the states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). She outlined the importance of peace and stability in the IOR for its surrounding states. With opportunities come threats such as piracy, trafficking and terrorism that destabilise the region. Thanking India and the USA for lending support to Seychelles, she called upon the global community for a joint effort to stabilise the region. This could

be in the form of multilateral agreements and continued vigilance.

Nandcoomar Bodha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mauritius spoke about the significant challenges posed by piracy and terrorism in IOR. A comment was made on the recent freeing of convicted pirates from Somalia's prisons, a major signal that the threat of piracy remains. With the crucial trade passing through the IOR, it is vital to protect the region against challenges such as trafficking, piracy, smuggling, and terrorism (etc.). The speaker concluded his speech by reiterating the importance of the IOR in being a bridge between Asia and Africa and the need to protect it.

The **Minister for Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan, Tandi Dorji**, began his address by highlighting the cordial and fruitful relationship that Bhutan and the Maldives share. While Bhutan is landlocked, what happens in the IOR does have a significant impact on the nation due to the interconnectedness of the world today. While states face rising sea levels, Bhutan faces threats from melting glaciers that threaten lower-lying regions in the country. The effects of climate change are seen in Bhutan and the need for a concerted global effort is highlighted. To protect trade in the IOR and sustain the benefits of a blue economy, dialogue and collaboration are needed, with such conferences being a necessary first step.

Talking about the theme of the Conference, **Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nepal** said that Nepal sees this as an apt and critical challenge to address. With relevance in development, biodiversity and vast resources,

the ocean is vital for each nation in the region, even Nepal. Climate change is something that also affects Nepal, even though it is landlocked. Furthermore, a multilateral approach is needed to tackle security challenges such as smuggling and trafficking. With the proposed construction of roads and waterways between Nepal and the Indian Ocean, Nepal hopes to have greater involvement in matters about the IOR.

Ahmad Ali Al Sayegh, Minister for Economic Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UAE stated that freedom of navigation and regional cooperation is key to the growth of the ocean continuing cultural exchanges and continuous trade movement. With the advent of climate change threatening all nations, there is a need to support global dialogues that catalyse climate action. A strong focus on vital issues such as maritime safety and security, cultural exchanges and the blue economy is needed with the help of several countries to continue building bridges and securing the region.

Joaquim Jose Gusmao dos Reis Martines, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Timor Leste, discussed the need to engage all partners to bring cooperation and responsibility in the region, committing itself to the sustainable development of the blue economy, following international law. Through partnership and support, there is a need to address unregulated fishing and developing sea-based tourism in the region.

Day 2

Keynote Session II

The Second Keynote Session of the



*Keynote address being delivered by
Md Nasheed, Speaker, Peoples' Majlis, Maldives.*

Conference was Chaired by **M J Akbar, Member of Parliament, India** and **Md Nasheed, Speaker, Peoples' Majlis, Maldives**.

M J Akbar, Member of Parliament, India began his talk by diving straight into the history of the ocean. In his address, he stated that with climate change, increased militarisation and globalisation, it is imperative to ensure the safety of the Indian Ocean region. He also stated the importance of the Indo-Pacific theatre during WW2, reiterating the importance of the ocean to global affairs, then and now.

Mohammed Nasheed referenced the history of the IOR, stating the interest of Chinese and later European forces of establishing control over

the ocean and their specific interest in surveying the islands of Maldives. While India has maintained a peaceful and strong relationship with the Maldives, he references the issue of land grabs and authoritarian rule in the region as a grave threat. Explicitly stating "I am specifically referring to China," he outlined land grabs and debt diplomacy, methods that the Chinese have used to gain control of the Maldives. He hopes for more transparent and mutually beneficial investment in the Maldives from all nations in the region, comparing China to the East India Company. He also discussed the rise of radical Islam that threatens the Maldives and the wider region.

Session II

Chair: Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party; Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation

In a special video message, **Lisa Curtis, Deputy Assistant to the President, Senior Director for South and Central Asia, National Security Council, USA**, highlighted the long term threat from actors who seek to undermine rather than uphold the rules based international order, seek to destabilize the region and reorder it towards their exclusive advantage. She focused on the Indo-Pacific priority of the USA to realize the goal of strong, sovereign and prosperous nations in the region.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Bin Hamood Albusaidi, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oman, focused his remarks specifically on maritime security in the region, built on the foundations of law and operational security. With piracy being a significant issue in the region,

the Minister called for a collaborative effort in policing the sea. Cooperation entails the coordination of naval operations, information sharing and joint training. With trust-building and respect for maritime law, he hopes that states will prioritise long term peace and stability as opposed to short term gain.

Shahriar Alam, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh stated that Bangladesh, a booming economy, has kept a strong interest and effort in maintaining peace and security in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. With peace and stability in the region, all can take part in prosperous growth. He calls for greater economic integration and coastal shipping agreements to enhance regional connectivity. With “zero-tolerance” to illicit activities in the ocean, he hopes for further strategic partnerships and a security architecture to address the issue. Highlighting the importance of sustainable fishing and the threat of climate change, he called for greater conservation efforts from all nations in the region.

Chhiv Yiseang, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia, stressed the importance of cooperation in enhancing maritime security in the region, premised on strategic trust among nations. He called for a mutually beneficial framework where the interests of both large and small nations are respected. He outlined the importance of ASEAN in being a forum and a “security shell” for its member nations to expand connections. He also stressed the importance of RCEP as being a key economic pillar of the region.

Session III

Chair: Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party; Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation

Kyaw Myo, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Myanmar, stressed the importance of cooperation through bilateral and multilateral settings to address regional issues. With the ever-increasing importance of the region Myanmar hopes for a greater role on the part of all states in the region. He hopes for the development of an “institutionalised cross-regional setting” for integration to tackle marine pollution and terrorism in the region. He stated that Myanmar supports for peace and harmony in the region and hopes to play a larger role in the future.

Presenting the Japanese perspective, **Toshiko Abe, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan,** reflected on the strategic importance of the IOR due the important Sea Line Of Communications. The Indian Ocean region is also the theatre of economic activity for many nations. Hence, it faces challenges of both economic and security nature. In the context of the Indian Ocean, the Japanese focus is essentially on three factors, namely, the maritime order, combating piracy and combating terrorism. She focused on the importance of a rule-based free and open order for stability and prosperity.

Ronny Prasetyo Yuliantoro, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Special Advisor to the Foreign Minister on Inter-Institutional Relations, Indonesia, stated that he hopes for greater confidence and soft cooperation through dialogue between nations in

the region. In a growing economy, ASEAN can play a major role in bringing regional cooperation. The East Asia Summit can further bring economic and maritime cooperation, promoting connectivity and sustainability. With the sustainable development of the blue economy, Indonesia hopes for mutually beneficial growth and prosperity in the region.

Session IV

Chair: Shakti Sinha, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, India

Harry Harris, the American Ambassador to South Korea and Former Commander of United States Pacific Command, regarded Indian and the Pacific Ocean as the two determinants of the future of the earth. He

mentioned the US contribution and the robust manifestation of US to the economic momentum in the region. He highlighted the focus of Trump administration on the creation of strong reciprocal bilateral trade relations that contribute to development through job creations and not debt creation. He advocated for a free and open Indo-Pacific, with states to be strongly independent and be satellites to none in economic, security and governance terms. He also raised concerns over China's actions in the region.

Speaking on behalf of the Russian Federation, **Yuri Materiy, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Russia to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and The Maldives** highlighted the Russian



Ambassador Harry Harris, US Ambassador to South Korea delivering his address.

interest in the Indian Ocean Region as mentioned in the Maritime Doctrine of 2020. He regarded the Shanghai Cooperation Operation as a potential multilateral dialogue form for concerns in the Indian Ocean with the recent additions in its memberships. He also questioned the substance value of “Indo-Pacific”, while focusing on “Asia-Pacific” as reflective of constructive partnership and cooperation.

Wei Hongtian, the Ambassador of Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China, commenced his address by stating the Chinese ambitions to be a strong maritime country based on four principles, namely, peaceful, cooperative, open and win-win development; settlement of maritime dispute through friendly dialogue and negotiation; commitment to maritime cooperation and rules; upholding unobstructed passage and security of international shipping lanes. On behalf of China, he proposed a justified reasonable openness of Indian Ocean Region with the participation of all based on negotiation. He regarded BRI to be one such forum for pragmatic cooperation.

Session V

Chair: Shakti Sinha, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, India

Describing old challenges as common knowledge, **Pornpimol Kanchanalak, Adviser to Foreign Minister, Kingdom of Thailand**, summarized new challenges to be rooted in the differences between the new great powers and the old international paradigm. She focused on the new Indo-Pacific outlook forwarded by Thailand as the current chair of ASEAN - to move away

from confrontation towards constructive cooperation and working together to find some, if not all, the solutions with an open mind.

M Shahidul Islam, Secretary-General, BIMSTEC Secretariat, focused his address majorly on the issues in Bay of Bengal and the littoral and adjacent states of BIMSTEC. The Bay of Bengal hosts key transit route between the Indian and the Pacific Ocean, thus becomes crucial in terms of security and strategic concerns of the larger Indian Ocean Region. Recognising the need for a rule-based order supported by maritime infrastructures, he appreciated the awareness amongst the BIMSTEC states to work closely in developing common approaches towards them.

Richard Maude, Deputy Secretary, Indo-Pacific Group, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia focused his address on the changing strategic dynamics in the region and the response of region particularly on the contribution of Australia. He highlighted the manifestation of the changing dynamics through the creation of multi-polarity in the region; flashpoints in border disputes; and gaining prominence of ‘geo-economics’, where trade, investment and infrastructure are being used not only for connectivity but also to build influence to secure political and economic gains.

Discussing the great strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, **Nguyen Van Thao, Assistant to Deputy Prime Minister, Director General of the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam**, attributed this importance to connectivity, oil shipment, shipping lanes etc. as factors critical to international trade, navigation and energy security. He concluded



Richard Maude, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia addressing the delegates.

his address by bringing into focus the recent activities in the South China Sea and urged the members of Indian Ocean region to stand firm on the rule of law in the oceans and for compliance with UNCLOS and international law.

Session VI

Chair: Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha, Former C-in-C, Western Naval Command, Indian Navy; Member, Board of Trustees, India Foundation

Detailing the maritime challenges faced by Madagascar and several policy initiatives taken by the country in this regard, **Ratsimandao Tahirimiakadaza, Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madagascar**, highlighted the effort required to build maritime oriented

development policy. In his address, he reiterated the commitment of Madagascar to contribute in the ongoing international effort to promote a secure and prosperous Indian Ocean region. Supporting the vision of SAGAR forwarded by the India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he advocated for peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region.

Discussing the perspective and experiences from the Western Indian Ocean, **Michael Kiboino, Director, Oceans and Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya** highlighted the increasing and deliberate prioritisation of blue economy as the next frontier of economic growth and development in Africa. He narrowed down three major concerns in realizing the potential of the Indian Ocean for Kenya. These were: land-based root causes of threats contained in passive

conflicts and state fragility; the extra-regional dynamics with destabilizing effect in an existing fragile region; and climate change which is defining new security and developmental challenges.

Abdallah Mirghane, Director of the Foreign Minister's Cabinet, Comoros, in his address stressed the importance of including the coastal and island states in any dialogue on the Indian Ocean. He highlighted that the economic development of African states is highly dependent on international trade and thus, maritime transport and security are of vital importance. He concluded by emphasising that maritime security must include element of international peace, security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Session VII

Chair: Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha, Former C-in-C, Western Naval Command, Indian Navy; Member, Board of Trustees, India Foundation

Edward Ahlgren, OBE, Royal Navy, UK, stated that the Indian Ocean sits at the crossroads of international trade which is a critical link between the world's powerhouse of Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific Region. The Indian Ocean is more than a simple transit corridor. The Indian Ocean is contested, congested, and complicated. He concluded by focusing on the need for technological developments to promote security,

governance, prosperity and sustainability that we leverage are also available to our adversaries.

Acknowledging that the strategic and security environment is highly volatile and ambiguous, **Abdulla Shamaal, Chief of Defence Force, Maldives**, stated that with complex and interlinked threats & challenges that creates uncertainty for Statesmen and Practitioners.

The main cause of this volatility is intense socio-economic as well as military competition among near-peer competitors. He focused on the need for a natural convergence of interests on the part of major regional and international players that fit into India Look East/Act East policy as well as China's economic network of Belt & Road Initiative.

Mahesh Singh, Flag Officer Karwar/ Karnataka, Indian Navy, commenced his address by pointing out that the global security environment has changed dramatically over the past few decades. The Indian Ocean is the only connection between the economic prosperity of the West and the aspirations of the East. The statistics of the types and numbers of ships that travel through vital shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean Region indicate that they sustain economic activity and enable prosperity across the world. He concluded by stating that today the security of the Indian Ocean Region faces challenges largely from Non-State Actors and in some cases from State-Sponsored Non-State Actors.



5th Dharma Dhamma Conference 2019

Theme: Sat-Chit-Ananda & Nirvana in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions

Dates: 27-28 July 2019

Venue: Rajgir International Convention Centre, Rajgir, Bihar, India

Siddharth Singh and Ngawang Hardy*



Inauguration Speakers

5th International Dharma Dhamma Conference was organised by India Foundation in collaboration with Nalanda University on 27-28 July 2019 in Rajgir International Convention Centre, Rajgir, Bihar, India. The theme of the Conference was “Sat-Chit-Ananda & Nirvana” in Dharma-Dhamma Traditions. The conference was attended by 250 scholars from 15 Countries, 37 distinguished speakers addressed the Conference while 50 scholars presented their research papers on various sub-themes of the conference.

The Inaugural Session of the 5th International Dharma Dhamma Conference was addressed by Pujya Swami Avdheshanand Giri (Acharya Mahamandleshwar Juna Akhara and Founder, Prabhu Premi Sangh), Shri Kiren Rijiju (Union Minister of State I/C, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India), Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera (Minister of Buddhasasana and Wayamba Development, Government of Sri Lanka), Lyonpo Sherab Gyaltsen (Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, The Royal Government of Bhutan) and Prof. Sunaina Singh (Vice-

**Siddharth Singh is Senior Research Fellow and Ngawang Hardy is Research Fellow at India Foundation.*

Chancellor, Nalanda University, Rajgir, Bihar).



Puja Swami Avdheshanand Giri

The conference began with invocations rooted in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions by the students and teachers of Nalanda University. Ms Lalita Kumarmangalam, Director, India Foundation, welcomed all the guests, eminent scholars, academics and students in her welcome remarks in the inaugural session of the conference.

In his Benedictory Address in the Inaugural Session of the conference, Puja Swami Avdheshanand Giri Ji Maharaj spoke on the spiritual aspect of the theme of the conference. Swami Ji lauded the theme of the conference as very significant and important for the contemporary world. He said that Hindu traditions conceive the Absolute Truth in terms of three essentials attributes namely *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*. When one knows or experiences these three, then the

logical conclusion is the liberation which is *Nirvana*. He added, “the name of Parmatma in Vedic/Hindu/Sanatana Dharma is Sachidananda and that is the ultimate truth which incorporates all elements of life including the truth, consciousness and Ananda”.



Shri Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Youth Affairs & Sports and Minister of State for Minority Affairs, India and MP from the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chief Guest in the Inaugural Session was Shri Kiren Rijiju. He said “Dharma Dhamma Conference is an endeavour to underscore the basic commonality between the two religions – Hinduism and Buddhism. Knowledge culture, which is the Indian Culture, is common among the two religions. The texts of the two traditions have many similarities, though people theorize and practice them differently.”



Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera

Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera, Hon'ble Minister of Buddhasasana and Wayamba Development, Government of Sri Lanka, was the Distinguished Guest of Honor in the Inaugural Session of the Conference. He highlighted that Hindu and Buddhist traditions have to work and live together. He said, "Buddhist teachings are the most relevant to the contemporary world for achieving a sustainable and happy world".

Lyonpo Sherab Gyaltshen, Hon'ble Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, The Royal Government of Bhutan, was also the Distinguished Guest of Honor in the Inaugural session of the conference. In his address, he highlighted the natural linkage between Nalanda and Bhutan since time immemorial. He said "the deliberations at the Dharma Dhamma Conference should be focussed on *Human mind & Self* to develop a compassionate world. Courses and curriculum on



Hon. Lyonpo Sherab Gyaltshen

self and human mind should be developed to create future citizens who care for happiness and values".

In her remarks, Prof Sunaina Singh, Vice-



Sunaina Singh, VC, Nalanda University



Keynote speakers

Chancellor of Nalanda University, said “Nalanda traditions have been in the true spirit of Sat-Chit-Ananda. The Dharma Dhamma Conference provides a forum for the best minds from the world of academics as well as leading statesmen, policymakers, religious heads from India and abroad to come together to explore new wisdom and meaning in the contemporary world.”

The Keynote Session in the Dharma Dhamma Conference was chaired by Prof. S. R. Bhatt, Chairman, Indian Philosophy Congress and Former Chairman, Indian Council of Philosophical Research. The Keynote Addresses in the Session were delivered by Shri Ram Madhav (National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party and Member, Board of Governors, India Foundation), Hon. Mano Ganesan (Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress & Hindu Religious Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka, Shrihariprasad Swami (Managing Trustee, Sri Vishnu Mohan Foundation) and Venerable Prof

Thich Nhat Tu (Deputy Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University, Vietnam and Founding Member, International Buddhist Confederation).



Shri Ram Madhav, National General Secretary, Bharatiya Janata Party

In his keynote address, Shri Ram Madhav said that “Satchidanand or Moksha is not there to desire or gain, but to experience. This experience begins from the physical world - *Isavasyamidam Sarvam* - Everything here is *Isvara*, the divine. Man has to travel from that realisation of the Omnipresent to a state where he becomes the Omnipresent himself, described in Upanishads as *Aham Brahmasmi* - I am the Creator. From Being to Becoming is the journey. Becoming is Moksha. Upanishads called that becoming as Satchidanand.



Hon. Mano Ganesan, Minister of National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress & Hindu Religious Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka

Hon. Mano Ganesan, in his Keynote address, underlined the harmony and coexistence of Hinduism and Buddhism since ages and said that Sri Lanka has recognized itself as multi identity, multiethnic, metalinguistic, multi-religious country just like India.

Shrihariprasad Swami, in his Keynote address, said “philosophy and knowledge of the Shastra should transform you, otherwise it is of no use”.



Shrihariprasad Swami, Managing Trustee, Sri Vishnu Mohan Foundation

Venerable Prof (Dr) Thich Nhat Tu, in his Keynote address, talked about *Nirvana* which is the Ultimate Goal of Buddhism. He said “the essence of the Buddha’s teachings lies in the four noble truths which are: the statement of what is suffering (*dukkha*), discovering the cause of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*), realisation of the state of the destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*) and showing the path leading to that state of destruction of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gmin-paipad*). They form the soteriological structure of the Buddha’s ethical teachings.

There were four Plenary Sessions in the conference where 27 Distinguished Speakers from various countries addressed the conference on four sub-themes of the conference namely Sat, Chit, Ananda and Nirvana. The first Plenary Session in the conference had discussions on the Sub-theme **Sat (Truth)** in Dharma Dhamma Traditions. The second Plenary Session had discussions on Sub-theme **Chit (Consciousness)** while the third Plenary Session discussed **Ananda**



Venerable Prof (Dr) Thich Nhat Tu, Deputy Rector, Vietnam Buddhist University, Vietnam and Founding Member, International Buddhist Confederation

(Bliss) Sub-theme and fourth and final Plenary Session had an engaging discussion on *Nirvana (Enlightenment)* in Dharma Dhamma Traditions. There were also 8 parallel Sessions in the Conference where Scholars presented their Papers on Sub-themes of the Conference.

Thus, the 5th edition of Dharma Dhamma Conference explored the shared values of the Dharma-Dhamma traditions with engaging and interactive sessions on both days of the conference. The conference was successful in facilitating the cross-pollination of ideas and highlighting the commonalities of Dharma and Dhamma traditions to foster harmony at the global level. In the present era of globalization, integrating the world through common bonds of Dharma-Dhamma would provide strong threads of interconnection for all citizens.



BOOK REVIEW



‘BE CLEAR, KASHMIR WILL VOTE FOR INDIA’ JAMMU & KASHMIR 1947-1953

**REPORTING THE CONTEMPORARY
UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNREPORTED**

Author: Raghuvendra Tanwar

Publisher: Manohar

Price: Rs.1695/- (Hardcover)

*Book Review by: Nidhi Bahuguna**

The title grabs attention in the prevailing environment where a small segment of radicalised Kashmiris seek what they term as ‘Azadi,’ with some of them seeking to be part of Pakistan or perhaps a larger Islamic caliphate. The book claiming to ‘report the contemporary understanding of the unreported’ is a deep, exhaustive and highly analytical study of a large volume of documents, such as first-hand sources, letters, news reports and magazines, some of which are now no longer in print. The book encompasses a wide body of research, put together in a brilliant narration by the author, who is Professor Emeritus at Kurukshetra University and a renowned teacher.

Prof Tanwar has, in the preface itself, put forth his personal experiences of Kashmir, which he found to conflict with the prevailing accepted theories. In the introduction to his book, he overviews the vast body of studies, books, reports, newspapers (etc). which over the years have been devoted to the Kashmir issue. Unsurprisingly, a vast body of this work propagates a Pakistan-centric point of view, which in turn has been a fall

out of the popular British view—a point of view that was geared towards securing the British national interest. The phase stretching from 1947-1953 from any other perspective is “hitherto over sighted”.

The first chapter gives a brief overview of the history of Kashmir, touching upon its interwoven society, the poverty of the local populace and the geo-strategic importance of the state which underpinned British interest in the region. The chapter analyses the political scene that prevailed in 1947 and the response of PM Nehru on the Kashmir issue. The roles of Maharaja Hari Singh, Sheikh Abdullah, Lord Mountbatten, Muslim League and the Kashmiri Pandits are analysed in light of the partition. The details from the visit of Acharya Kripalani, often neglected, make, for interesting reading.

The tribal invasion of the state has not received much coverage in India but finds deep resonance in the book, which has a chapter on the subject. The various issues and the sources Professor Tanwar has put across make for a captivating

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read. These historical details point the lie in the false narrative that has been spewed out—a narrative that states that the invasion by the tribal marauders was spontaneous and triggered by high taxation of Muslim subjects in Poonch; that Maharaja Hari Singh was bullied into acceding to India and that it was not the desire of the common Kashmiri to accede to India. All this is countered through cogent and painstaking research which methodically demolishes the web of lies which has weaved a false narrative for reasons that need to be determined. The picture that emerges from the research carried out by the author is one of India being taken by surprise; of a collapsed administration not heeding to intelligence inputs of an impending attack; of senior officials in the Hari Singh administration being in cahoots with Pakistan and of attempts to incite the Muslims of Kashmir against the Maharaja, in the hope that they would support the invaders. The article by K.R. Palta, cited at length, gives first-hand reports on Pakistani involvement and makes for an engrossing read. The invasion failed from the Pakistani viewpoint and ‘Fortified Hindu-Muslim Relations’. The inhuman behaviour of the invaders which has never been discussed, is dealt with at length, quoting first-hand sources and reports, which should be made public again to make the new generations aware of the reality of the invasion.

The chapter dealing with Nehru putting Abdullah in charge analyses the beginnings of the political whirlpool of follies. The forgotten opposition of many field officers like Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of Punjab, who believed that partition on religious grounds was a mistake has been discussed. The events of the weeks following

the invasion, the miscalculations and misjudgements of Nehru and the larger Indian leadership have been discussed at length? News reports from leading papers like the Tribune offer insights about the reaction of ordinary Kashmiris which have never been discussed in the debate on Kashmir. The insights of Mr Jagmohan, twice governor of the state, have been given due space.

The relation of Abdullah with Sardar Patel offers very interesting insight. The analysis of Nehru taking to the idea of the plebiscite is dealt with in detail. The various studies accessed by the author bring out very interesting details like the issue of plebiscite never being of much importance at the time of accession. The idea was planted by the leaders, mainly Abdullah and taken up by Nehru and Gandhi. The various versions for why Nehru took a fancy to plebiscite will go a long way in dealing with this issue at present.

The book also analyses the role of the UN in minute detail, bringing out many facets which had till now been kept out of public gaze. The misjudgment of Nehru is evident in the speech he made in Parliament, the consequences of which are still being dealt with by the nation. The mistake Nehru made in making Kashmir into an international issue and the reasons Nehru went to UN, the geopolitical interests of the Western world and the consequence of this move are covered in depth in the chapter titled ‘Pilgrimage of Hindustan to Lake Success (UN) the hotbed of international intrigue’. The cartoons of that time, collected by the author, are indeed fascinating and bring to fore the prevailing sentiment and the depth of this Nehruvian blunder.

The roles of The Praja Parishad, and SP Mookerjee, and their relation with Nehru and Abdullah have been often relegated to the dark bins of history. The Chapter ‘Accession still in the Melting Pot’ brings to light many forgotten reports and incidents. The issue of Pakistan claiming Rs 55 crore from India has somehow always escaped public attention, as is the role of Gopalaswami Iyengar in the whole situation. The maligning of Praja Parishad by Abdullah has never been contested. The book brings forth hidden reports and forgotten publications that bring out the real picture of the Praja Parishad. The booklet published by Bhaskaranand, cited in parts, makes for compelling reading. The letters exchanged between Nehru, Mookerjee and Abdullah give a very clear picture of the events and the various stands prevailing at that time.

The dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah by Nehru is often considered a watershed moment in Kashmiri politics, but oft-forgotten is the death of SP Mukherjee that preceded the dismissal by a couple of months. The narrative established of the dismissal is that of ‘communal elements’ (Praja Parishad) taking control of the decision making bodies in New Delhi. The various letters, news reports give an interesting perspective, especially the letter was written by Indira Gandhi to Nehru expressing sadness on the events in Kashmir. The various reactions to the dismissal offer a clearer picture. While some reactions have been in the public eye, it is the forgotten ones, like those of Mridula Sarabhai that offer valuable insights.

Another forgotten issue in India is the possibility of a partition of Kashmir proposed by Nehru in a letter written to Bakshi Ghulam. The minutes of Nehru-Mohammed Ali meeting require deep reading as they bring out how a non-issue like a plebiscite became the central issue in the Indo-Pak talks on Kashmir.

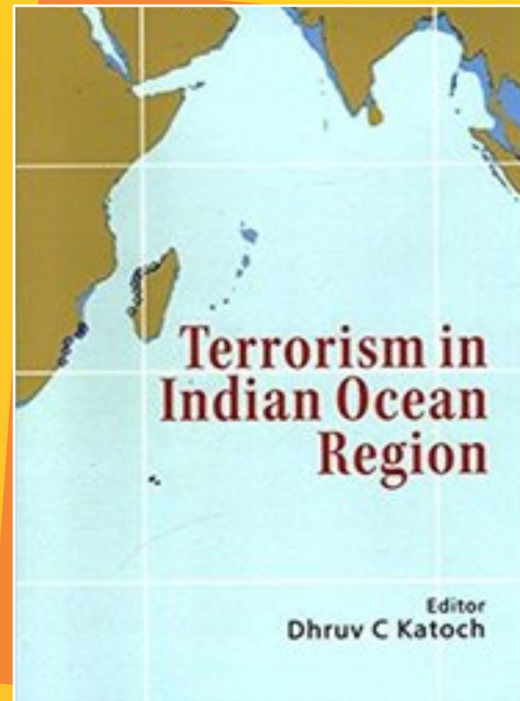
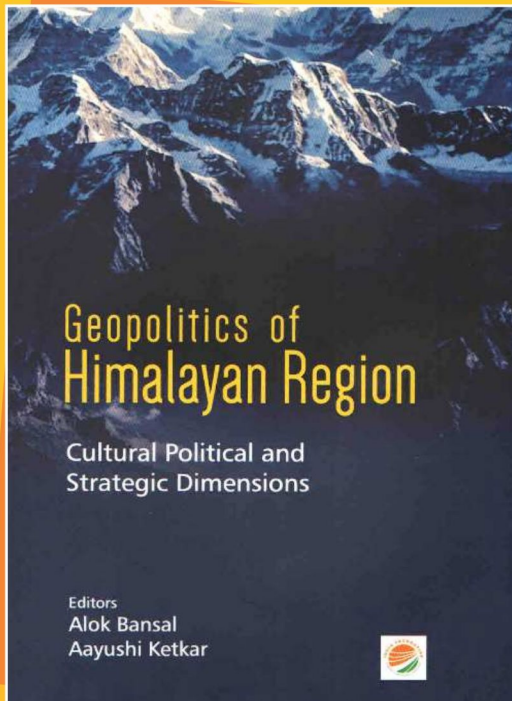
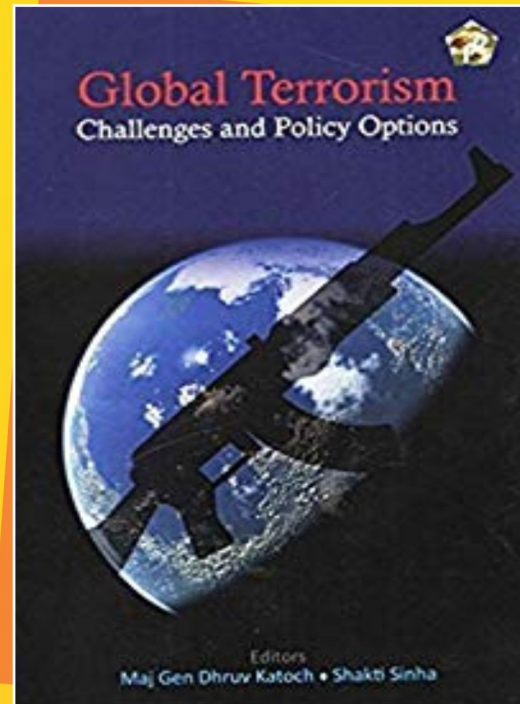
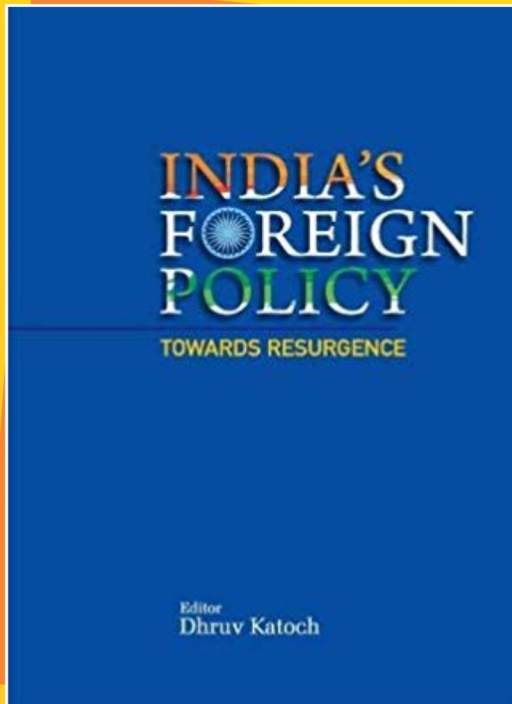
As we go through the book, it is difficult not to agree with the author that the ‘Kashmir problem’ in “its most basic form is that in 1947, Kashmir was not only a Muslim majority state but also had a contiguous border with Muslim majority Pakistan ...’

To come back to the title, in the introduction, the author cites an article dated 26 October 1949 by K.A Abbas, published in ‘Current’ Magazine stating “...let us be clear, Kashmir will vote for India...” Raghuvendra Tanwar has successfully established this fact in his book, by laying out historical documents, reports and studies which have been consigned to ill-maintained archives.

The book is suggested for all who wish to gain insights into the Kashmir problem beyond the purported facts by a Western-centric media. The Government can perhaps take the initiative to publish the studies and reports cited in the book, to make them available to the general public, to foster a climate of a broader understanding of its historical trajectory. While the book deals with just six years—1947-1953, it would indeed be excellent if Professor Raghuvendra Tanwar could look into the events of 1931 and bring out another publication on the same.



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