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Editorial Board

Table of Contents

Editor's Note

FOCUS: Centrality of the Indo-Pacific

International Relations

Society and the State

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With a team of dedicated professionals based at its office in New Delhi, the Foundation works with partners and associates both in India and overseas to further its stated objectives.

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The India Foundation Journal is led by an Editorial Board of eminent scholars and leaders from various spheres of Indian public life. The bi-monthly journal covers a wide range of issues pertinent to the national interest, mainly focusing on international relations, national security, legal and constitutional issues and other issues of social, religious and political significance. The journal seeks articles from scholars with the intent of creating a significant body of knowledge with a nationalist perspective and establish a recognised forum for debates involving academicians and policymakers.

The Blue in India's Flag

Dhruv C. Katoch*

India's Flag is oft called the Tricolour, for its three horizontal stripes in colours of saffron, white and green. But what is often missed is the fourth colour in the flag—the blue wheel in the centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made reference to this, in an address he delivered at the commissioning of the 'Barracuda' in Mauritius on 12 March 2015. Referring to the blue wheel, he said, "To me, the blue chakra or wheel in India's flag represents the potential of the blue revolution, or the ocean economy".[1]

The Barracuda—a 1,300-tonne offshore patrol vessel (OPV) built by Garden Reach Shipyard & Engineers (GRSE), was the first warship ordered by a foreign country from an Indian shipyard.[2] In his address at the commissioning of the 'Barracuda,' Prime Minister Modi sketched out India's vision of the Indian Ocean. He spoke of the criticality of the Indian Ocean to the future of the world, and stated that all would prosper when the seas were safe, secure and free for all. The vision he articulated contained five key elements. These were:[3]

- India will do everything to safeguard its mainland and islands and defend its interests. Equally, India will work to ensure a safe, secure and stable Indian Ocean Region.
- India will deepen economic and security cooperation with her friends in the region, especially her maritime neighbours and island states and will continue to build their maritime security capacities and economic strength.
- Deepen mutual understanding on maritime challenges and strengthen our collective ability to address them through regional mechanisms for maritime cooperation.
- Seek a more integrated and cooperative future in the region that enhances the prospects for sustainable development for all.
- The primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean rests on those who live in the region. However, India recognises the fact that there are other nations around the world with strong interests and stakes in the region and India is deeply engaged with them.

From the above, emerged the acronym SAGAR or Security and Growth for All in the Region, which has become the fulcrum of India's vision in the Indian Ocean and in the wider Indo-Pacific region. It is a tool for India's development, and towards that end, this shared marine space would need to be protected. In a sense, this represents a transition in the Indian thought process, which for long has thought of itself as a continental power, but now also sees itself through a maritime lens.

Indian history records a long maritime tradition, covering a period of over five millennia. As far back as 2500 BCE, the Harappans built tidal docks at Lothal for berthing and servicing ships, and were perhaps the first in the world to do so. India's strong

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naval tradition finds reference in her sacred scriptures, as also in Kautilya's Arthashastra and in other texts. The Chola empire saw the zenith of ancient Indian sea power, but with the decline of the Cholas towards the end of the 13th century, Indian sea power declined. The Arabs gradually edged out the Indians from the sea faring trade and were themselves sidelined when the Portuguese came on the scene and assumed control of the seas in the early sixteenth century. There was a brief period which saw the resurgence of Indian sea power with the rise of the Marathas. Maharaja Shivaji had started creating his own navy, which reached the zenith of its power under the command of notable admirals like Sidhoji Gujar and Kanhoji Angre. But with the death of Angre, Maratha naval power declined.[4]

An interesting aspect to be noted is the co-relation of India's economic prosperity and its control of the seas. As India lost control of the seas, external forces entered to rule over the land, which in turn led to India's economic decline. Post independence, the Indian security establishment had its focus on the land borders, as India had inimical neighbours. But now, maritime trade is becoming a key indicator in India's growth story. And hence the need for a vibrant Ocean policy, emphasising the need to keep the sea lanes free, safe and secure for all.

Soon after assuming office for the second term in May 2019, the Narendra Modi-led government set a target of taking the economy to USD 5 trillion over the next five years. This was a daunting and an ambitious undertaking, but given that the fundamentals of the economy were strong, it was not something which could not be achieved. The pandemic caused by Covid 19, a virus that emanated from China, will certainly delay the timelines by perhaps another three to four years, so we could be looking at 2028 to achieve the laid down target. But a more important point to note is that to achieve the target, greater dependence has to be on the blue economy, which conceptualises the oceans as "shared development spaces".

The World Bank has defined Blue Economy as the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihood and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health".[5] India's development effort will increasingly be dependent on the Blue Economy and the Oceanic space thus becomes vital for India. According to the Ministry of Shipping, around 95% of India's trading by volume and 70% by value is done through maritime transport. India's Sagarmala programme is designed to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes. A total of 189 projects have been identified for modernisation of ports involving an investment of Rs 1.42 trillion (USD 22 billion) by the year 2035.[6] Peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific is hence a key requirement for India's development agenda.

Growing Chinese naval and air power in the South China Sea and its expansionist designs in the region, have understandably raised concerns, not only amongst the ASEAN countries, but also among other regional powers, primarily the US, Japan, Australia and India. China's 'nine dash line' is being unilaterally imposed on China's smaller neighbours, in utter disregard to the UN

Conventions. Evidently, there is a need to push back against Chinese expansionism and towards a rule based order.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, popularly called the Quad—an informal strategic forum between the United States, Japan, Australia and India, is at present being maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills between member countries. There is a need to formalise the Quad and make it agenda and rule based, to prevent Chinese hegemony in the region. This would encourage some if not all the ASEAN countries to join the grouping, which will likely also see the United Kingdom, France and some other European nations coming in.

A united effort is required to check Chinese expansionism, especially as the UN appears to be singularly ineffective in this regard. India must play a leading role towards that end, confronted as she is by Chinese hegemonist attitudes in its northern and Eastern borders. This is better done sooner rather than later, otherwise the world may well witness another moment, where lack of decisive action when required, led to the Second World War. Keeping the sea lanes of communication safe, secure and free for all, as stated by Prime Minister Modi, must hence be a priority not only for India, but for all who value peace and freedom.

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FOCUS

Indo-Pacific is the Power Axis of the 21st Century

Ram Madhav*

Year 1992 was momentous in the history of the Indo-Pacific. In February that year, the Chinese legislature passed a resolution innocuously named as the 'Law Concerning Territorial Waters and Adjacent Regions'. This resolution was the starting point of China's ambitious and aggressive maritime adventures in *Nanhai* or *Nanyang* – the Chinese name for the South China Sea and the Southern Ocean. This came as a culmination of the Southern tour of the supreme leader Deng Xiaoping. Armed with the new law, the Chinese started making new maritime claims in the Western Pacific right upto the Malacca Straits. It also started enforcing claims based on the unilaterally pronounced Nine Dash Line – an imaginary maritime boundary causing serious consternation to the maritime states in the region like Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Philippines.

This sudden ascendency of China in the Western Pacific was followed by another important geo-strategic development in the region nine months later. In November 1992, the Americans had announced the closure of an important naval base at the Subic Bay in Philippines. The base had been under the US control since the time of victory of the US Forces in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The base played a pivotal role in US' naval adventures in the Western Pacific during the Cold War years as the "service station and supermarket" for the US Seventh Fleet. In June 1991, Mount Pinatubo, a volcanic mountain in the region, had erupted causing severe damage to the base and a nearby US Air Force base at Clark. Rising nationalism in the Philippines and the collapse of the Soviet Union too contributed to the US decision of vacating the Bay.

Although unconnected, these two developments in 1992 – the new Chinese maritime laws and the US' withdrawal from Philippines - were to signify a major strategic shift about to begin in the Indo-Pacific region – the ascendency of China and the erosion of the US influence.

Thirty years later, this asymmetry is glaring before the countries in the region as well as the world at large. China has today emerged as a major maritime power, ambitiously exerting its authority in the seas to the South and East. It shed what President Hu Jintao described in 2003 as its "Malacca Dilemma" under President Xi Jinping and embarked on the program of "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" in the Southern oceanic region. It occupied shoals, built artificial islands, constructed airstrips on them, erected radars, deployed massive fleet of vessels to constantly guard the waters and violated boundaries of maritime neighbours with impunity.

China's Indo-Pacific adventurism is an

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important dimension of the "China Dream" of Xi Jinping. The Chinese had always felt claustrophobic of being surrounded by big powers like Russia, India and Japan. Their relatively underdeveloped Naval strength had left them handicapped in the only major opening that they had in the South through the Indo-Pacific sea lanes. As the country prospered, its dependence on the Indo-Pacific has also increased manifold. Malacca Straits became its lifeline with over 80 percent of its energy supplies coming through that route.

Additionally, the global power axis has shifted to the Indo-Pacific region with the advent of the new century. This region has emerged as the busiest sea-route with over 50 percent of the container tonnage passing through it. It is here that the fastest growing new economies are located. It is here that major defence spending is happening. It is here that populations with purchasing power creating potential markets exist.

Both China and the US have realised the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region in the 21st century. President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – that included both land and maritime linkages – was essentially intended to gain greater dominance over Eurasia in general and the Indo-Pacific in particular. In a hard-hitting speech against the West, delivered in February 2013 and released to the public six years later, Xi Jinping came down heavily against what he perceived as America's 'containment policy' against China in the region. The BRI was conceived as an antidote to America's intended re-domination of the region.

President Obama's years in the White House saw enhanced attention towards the Indo-Pacific region. His policy of 'Asian Pivot' or 'Asian Rebalancing' was a major shift from the earlier US focus on West Asia and Western Europe. Although Bill Clinton and George Bush showed some interest in the shifting power balance in the world, their focus largely remained limited to Guam and Western Pacific besides of course the 'war on terror' in West and Central Asia. With a view to achieving balance in the Indo-Pacific region and containing China's growing muscle, Obama initiated 'Trans-Pacific Partnership' (TPP) dialogue with the nations on the periphery of the Indo-Pacific, while enhancing bilateral ties with ASEAN member states and other regional powers.

In an important article in the Foreign Policy magazine titled 'America's Pacific Century', Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote that "Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, countering the nuclear proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region's key players". She enumerated six action points for the policy of 'Asian Pivot': strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening America's relationships with rising powers, including China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights.

End of Obama presidency coincided with consolidation of Xi Jinping's position in China.

President Donald Trump's reckless adventurism met with Xi Jinping's 'great power autism' – inability to hear about the concerns of others. In his Indo-Pacific policy address, Trump articulated his aim in so many words as targeting China. While Obama's Asian Pivot policy was inclusive at least ostensibly, Trump didn't display any such pretences. His Indo-Pacific policy clearly excluded China and his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo missed no opportunity to attack the Chinese Communist Party as the quintessential evil.

The American hyper-power and the Chinese growing power are on an ominous collision course in the Indo-Pacific. Mutual suspicion is conspicuous in many of the initiatives that both countries take in the region. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that President Obama initiated in 2012 excluded China. Similarly, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that China initiated a year later excluded America. This obviously puts pressure on the regional stakeholders. "The strategic choices that the United States and China make will shape the contours of the emerging global order. It is natural for big powers to compete. But it is their capacity for cooperation that is the true test of statecraft", wrote Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong in a recent article in The Foreign Affairs journal, which extensively dealt with the raging acrimony between the two big powers. "The Asia-Pacific countries do not wish to be forced to choose between the United States and China. They want to cultivate good relations with both", he added. No less-important regional powers like India, Japan and Australia, together with their ASEAN neighbours, must watch the unfolding rivalry carefully and closely.

The economic and security heft of the United States is critical to what President Obama termed as the 'Asian Rebalance'. Without the American reassurance, nuclear threshold countries like Japan and South Korea may be tempted to cross that threshold, thus jeopardising regional security further. On its part, China has to rewind its policy by twenty years to Jiang Zemin's time when the Chinese leadership was sincerely reassuring its Asian neighbours – the 'Near Abroad' as the Chinese describe it – and the rest of the world about its intentions of a 'peaceful rise'. That had earned China a smooth entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1999 and allowed it an opportunity to exploit global markets. In just two decades time China emerged as the world's largest economy in terms of its GDP on purchasing power parity (PPP) and second largest in nominal GDP.

Xi Jinping wants regional powers in Asia to take control of the affairs of the region. As a principle it sounds logical. However, given the experience of several countries in the region with China in the past, it actually echoes China's *Tianxia* worldview in which the Chinese emperor, sitting in the *Zhongguo* – Middle Kingdom – would rule over "all people under heaven". The regional powers want their relationship with China on the basis of 'sovereign equality'. Decades ago, when this was being challenged, the South East Asian countries came together and formed the ASEAN to deal with a bigger and mightier China. As China grew even bigger, it is imperative for all the important regional powers to come together

ensuring that the region doesn't become a battlefield for a new Cold War on one hand and one dominated by China on the other. Regional collaborative initiatives that include all major powers like India, Japan, ASEAN and Australia are crucial to the peaceful management of this most happening region of the century.

India is an important power in this region. Just as the centrality of the ASEAN to the Indo-Pacific cannot be overlooked, centrality of India to the Indian Ocean too cannot be underplayed. India has a stated policy of Act East from the time of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's regime in early 1990s. However, it doesn't seem to fully realise the potential and significance awaiting it to the East of its geography. Indian approach still remains largely Westward ho. Indian system should appreciate the fact that what France and Germany are to it today, Vietnam and Indonesia will be tomorrow.

Indian diplomacy has to pull its socks up to play a greater role in the region. Prime Minister Modi laid out his vision at the Shangri La address in 2017. It has to shed its reticence and move in that direction quickly and strategically. Seasoned diplomats easily understand what James Mattis meant when he told the American Congress as the Commander of the U.S. Central Command: "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately." If diplomacy doesn't get priority, defence will be forced to. It may be pertinent to recall that India began its global diplomacy with the Asian Relations Conference hosted by Jawahar Lal Nehru in March 1947. It was from there that the policy of non-alignment took roots. These twin principles – proactive engagement with Asian neighbours and non-alignment – remained benchmarks for Indian diplomacy ever since.

There is no better time for India to recommit itself to these benchmarks; and no better opportunity than the Indo-Pacific.

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Australia's view of the Indo-Pacific Concept

David Brewster*

This article explores Australia's adoption of the Indo-Pacific concept in light of its strategic challenges. For several decades the idea of the Asia Pacific as Australia's region has provided a foundation for a successful strategy for providing security and economic prosperity for Australia. But growing strategic interactions between the Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres, driven by China's growing economic, political and military power and India's emergence as a major regional power, now requires a broader concept of Australia's region. This article concludes that the concept of the Indo-Pacific as a region provides Australia with an opportunity to develop a more cohesive national strategy that better integrates its strategic imperatives to find security in a stable and prosperous neighbourhood.

Australia's role in building the "Asia Pacific" as a region

Before considering the implications of Australia's approach to the Indo-Pacific, it is necessary to understand its previous approach to the "Asia Pacific" as a region. Since its establishment in 1901, Australia's strategic perspectives have been primarily directed northwards, towards potential threats emanating from northeast Asia and through the Southeast Asian archipelago. Australia has long seen itself as principally a Pacific Ocean state. European settlement of the Australian continent from the early 1800s was largely focused on the fertile southeast. As a result, the three major cities in the southeast of Australia, Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, represent almost 50 percent of Australia's population, and altogether the eastern states and territories constitute more than 80 percent of Australia's population. Through the latter part of the twentieth century, Australia's key economic, political, and strategic relationships in the region—including with the US, Japan and China—were all in the Pacific Ocean, or in current parlance, in the "Asia Pacific."

The Australian continent straddles the Indian and Pacific Ocean and, indeed, it has by far the longest Indian Ocean coastline of any country. But only a small proportion of Australia's population lives on the western side of the Australian continent, and its political, defence and security relationships in the Indian Ocean are relatively undeveloped.

Australia's longstanding strategic focus on the Pacific lay behind its past enthusiastic support for the idea of the "Asia Pacific" as a way of defining its region. The idea of the Asia Pacific has been one of the most important mental maps for Australia over the last several decades, forming an almost ubiquitous part of Australia's thinking about the world. However, despite its ubiquity, the idea of the Asia-Pacific as a region is a relatively recent one, and one that was intentionally constructed. The concept of the Asia Pacific was initially pushed during the 1970s and 1980s by countries such as Japan and Australia, who feared a possible US disengagement from East Asia in

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the wake of its defeat in the Vietnam War. Both countries wanted to better bind the United States with what they hoped would become a politically stable and economically vibrant East Asia.

Although principally driven by economic opportunities, for Australia, the idea of the Asia Pacific has always had a strong underlying security element – that of keeping the US engaged in Asia as a benign offshore balancer and the main security provider to the region. The concept of the "Asia Pacific" also gave Australia an opportunity to bind itself closer to East Asia as a "Pacific" nation, if not necessarily an "Asian" one. These motivations remain compelling. Australia has successfully used the concept of the Asia Pacific as a region to tie itself much more closely to East Asia, helping Australia to find security *in* a more prosperous region.

Although the concept of the Asia Pacific included the United States, it did not include India or the great majority of other Indian Ocean littoral states. Consistent with the boundaries of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping, Australia's mental map of the Asia Pacific never extended to South Asia or beyond. This mental dividing line between the "Asia Pacific" and "Indian Ocean" regions reflected late twentieth century understandings of the relative lack of strategic interactions between those two theatres.

The development of a clear "mental map" of the Asia Pacific as a cohesive space considerably helped Australia to establish unified, whole-of-government policies towards that region. Australian policymakers also have a clear mental map of the Pacific islands, which has been an important driver behind the development of unified policies towards that sub-region. For decades, Australia has also pursued a clear and comprehensive southern strategy including the Southern Ocean and Antarctica (over which it has territorial claims of more than 40 percent of that landmass) that has successfully de-securitised that space through emphasising peaceful environmental and scientific cooperation with other interested states.[1]

But, in contrast, Australia has not yet formulated a comprehensive strategic view of the Indian Ocean region.[2] Its mental map of the Indian Ocean has long been in the nature of an essential trading highway connecting Australia with the Persian Gulf and Europe rather than a region in which Australia should be developing key partnerships. But the Indian Ocean region is becoming increasingly important in Australian strategic planning. Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper assessed that the Indian Ocean would have greater strategic significance in the period to 2030 and would eventually join the Pacific in terms of its centrality to Australia's maritime strategy and defence planning.[3] Similarly, the 2016 Defence White Paper, notes that "The Indian Ocean has become an important focus for Australian strategic policy in recent years," and that it is also likely to become a more significant zone of competition among major powers[4]. Other official statements[5] also stress the importance of the Indian Ocean region but none of them provide a useful road map for Australia's engagement in that region.

Consequences of the Indo-Pacific construct for Australia's regional strategy

The "Indo-Pacific" strategic construct, in which the Indian and Pacific oceans are seen as

an increasingly interdependent strategic and economic space, is fundamentally changing the way Australia thinks about its broader region.[6] Among other things, it is spurring the development of a more cohesive and unified regional strategy having regard to Australia's competing strategic imperatives.

As noted, traditionally, the Pacific and Indian Oceans have been seen as largely separate strategic spheres. East Asia and the Pacific operated with one set of economic, political and security dynamics, and South Asia and the Indian Ocean with another. Strategic interactions between the two theatres were relatively limited, partly reflecting the limited economic, political, and military reach of important countries in East Asia and the Indian Ocean. Until recently, China, Japan and South Korea had little political, economic or security presence in the Indian Ocean region and India had little presence in the Pacific.

But this is now changing, led by the expansion of the economic and security interests of China, Japan and other East Asian states into the Indian Ocean and India's growing role in the Pacific. As a result, it is no longer sufficient to put the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean theatres in separate boxes in understanding major power interactions, especially in the maritime realm. There was a growing realisation among many Australian strategic thinkers that Australia needed a more unified strategic perspective of the long Asian littoral that stretches from Vladivostok to the Persian Gulf.

Shinzo Abe may have been the first regional leader to talk about the idea of the Indo-Pacific when he talked about the 'confluence of the seas' in an address to the Indian Parliament in 2007, but Australian officials have been among the most enthusiastic promoters of the concept. Australia's 2013 Defence White Paper represented the first official adoption of the Indo-Pacific region by any country, when it noted what it called, "the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a single strategic arc" which Australia must concern itself with, with Southeast Asia lying at its center.[7] Indeed, in retrospect, it seems obvious that Australia, sitting between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, should understand the long Asian littoral in unified strategic terms.

The adoption of the Indo-Pacific as Australia's self-identified strategic space has significant consequences for Australia's future interactions with that space. First, it can help provide a better understanding of Australia's likely role in any future confrontation between China and the United States and its allies and partners. Second, it can better frame the scope of Australia's relationships with key regional security partners such as Japan, France and India. Third, the identification of the Indo-Pacific as Australia's region can help in the development of a unified regional security strategy, principally focused on the maritime realm. Fourth, an Indo-Pacific strategy can be used to provide a conceptual basis for the development of broader relationships with countries in the Indian Ocean. Fifth, an Indo-Pacific strategy can help prioritise Australia's allocation of defence resources between its commitments in the Middle East and commitments towards its closer neighbourhood. Each of these consequences will be discussed in turn.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific allows us to better understand Australia's future strategic role in the region. Australia has an important role in the

Indo-Pacific strategies being pursued by the US and other countries such as Japan, India, and France, which are all seeking to address the challenges caused by China's rising power. Decades ago, Australia had the good fortune of finding itself on the geographical periphery of the Cold War. Then, the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies was focused on central Europe, the North Atlantic, and Northeast Asia. The Indian Ocean and South Pacific largely lay on the periphery of that confrontation. Although Australia found security through a close security alliance with the United States, it was able to avoid becoming a member of an integrated military alliance in the nature of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or the US-Japan alliance. Its position, far from key areas of potential conflict between the superpowers, meant that Australia was also able to avoid hosting foreign military forces on its soil in any significant numbers.

In contrast, future rivalry between China and the US and its allies and partners will involve Australia much more directly. The Australian homeland is also under threat, if likely not through conventional military means. In recent years, China has attempted to project power directly into the Australian homeland through cyberattacks, trade threats, efforts to control the large Chinese diaspora and (largely ineffective) attempts to interfere with domestic politics.[8] These developments have raised the stakes considerably for Australia and has provoked a sharp response from the Australian government. The Australia-China bilateral relationship is now at its lowest point in more than 50 years.[9]

Importantly, Australia's geographic position at the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans means that it, along with countries such as Indonesia, will act as a gatekeeper for the movement of trade and military forces between those theatres. A US naval analyst described the geographic positions of Australia, Japan and India vis-à-vis China as like a "baseball diamond", where Australia is the "home plate" while Japan and India are first and third bases.[10] Australia's geography and other strategic characteristics mean that it will likely play a much more active role in any potential future confrontation with China, as compared with the role it played during the Cold War. The hosting of a US marine contingent to Darwin may be the harbinger of the stationing of significant US naval and air forces on Australian soil, potentially including a revived US 'First Fleet'.[11] This would assist the United States to rapidly swing naval and air forces between the Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres. Australian analyst, Andrew Carr, has called the use of Australia by US forces as a base to project power into Asia the "MacArthur Model" (by analogy with the US use of Australia during the Pacific War), in contrast with the somewhat different US-Australia relationship since that time.[12] Australia may soon see the return of the MacArthur Model as a security partner of the United States.

Australia's status as a significant regional military power, with small but sophisticated armed forces, a powerful navy, and—importantly—a historical willingness to project power at long distances, also makes it an attractive security partner for many countries. The shift in Australia's strategic perspectives from one focused

(separately) on the Asia Pacific and the Middle East to a more unified view of the Indo-Pacific also has some crucial implications for Australian relationships in the region. A more unified understanding of Australia's area of strategic interest affects Australian perspectives on its other alliance partnerships in the Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres. In recent years, Australia has moved to develop a closer and more direct security relationship with Japan, which includes enhanced cooperation throughout the Indo-Pacific, including in Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. Australia and France have also been enhancing their security relationship with an eye to how they can contribute to each other's security across the Indo-Pacific.

The shift in Australian strategic perspectives to the Indo-Pacific has particular implications for its approach to the Indian Ocean. Some important security challenges in the Indian Ocean, particularly the security of vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs) across it, need to be approached through understanding the dynamics of strategic competition among major Indo-Pacific powers. There is a significant likelihood that a major interruption to the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean would be connected, directly or indirectly, to developments elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific. This means that in many cases, a localised response by Australia would be inadequate. In addition, Australia may be in a better position to approach new security challenges in the Middle East/West Asia with support from or coordination with other security relationships within the Indo-Pacific region, such as India. Australia may find that India could be a valuable new security partner in that part of the world.

Thus, the Indo-Pacific concept can be used to give greater coherence to Australia's defence strategy. Since the official adoption of the Indo-Pacific concept in the 2013 Defence White Paper, Australia's defence strategy has been understood to be a national *maritime* strategy[13] undertaken in a predominantly *maritime* environment.[14] This has important implications for the allocation of defence resources. Maritime security now receives the lion's share of defence funding, and the Australian navy is now undergoing its biggest recapitalisation since at least World War II.

Further, by combining the Indian and Pacific Oceans into a single maritime zone, the Indo-Pacific concept calls for a systematic strategy of responding to threats against Australia's interests across the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions. Thus, for example, the ongoing rebalancing of the Australian naval fleet from its east coast towards Fleet Base West near Fremantle, Western Australia, which in coming years will include most of Australia's new submarine fleet and the forward deployment of Australia's new air warfare destroyers, should not merely be measured by Australia's strategic needs in the Indian Ocean. The strategic value of Fremantle port should not be understood by its location on the Indian Ocean, but rather due to its relative proximity to much of the Indo-Pacific littoral compared with major ports on Australia's east coast. Enhanced use of Fremantle makes considerable sense for enhancing the ability of the Australian Navy (and potentially also US fleet units based there in future) to quickly swing naval resources between the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres. The ability to quickly swing resources between the Pacific and

Indian Ocean theatres will become increasingly vital for Australia and its regional partners.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific also provides a useful framework for approaching Australia's strategic relationships with India and other Indian Ocean states, which may be profoundly different from Australia's past approach to countries in that theatre. The development of the Australia-India relationship in recent years reflects not only a recognition of shared interests between the two countries in the Indian Ocean but also much more broadly across the Indo-Pacific. That supports the idea that the two countries should be seeking out potential areas for security cooperation, and particularly maritime security cooperation, in the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific.

The Indo-Pacific concept also provides some valuable pointers for the geographic allocation of Australia's defence resources. The huge size of the Indian Ocean creates real dangers of the diffusion of its limited resources if Australia was to pursue ocean-wide engagement indiscriminately. Accordingly, Australia's Indo-Pacific strategy will likely force it to place a particular focus on countries in the eastern half of the Indian Ocean, such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.[15] Several countries in the eastern Indian Ocean could be the source of significant security risks such as violent extremism, political instability, or large unregulated population movements, as well as significant economic opportunities. Those risks and opportunities will increasingly require Australian agencies to give Southern Asian/Bay of Bengal states such as India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh no less priority in engagement than is currently given by Canberra to many ASEAN countries. Nevertheless, Australia will also need to continue to politically engage in the western Indian Ocean in conjunction with the US and strategic partners such as India, France and Japan.[16]

The development of substantive security partnerships with India and other key states on the southern Asian littoral would represent a significant departure from Australia's past approach. Previously, Australia would frequently deploy military forces from Australia to the Middle East, transiting Indian Ocean waters secured by the British or US navies without much regard for the countries lying in between. But Australia's future defence presence in the Indian Ocean region will increasingly involve a greater continuum of regional relationships. The current reduction of the Australian naval presence in the Persian Gulf/ northwest Indian Ocean from a more or less full-time presence to the deployment of a frigate for six months per year is allowing the Australian navy to re-allocate resources to the eastern Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and South Pacific. This was demonstrated by the 2019 Exercise *Indo Pacific Endeavour* which involved the tour of the largest Australian fleet to South Asia since at least World War II.[17]

The redefinition of Australia's key strategic space will likely require Australia to juggle with several regional concepts such as the "Asia Pacific," the "Indo-Pacific," the "Indian Ocean," and even the "Eastern Indian Ocean", each of which may be useful for different purposes. Despite its name, the "Indo-Pacific" does not provide an all-encompassing and exclusive framework for

Australia's engagement across the entire Pacific Ocean or Indian Ocean theatres. This means that Australia will need to work with several regional concepts at the same time and will also need to be comfortable in working with partners that have different geographic conceptions of the Indo-Pacific, reflecting their own location, history and strategic needs. India, for example, has a much greater focus than Australia on the security of the western Indian Ocean and East African littoral, for obvious reasons.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific does not involve a simple agglomeration of the entire Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres, which makes little sense. From Australia's perspective, it would not be meaningful or practical to combine the entire Pacific and Indian Ocean theatres, including the space from, say, Peru to Madagascar. Rather, the Indo-Pacific must be primarily understood as a functional rather than just a purely geographical concept involving sharp lines on a map.

Conclusion

As a huge country with a relatively small population, Australia has long struggled to meet the strategic imperatives it has regarded as essential to its defence and security. For more than a century, its need to support its great power allies, its desire to help build a secure region, and its imperative to defend the continental homeland have been undertaken in a relatively disaggregated manner. Australia's defence forces have frequently found themselves whipsawed between commitments in the Middle East, West Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, the Pacific, and Australia's northeast maritime approaches.

Australia's changing conception of its principal region, from the Asia Pacific to the Indo-Pacific makes considerable sense in understanding and responding to various regional security challenges. There are several potential consequences of Australia's identification of the Indo-Pacific as its principal strategic space. One is in highlighting Australia's likely role in future rivalry or confrontation between China and the US and its allies. Australia's location between the Pacific and Indian Oceans makes it an important piece of real estate in any future conflict that spans both those oceans.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific is also a valuable framing device for Australia's relationships with key regional security partners such as Japan, France and India. It will increasingly find itself working with so-called "like-minded" security partners on a pan-regional basis.

The concept of the Indo-Pacific will also help Australia develop a unified regional security strategy which is principally focused on the maritime realm. The Indo-Pacific prioritises the importance of the maritime realm and the littoral states of the Asian continent, and tends to de-emphasise continental concerns.

The Indo-Pacific also provides a valuable conceptual basis for the development of broader security relationships with countries in the Indian Ocean. For most of its history, Australia has given little priority to security relationships in the Indian Ocean. The relative decline of US naval predominance will force Australia to build more productive security relationships in the Indian Ocean region, beginning with India and other selected states on the southern Asian littoral.

Finally, the concept of the Indo-Pacific will

help to prioritise the allocation of Australia's defence resources across the extended region. In particular, it can be a valuable tool in juggling Australia's military commitments in the Middle East with its commitments towards its closer neighbourhood.

In some ways, the concept of a "region" might be seen as the drawing of arbitrary lines to divide indivisible landmasses and oceans. But our "mental maps," the way we carve up the world around us into useable pieces, can have significant consequences for the real world. Australia's adoption of the Indo-Pacific as the principal guide towards its strategic space will likely have significant consequences for Australia's strategic interactions with the world around it.

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FOCUS

Indo-Pacific: The Emerging Geo-Strategic Landscape-A Japanese Perspective

Satoru Nagao*

Introduction

The idea of connecting the Pacific and the Indian Oceans emerged during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech in the Indian parliament in 2007[1]. He emphasised the idea because he wanted to highlight the importance of India. The "Indo-Pacific" is the concept instead of the "Asia-Pacific," which did not include India. Recently, improved cooperation between India and Japan has become more evident. India and Japan have been increasing their diplomatic exchanges, joint exercises of their armed forces, and seeking joint infrastructure projects. However, deep India-Japan relations have not always naturally occurred because of geographical and geopolitical distance. For example, according to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 37,933 non-resident Indians (NRIs) live in Japan (MEA). And Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that about 9,838 Japanese lived in India in 2018.[2] However, 1,280,000 NRIs and 446,925 Japanese are living in the US. 241,000 NRIs and 98,436 Japanese are living in Australia. And 55,500 NRIs and 120,076 Japanese live in China. Compared with these numbers, India and Japan have relatively few people-to-people exchanges. Therefore, it is logical to ask why the relations of India-Japan have progressed recently.

India-Japan relations have grown closer since end of the 2000s, when China's activities began to grow and were perceived as a threat to India and Japan. And India-Japan security relations have developed faster than economic relations. In addition, India-Japan bilateral relations have developed alongside multilateral relations, including with the US and Australia. As a result, this article focuses on the China factor in India-Japan relations and looks at three issues: What has happened since 2000s? What can India-Japan cooperation do? And, how does India-Japan cooperation affect relations with the US and Australia?

What has happened?

Let us take a look at three areas: The sea around Japan, the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The Sea around Japan

For Japan, the Chinese submarines are a threat to Japan's SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. But at the same time, the main concerning points are China's activities in the sea around Japan. For some years now, Beijing has been expanding its military activities near Japan. For example, in 2004, a Chinese nuclear attack submarine violated Japan's territorial seas in the East China Sea. China has also been carrying out naval exercises on the

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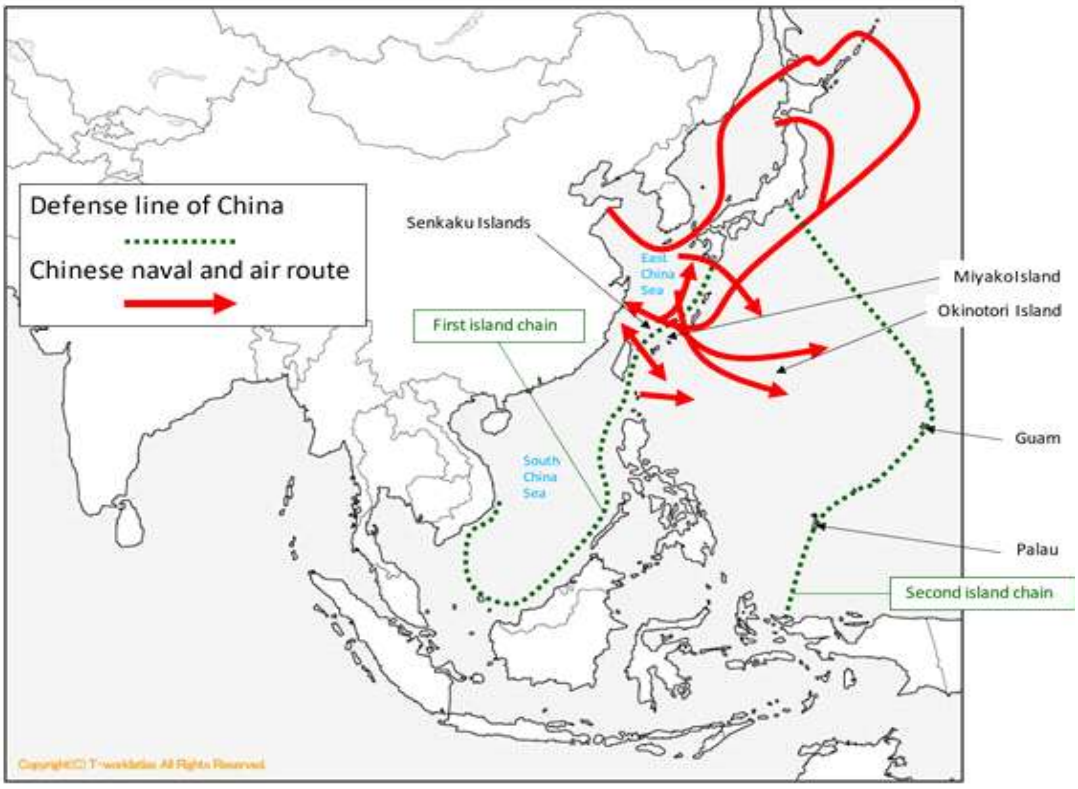
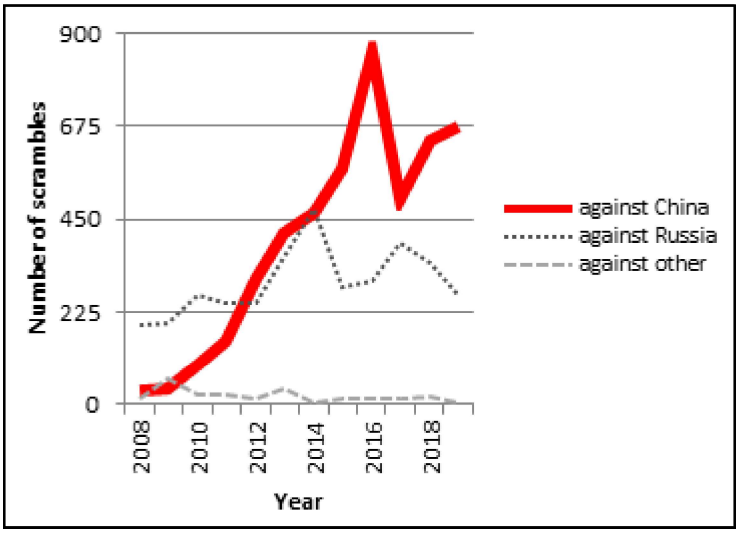
Pacific side of Japan since 2008, as is show in Figure 1 below.



Source: Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2020

Figure 2: Number of scrambles of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force

The Chinese air force has also been expanding its activities. In 2013, Japan's Ministry of Defense white paper pointed out that, "in FY 2012, the number of scrambles against Chinese aircrafts exceeded the number of those against the Russian aircrafts for the first time." In 2016, the number of scrambles against Chinese aircraft further increased to 851. This decreased to 500 in FY 2017, but the number rose to 638 in FY 2018 and 675 in FY 2019 (see Figure 2).



Source: Joint Staff, Ministry of Defense of Japan, 202

The South China Sea

From Japan's point of view, the situation in the South China Sea is a serious matter. While in 2016 the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague rejected China's claim to ownership of 90 percent of the South China Sea, Beijing is ignoring the verdict and building three new airports on seven artificial islands in the South China Sea. This has provoked Japanese concern, and Prime Minister Abe, in an article published in 2012, just two days before he was sworn in as prime minister, noted that, "increasingly, the South China Sea seems set to become a 'Lake Beijing,' which analysts say will be to China what the Sea of Okhotsk was to Soviet Russia: a sea deep enough for the People's Liberation Army's navy to base their nuclear-powered attack submarines, capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads"[3]. His statement pointed out to the possibility of China deploying ballistic missile submarines under the protection of fighter jets launched from these artificial islands, and excluding all foreign ships and airplanes that might identify their submarines.[4] Abe pointed out that, "if Japan were to yield, the South China Sea would become even more fortified."[5]

The Indian Ocean

China has expanded its activities in the Indian Ocean, which has caused concern for India. Beijing insisted on solving its "Malacca Dilemma"—that it must avoid excessive dependence on the Malacca Strait, which is a strategic shipping lane for China's oil and is controlled by the US Navy. As a result, China is creating alternative routes such as a Middle East-Pakistan-Xinjiang Uyghur route and a Middle East-Myanmar-China route. These are a core part of China's Belt and Road Initiatives.

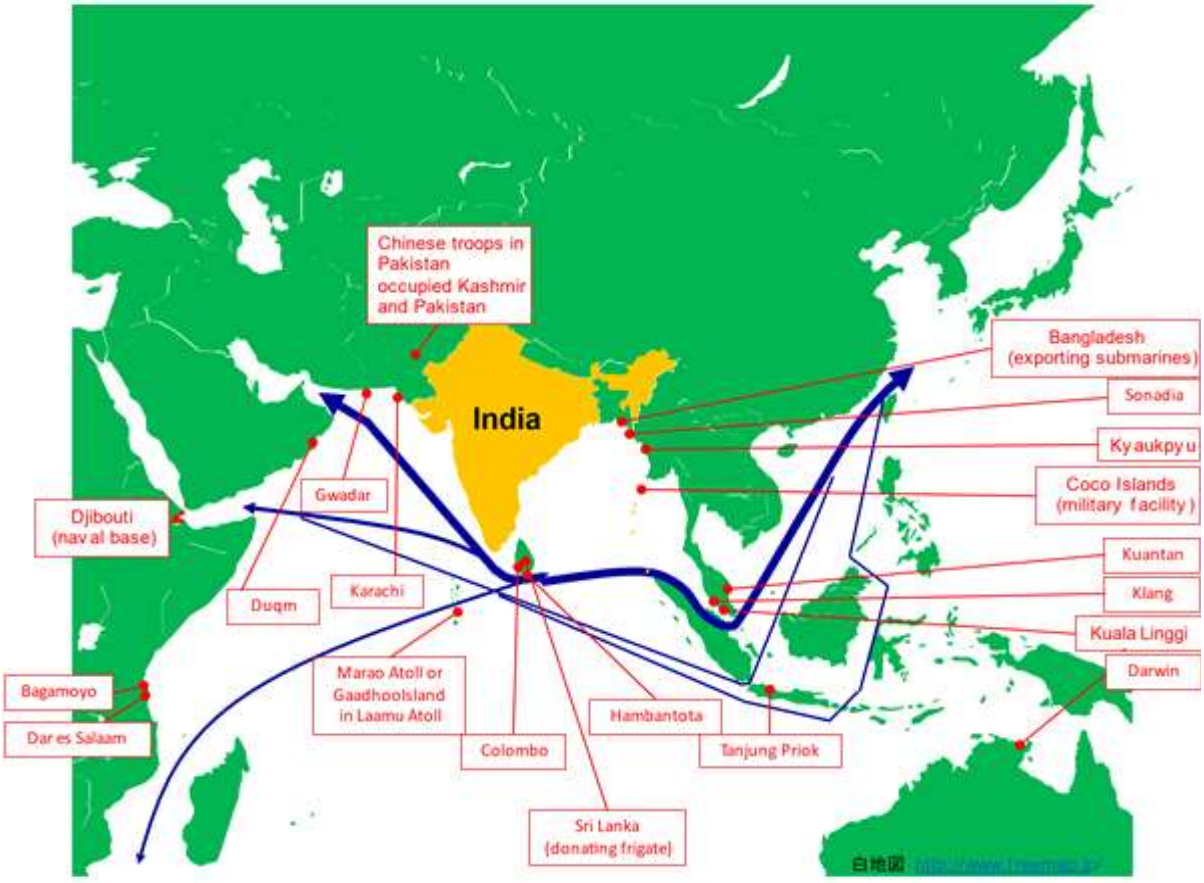
On one hand, Beijing is investing in developing ports such as Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar in the Indian Ocean. Because of the sheer size of China's investments and the 6-8 percent interest rates it charges on loans, these countries now have enormous debts (the World Bank and Asia Development Bank, in contrast, charge 0.25-3 percent).[6] With Hambantota, Sri Lanka was unable to repay its loan. It thus became a victim of China's "debt diplomacy" and in December 2017 handed over the port to China as part of a 99-year lease agreement.

In the meantime, in order to secure sea routes, China has started to expand its military forces in the region. China expanded its military activities in the Indian Ocean since 2009, when it joined anti-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia. Chinese submarines have patrolled since 2012, and the Chinese surface fleet has called at ports in all the countries around India, including Pakistan, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. According to Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of Naval Staff, Indian Navy, Beijing has deployed 6-8 warships in the Indian Ocean,[7] while in Pakistan, it has started to deploy ground forces. Referring to China's operation of the Hambantota port, some raise concerns that if the Chinese navy begins to use civil-purpose ports as naval supply bases, China could overcome its weakness, which is its lack of a naval port in the region.

In addition, China also exports submarines to countries around India. Bangladesh received two in 2016, and Pakistan decided to import eight Chinese submarines for its navy. In particular, Islamabad's willingness to possess nuclear submarines must not be overlooked. Because it lacks the technology, there is a reasonable possibility that China will support such "indigenous" nuclear submarines to counter India.

The activities of these submarines indicate that they could potentially attack India's nuclear ballistic missile submarines, aircraft carriers, and sea lines of communication (SLOCs). This means that these submarines will, to a great extent, regulate India's activities (Figure 3).

Figure 3: China's activities in the Indian Ocean



Source: author

The India-China border area

Since 2000, China has been developing infrastructure projects in the India-China border area, increasing the number of strategic roads, trains, tunnels, bridges, and airports. The military balance in the India-China border is changing because of China's rapid military infrastructure modernisation. Along with these infrastructure projects, Beijing has started to deploy more armed forces in the area. In 2011, India recorded 213 incursions in the India-China border area, but in the following years, the numbers were larger: 426 in 2012, 411 in 2013, 460 in 2014, 428 in 2015, 296 in 2016, 473 in 2017, 404 in 2018, and 663 in 2019.

China is deploying troops in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan where a part of the China-Pakistan economic corridor, which is a core project of the Belt and Road Initiative, is situated.[8] Beijing is also developing infrastructure projects to connect to Nepal. It has entered the Doklam heights, claimed by both China and Bhutan, insisting on building a new road to deploy more forces. This led to Indian and Chinese armed forces facing each other in a standoff along the 3,500 km India-China border (including the Line of Actual Control, a line separating the territory controlled by India from the territory controlled by China).

And in 2020, the situation escalated further. China entered the India side in the spring and the two sides clashed in June. At least 20 Indian soldiers sacrificed their lives (the Chinese did not publish any losses). After that, China continued to redeploy fighter jets and missiles from other areas of China. For example, China moved H-6 bombers that can employ cruise missiles from Wugong to Golmud and Kashgar[9]. China also deployed DF-21 missiles to Kailash Mansaravar[10] (DF-21s use new types of warheads that the US and Japan cannot intercept through missile defense systems). At the Hotan air base, China has been increasing heavy fighters and bombers such as the J-11 and J-16. Also at the Hotan base, many other types of military aircraft such as the Y-8G electronic reconnaissance aircraft, the KJ-500 early warning aircraft, and the CH-4 drone were present.[11] The latest J-20 stealth fighter jets are also deployed.[12] To protect these airfields and missiles, China is deploying Su-300 surface-to-air missiles.[13] To deal with China's build-up, India has repeatedly conducted missile tests. In six weeks (September to October), India conducted more than 12 missile tests.[14]

What can India-Japan cooperation do?

What effect can India-Japan cooperation have on this kind of Chinese aggression? If history is any guide, the motive behind China's maritime expansion is based on military balance. For example, when France withdrew from Vietnam in the 1950s, China occupied half of the Paracel Islands. In 1974, immediately after the Vietnam War ended and the US withdrew from the region, China occupied the other half. In 1988, after the Soviet withdrawal from Vietnam, China attacked the Spratly Islands, controlled by Vietnam. Along similar lines, after the US withdrawal from the Philippines, China occupied Mischief Reef, claimed by both the Philippines and Vietnam (Ministry of Defense of Japan, 2020). Whenever China found

a power vacuum created by a changing military balance, it exploited it and expanded its territories. Maintaining a military balance to avoid creating a power vacuum will counter China's strategy. And if India and Japan (and the US and Australia) cooperate with each other, there are at least three methods to maintain military balance.

The India-China border and the East China Sea

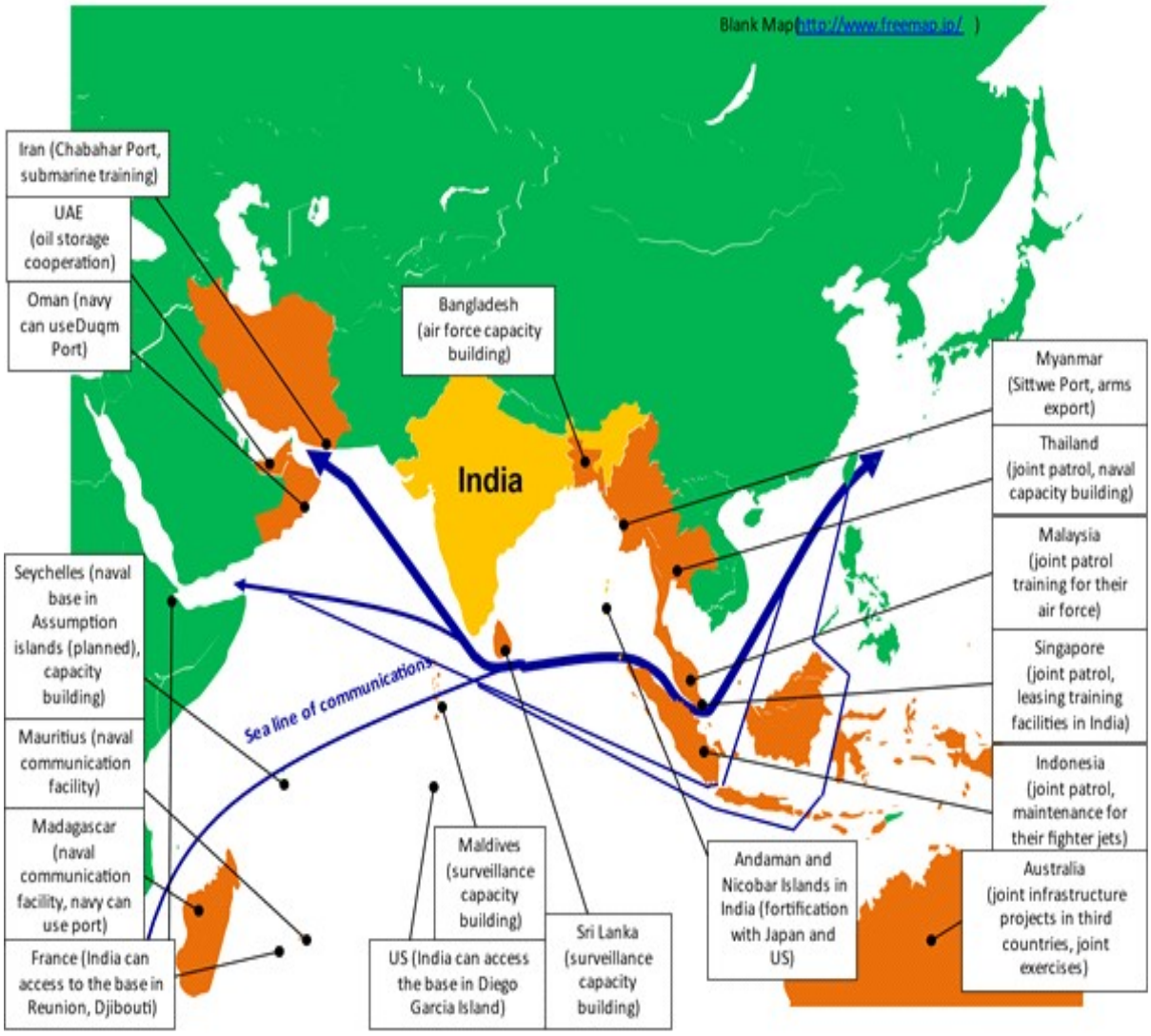
First, we should focus on the linkage of the India-China border area and the East China Sea. For example, if India cooperates with Japan (and the US), India will not need to deal with all the Chinese fighter jets and missiles at once because China is likely to keep some of its fighter jets and missiles in its east side against Japan, and vice versa. China's defence budget is also divided among its east front against Japan and its southern front against India. Therefore, by using its know-how of high-end military infrastructural development, Japan can support India's efforts to modernise its defence in the India-China border area. Since 2014, Japan has invested in India's strategic road project in the northeast region of India. By using this road, the Indian army can deploy more forces and supplies to the border area. And as mentioned above, in 2018, India and Japan started joint development of unmanned ground vehicles. These unmanned ground vehicles are useful along the India-China border where conditions are too harsh for people to stay in the winter.

In addition, India-Japan cooperation can have some effect in the event of an India-China crisis. Dispatching the Izumo-class helicopter carrier with a US aircraft carrier during the Malabar Exercise in 2017, and the statement of support for India from the Japanese ambassador, achieved good results in the Doklam crisis in 2017.[15] A similar situation occurred in 2020. Japan can use similar measures in a future crisis. In addition, as a good means to dissuade China, Japan should draw China's attention toward Japan instead of toward India. For example, if Japan deployed the Self Defense Forces (SDF) in the Senkaku Islands, China would deploy more forces to Japan rather than to India.

The security burden in the Indian Ocean

Second, if India has the will and capabilities, Japan, US and Australia will be able to release themselves from the heavy burden to safeguard security in the Indian Ocean and can deploy more military force in the East China Sea and the South China Sea to maintain military balance. And India can set the key role in the Indian Ocean. Recently, India has shown its presence actively (Figure 4). India will be a new hope for Japan. Japan should share the know-how related to anti-submarine capabilities and enhance India's capability as a security provider. In the "Japan-India Joint Statement Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific" in September 2017, "They noted the ongoing close cooperation between the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the Indian Navy in various specialised areas of mutual interest, including anti-submarine aspects."[16]

Figure 4: India's presence in the Indian Ocean



*The figure was made by the author

India-Japan infrastructure cooperation is a useful method to neutralise China's influence in the Indian Ocean Region. The Hambantota port in Sri Lanka had no alternative to a "debt diplomacy" offer from China: the threat of sanctions and war crimes charges in the wake of Sri Lanka's civil war meant that China was the only country willing to provide it with massive investment. Beijing thus created a huge debt for Sri Lanka. This enabled Beijing to negotiate the 99-year lease of the Hanbantota port. India and Japan should offer an alternative. For example, Bangladesh has already chosen Japan's Matarbari port project instead of China's Sonadia project

(Figure 5), and thus it is possible that India and Japan can use a similar tactic.

Supporting Southeast Asia

Third, Japan and India can collaborate to support Southeast Asian countries around the South China Sea, which need to beef up their defence with a trustworthy partner that provides military support. Thus, Japan and India should collaborate with each other and support these countries more effectively. For example, Japan and India can collaborate to support Vietnam.

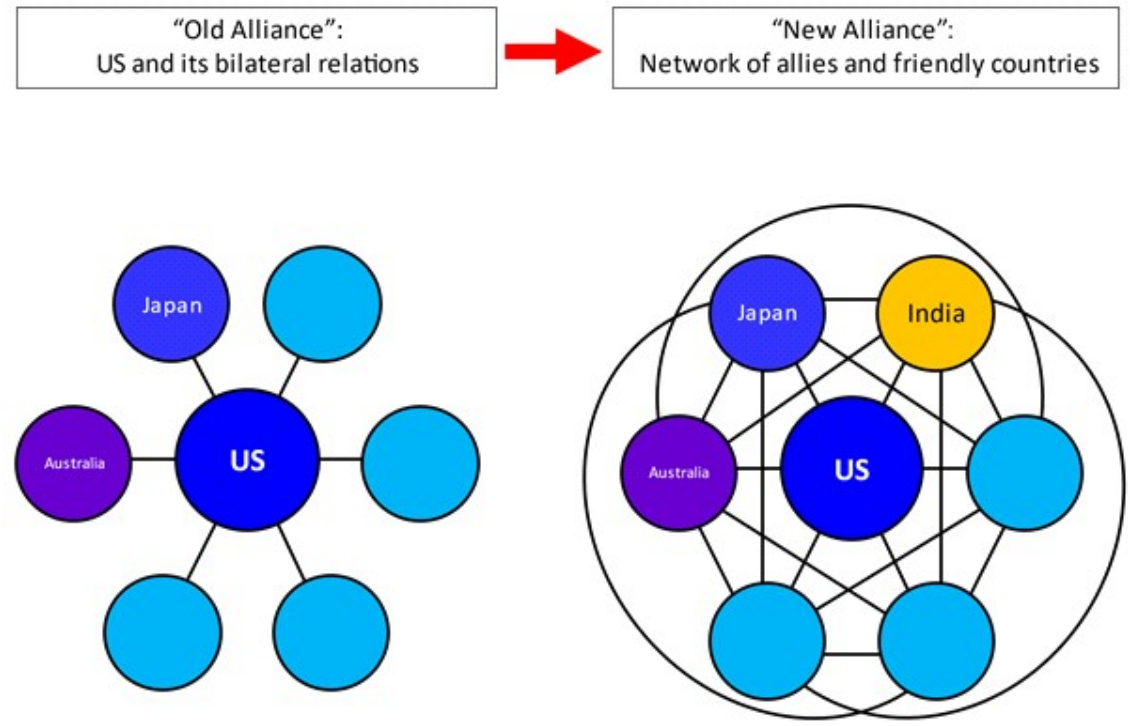
For India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are a gateway to connect with Southeast Asia. These islands are strategically important, as they are near the Malacca Strait and SLOCs. As described above, China's submarines venture into the Indian Ocean, sailing from China's Hainan Island through the South China Sea and choke points including the Malacca Strait. Therefore, to track China's submarine activities, the Andaman–Nicobar Islands are an excellent location. India is modernising its infrastructure to deploy large warships, patrol planes, and transport planes in the Andaman-Nicobar Islands. No detailed official report has been published, but some media reports indicate that India, Japan, and the US are planning to install a submarine detecting sensor system along the coastline of the Bay of Bengal.[17] Japan has also decided to support radar facilities and power plants in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Japan is also planning to build a light fibre cable connection between mainland India and these islands. Although these are civil projects to resolve electric power shortage difficulties, there is a high probability that the project will have strategic effects related to China.

Impact of India-Japan Cooperation on Relations with the US and Australia

As mentioned above, India-Japan cooperation has been a core part of the US-led security framework in the Indo-Pacific. And that framework itself has changed. After World War II, the "hub and spoke system"—US alliances with countries such as Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and South Korea—maintained order in the Indo-Pacific (Figure 5). Although the US formed alliances with many countries in East Asia, a close defence relationship was lacking among its allies. For example, both Japan and Australia are US allies, but during the Cold War, there were no close security relations between Japan and Australia. In such a context, Japan and Australia are dependent on US military power and information. The hub-and-spoke system would function effectively if the US had enough military resources to tackle all the problems in this region.

However, a salient feature of the recent security situation is the changing US–China military balance. For example, during 2000-19, the US commissioned 21 new submarines. During the same period, China commissioned at least 54 submarines. US allies and friendly countries need to fill the power vacuum to maintain military balance. As a result, a new security framework has emerged. This new framework is a security network of US allies and friendly countries, and includes not only US-led cooperation, but also India-Japan-Australia, India-Japan-Vietnam, India-Australia-Indonesia and India-Australia-France, all of which do not include the US. In this case, India-Japan security cooperation will be the key.

Figure 5: Old alliance and new alliance



Source: Satoru Nagao, "The Japan-India-Australia 'Alliance' as Key Agreement in the Indo-Pacific," ISPSW Strategy Series, September 2015, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193713/375_Nagao.pdf

Conclusion

Why have India-Japan relations progressed recently? As mentioned above, this article focuses on the China factor in India-Japan relations. And China has been escalating its assertive behaviour against both India and Japan. Maintaining military balance is vital to curbing China's activities. To do this, a new type of the Indo-Pacific security framework is establishing itself, one in which India-Japan cooperation plays a vital part.

What kind of tasks will India-Japan cooperation face? In light of the above analysis, there are at least three. First, it is important to deal with China's economic strength. Because China has enough money, it can modernise its military very rapidly. Because China has enough money, it can create debt in developing countries by leveraging the infrastructure projects of the Belt and Road Initiatives. Curbing the income of China will thus be vital. India's rising economy and Japan's number three world economic status could create an alternative market to China if there is enough cooperation. But the supply chains of both

countries are still very dependent on China. How to solve these difficulties will be an important challenge for India-Japan cooperation.

Second, under escalating US-China competition, the US has tried to institutionalise Quad cooperation. But compared with Europe, the Indo-Pacific region is far wider and more diverse. If one includes the sea between Indonesian islands, the size of the Indo-Pacific region is similar to that of the EU. How to institutionalise the framework will be the challenge for all involved countries, including India and Japan.

Third, opposition to China cannot be the only reason that India and Japan are connected. Therefore, for the long-term success of India-Japan cooperation, the two countries need to find another reason to maintain cordial and deep relations. During the Cold War, India-Japan relations did not develop well, and without strong efforts, their relations could return to that state. India-Japan relations have been developing at a very fast pace lately. This is the best chance for both India and Japan. Now is the time to act.

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India and Oceania: Potential and Opportunities

Cleo Paskal* and Lord Fakafanua*

Context

Oceania covers a large area of the Pacific part of the Indo-Pacific – roughly between Hawaii, Japan and New Zealand. In good times, this area is the bridge between Asia and the Americas. In bad times, it is the battle-zone. Many of these islands were on the front line of the Pacific Theatre during World War Two, and form parts of the Second and Third Island Chain hemming in China. It still hosts military installations, such as the American base in Guam and the French one in New Caledonia.

China needs to break through those island chains if it is to achieve strategic independence in the larger Indo-Pacific. It is trying to do that in part through gaining influence in the countries of the region, and has been focused on across-the-board engagement throughout Oceania. Partially as a result, other countries including the United States, Japan, and India are showing renewed interest in the region. The people of Oceania are finding themselves courted and pressured in ways they haven't seen since the era of European colonial expansion in the late 19th century.

As the leadership in Oceania weigh their options, one country that stands out to many as a potential game-changer is India. India seems keen to engage with Oceania, and Oceania is receptive, but movement is slow. The question is why, and what can be done about it?

What is Oceania?

Oceania covers approximately 1/6th of the planet's surface, and is home to around 10,000 islands, making up over twenty countries and territories (some also include Australia and/or New Zealand). As each habitable island can claim a 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), some of the countries cover vast areas. The republic of Kiribati, with a population of around only 1,20,000, has an EEZ approximately the size of all of India.

The main regional grouping is the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) consisting of Australia and New Zealand and 16 Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Nine of the 16 PICs are sovereign nations: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

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The other seven are linked to larger nations through differing agreements, though all have individual votes in at least some international fora. The ones more to the North - the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Marshall Islands, and Palau - have Compacts of Free Association with the United States, giving their citizens access to the US, and entailing close defence cooperation.

The Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau are in Free Association with New Zealand, and French Polynesia and New Caledonia are part of France. In fact over half of Frances' EEZ is in the Pacific. There are also locations that aren't part of PIF, such as the UK's Pitcairn Island, the US's Guam and Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, and France's Wallis and Futuna.

The economies and societies of the strategically important nations of Oceania vary considerably; though largely there are relatively high rates of literacy, and English language abilities. Only three of the independent PICs have militaries—Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga.

Strategic Environment

Until recent Chinese advances, the region was considered largely in the Western sphere of influence. However, after the end of the Cold War, the US and UK largely lost interest in the region, with the UK closing three High Commissions in countries in Oceania in 2006.

The bulk of Five Eyes 'oversight' in the central and southern part of the region - often referred to as Melanesia and Polynesia, and including countries such as Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa - passed to Australia and New Zealand - two countries which both had colonies and complex histories in the region. The northern part, including the US Freely Associated States such as Palau, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, still have substantial US influence, as well as increasing Japanese engagement.

Chinese engagement is growing rapidly, and is deep. China has five university-based Oceania research institutes and has delegated primary outreach to the region to Guangdong. This gives the government of Guangdong incentive to increase engagement as it will raise its profile with Beijing, as well as making the vast bureaucratic expanse of China more accessible to the governments of Oceania by having them pass through a smaller entry point with dedicated contacts.

Additionally, countries in Oceania that have signed on to the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) include the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu. The pace is accelerating. In September 2019, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands switched recognition from Taiwan to China and almost immediately afterwards they joined the BRI.

Australia and New Zealand themselves have become more enmeshed with China. In 2019-2020, 39% of Australian exports went to China. In 2019, 23% of New Zealand's goods and services exports went to China. New Zealand was the first Western country to agree to a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China, to sign on to Beijing's Asian Infrastructure Bank and it was the first Five Eyes country to join the BRI. Australia has begun a vocal pushback against Chinese influence, especially since COVID-19, but New Zealand is more quiet.

Growing Chinese influence is raising concern in capitals with a stake in the Indo-Pacific, including India, the US, Japan and others. As a result, there has been a flurry of activity. Australia and New Zealand, keen not to lose their position of perceived influence in the region, have announced reinvigorated polices. The UK has opened three new diplomatic missions; French leaders are visiting more often; Japan is putting much more emphasis on its Pacific Islands leaders and defence outreach; the United States is funding a massive Pacific Deterrence Initiative with a component for bolstering partners in Oceania; and India announced a new Oceania division in the MEA.

India and Oceania

Signs of an interest in Oceania began very early in the first term of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In an early demonstration of his new approach to foreign policy, including a highlighted role for the Indo-Pacific, he went to Fiji after the 2014 G20 Brisbane Summit. This made him the first Indian Prime Minister to visit in over three decades. While there, he met with leaders from fourteen PICs, and launched initiatives that were well thought out to show sincere interest in building relations. One that stood out was the announcement of e-visas on arrival in India.

Visas are a sensitive issue for many in Oceania. The process for getting even tourist visas to Australia, New Zealand and the United States is often difficult, expensive and occasionally humiliating. Conversely, many countries in Oceania have easy visa-free like access to the UK and Schengen zone and visa waivers for China. By making visas to India easy to obtain, PM Modi was showing in a very real way, trust and openness to the people of Oceania.

Another notable aspect of the visit was that two days later, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Fiji as well. However Xi could only meet leaders from eight PICs, rather than the fourteen who met PM Modi, as the others had relations with Taiwan. It demonstrated the lack of geopolitical baggage in working with India.

In August 2015, Modi hosted fourteen PIC leaders in India. A wide range of initiatives were announced, including PICs access to free Indian television and radio content, training for journalists, the setting up of India Centres (with books on India, etc.), renewable energy training and technical cooperation, the setting up of IT labs to facilitate e-education and e-medicine, cooperation with coastal surveillance, hydrology, coastal studies, disaster management, disaster early warning systems, fisheries, health camps, military-to-military cooperation, SME business support, diplomatic training, generic drug manufacturing, and more. However there was little follow up.

One problem was that MEA was overstretched and coverage of the region was fragmented. Only two of the fourteen PICs, Papua New Guinea and Fiji, had an Indian High Commission with no permanent Indian representation in the dozen other PICs. Responsibility for them was spread out over half-a-dozen or so different Indian missions, making coordination and institutionalisation of knowledge and contacts very difficult.

Additionally, within Oceania there was the perception that India was prioritising engagement with Fiji because of its ethnic Indian diaspora (approximately 38% of the population), and that

Delhi was using Indo-Fijians/Indian-Pacific islanders as their main regional interlocutors for similar reasons.

While there is local understanding for India's instinct to engage with its diaspora, there is exasperation at that being the perceived driver of foreign policy. One reason is that some elements of diaspora have a substantial amount of baggage, that India risks carrying along with them. For example, Indo-Fijian politician Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, holds so many government portfolios, including justice, economy, aviation, communication, public service and enterprises, climate change and anti-corruption, that he is known as 'Minister A-to-Z'.

He might seem like a good entry point, however in late 2020, it was announced he was being investigated in connection with politically-linked bomb blasts in 1987. There are also regional security concerns around potential radicalisation of some within the Indo-Fijian population. India should be careful and choose interlocutors who think like them rather than just look like them.

This is particularly important because, within Oceania, there is a very high desire for more engagement with India. The majority of the people of Oceania share the same values as most Indian, including faith, family, and education. And there are many economic crossovers, from village-scale economics, to the need for reasonably priced equipment and infrastructure that can withstand hot humid environments, to an aspirational middle class.

China's entry point is economic before mutating into strategic which in turn attracts others into the region. Engagement with India is seen as economic that evolves into creating more domestic security through providing affordable but reliable essentials such as education, health care, IT, printing, transportation and pharmaceuticals, along with affordable quality of life goods such as textiles, spices and décor.

So the desire is there on both sides, the question is how to make it work. In order to delve deeper into the constraints, we will look at a specific case study, the Kingdom of Tonga.

The Kingdom of Tonga

Tonga was chosen for a range of reasons. Its population of around 1,00,000 makes it a medium sized country by Oceania standards, and it has a literacy rate of close to 100%. Having never been colonised, it has long-standing and experienced foreign policy expertise.

Tonga's first modern era King, George Tupou I (1797 – 1893) deftly navigated his country through the era of colonial expansion in the Pacific. While other countries in the region were taken over by Germany, France, the UK, New Zealand and Australia, Tupou I balanced external powers in part through a carefully negotiated set of treaties that recognised it as an independent country (Germany in 1876, UK in 1879, and the United States in 1886). At the same time, he set up his country as a mirror of what would be found in the West. This included a Constitution (1875), a legal code, an English-style education system, commercial rights, a postal system, and even one of the world's earliest EEZ claims (by latitude and longitude). He also, in what Tongans refer to as Tonga's first treaty, "gave the country to God" – implying any country who tried to take it, was taking it from the Almighty.

This sense of independence combined with a

martial tradition (before the arrival of Europeans, Tongans had themselves colonised elsewhere in the Pacific, including parts of Fiji and Samoa) made it even less attractive as a European colonial target. When, in the early 1900s, New Zealand tried to convince the UK to let it take over Tonga, the understated response from the British was it would "raise difficulties".

Tonga also has a strong regional soft power network. As the last surviving Polynesian Kingdom in an area where familial status is valued, closeness to the Royal House of Tonga reflects standing. King Tupou II (1874 – 1918), carrying on a longstanding tradition, married some of his children into high-ranking Houses across the region as a foreign policy tool, creating enduring kinship relationships across the region.

Additionally, the Royal House gives Tonga international soft power, as it interacts with other Royal and Imperial Households, including in the UK, Japan, Thailand, New Zealand (Maori King) and the royal houses of the Middle East and India. At the 2015 Coronation of the current King of Tonga, guests included political leaders and representatives of chiefly houses from across Oceania, as well as the current Emperor of Japan. Tonga is unique in the region in this respect.

Tonga and the Indo-Pacific

In terms of defence, Tonga is one of only three countries in Oceania with its own military (the other two being Papua New Guinea and Fiji). It has been deployed in Afghanistan, does regular joint training exercises with a range of countries and is currently writing its first Defence White Paper.

Tonga switched recognition from Taiwan to China in 1998, following China's support of Tonga's membership in the United Nations. The government of Tonga has a substantial loan from China and signed on to the BRI. There are persistent Chinese interest in major infrastructure projects in the Kingdom, including a 'slipway' (China was keen to develop ports across the region). Tonga is typical in the region in that when pressed by Canberra and Wellington about working with China, one reply is that it needed the investment (planes, boats, roads, etc.), and if traditional partners haven't helped, why should they reject new partners.

Tonga, like most countries in the region, was not naïve; it just saw itself as having different priorities than Canberra and Wellington. Australia and New Zealand were perceived as wanting to 'secure' the region in order to enhance their own strategic value and for their own economic advantage. Meanwhile Tongan leaders were trying to ensure development on their own terms by assessing their increasing international options, in order to again find a balance between alliances and independence.

This, to a degree or another, was relevant beyond Oceania as well. Many of the medium-sized and smaller Indo-Pacific nations similarly considered themselves primarily as 'balancers' as opposed to 'weights'. Understanding some of the factors that went into Tongan decision-making helped understand where potential inflection points were across the region.

Effective engagement with Tonga, as with all Indo-Pacific countries, requires understanding very different starting points for history (regional countries tend to have long memories), strategic

options, and the responsibilities of the citizen and the state. For example a Tongan reference point for collective security was an incident involving a 19th century civil war in neighbouring Fiji. Tupou I had become involved and he wanted to put an end to the way Fijians executed prisoners. He decreed that if a village attacks another village, then the attacking village will be known as the enemy of all other villages. Understanding this viewpoint can help today in discussions with Tonga around, for example, acceptable Chinese behaviour regarding Taiwan.

Tonga – India relations

In the 1950s and 1960s, Tonga sent civil servants to India for training. From the 1970s, selected Tongan military went as well, including Prince Tu'ipelehake. His Late Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV made two state visits to India, in 1971 and 1976. In 1982, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Tonga. She was the first Prime Minister from India to visit Tonga. To date no other Prime Minister has visited Tonga, so the relationship lagged until 2014, when PM Modi went to Fiji.

In spite of the many announcements made, there have been few concrete outcomes, though those that have come to pass have been appreciated. For example, Tonga is a keen and active member of the International Solar Alliance. To better understand how closer cooperation would benefit both countries and increase Indo-Pacific security, here are four specific examples of how Indian engagement with Oceania, using Tonga as a case study, can help increase local security leading to a more stable Indo-Pacific.

- **Forensics.** Many countries in the region don't have forensic labs, or if they do they are limited. Apart from limiting medical work, this means that criminal investigations are also impeded, or samples need to be sent out of the country, often to New Zealand or Australia for analysis, potentially creating a chain of custody issues. For someone from Tonga, to do training in Australia would be prohibitively expensive, as would be equipping a lab with Australian-certified equipment. And Australia has no incentive to train the people of Tonga or build a lab as it would limit its own role in a critical area. Meanwhile, this is not an area China wants to facilitate either, as it also doesn't benefit from a country in Oceania becoming more independent. India can offer excellent low cost training in forensics, with affordably priced equipment. To be clear, this is not aid. Tonga currently pays for forensic services. That money can be reallocated for training and equipping, saving the Tongan government money over the long term, though short term financing might be required during the transition.
- **Dialysis.** Tonga is in a similar situation with dialysis. In spite of a huge demand, there are no machines or trained technicians in the country. Equipment, supplies and training from New Zealand are prohibitively expensive, and it has happened that Tongans in New Zealand for dialysis who run out of money are sent back to Tonga to die. Again, this is an area where access to Indian equipment and training could have a dramatic effect.
- **Veterinary training.** Tonga is an agricultural country with not a single veterinarian, except

those who come occasionally as volunteers from abroad. Again, training in India would be more affordable, and culturally compatible for Tongan vet students.

- **Tax collection IT.** A current concern in Tonga is that the country has very inefficient customs and tax collection, including from the many small ethnically-Chinese run shops. One expert mentioned that Tonga could easily pay off its loan to China, if only Tonga could efficiently collect taxes. The system they are considering buying is from the US and costs close to $10 million. If something cheaper and as good were available from India, it could transform public accounting in Tonga. They just don't know who to ask.
- There are myriad other sectors like this, including coconut products, space, emergency supplies (tents, etc.). Tongans, and the people of Oceania in general, are overcharged for foundational aspects of economic development such as higher education, energy, communications and transportation, while at the same time are flooded with Chinese goods. So, how to make the link? The impediments have come from both sides. First, the barriers for India to engage with Tonga.
- **Visas**. Tonga did not reciprocate the easy visa access given by India to Tonga. The process for an Indian to obtain a visa to Tonga can seem somewhat opaque.
- **Transportation**. The only way Indians who wish to visit or invest in Tonga is via transits in Australia, New Zealand or Fiji. Even before COVID-19, all travel to Tonga was made difficult by Australia and New Zealand by requiring transit visas that could be complicated or lengthy to obtain.
- **Tongan bureaucracy**. Tonga's foreign Affairs office is overstretched and does not have the time to learn what India is offering for example in terms of scholarships, training, supports, etc., and matching it with Tonga's requirements.

Recommendations

The barriers from the India side have some overlap, but largely come down to not knowing how to engage, or with whom. In that context, here are some recommendations.

- India to have at least one person who is a point of contact in each country in Oceania. It could be an Honorary Consul, a manager of a cultural center, and/or the setting up of an India-Oceania Business Council, with branches in each country. That way India would have a person who could attend key events, talk to key people, get to know the countries and their needs, and act as a bridge.
- India to facilitate the setting up of an 'Oceania House' in New Delhi, with space for all the countries of Oceania to have offices and accommodations. This would act as the other end of the diplomatic and business-to-business bridge.
- In the same way that China has delegated Guangdong as an entry point, India could choose a climate-appropriate state, such as Kerala or Tamil Nadu, to lead on Oceania outreach.
- Work with the countries of Oceania to develop their unique products, such as kava, noni fruit etc with the potential for worldwide sales.

- On aid, if requested by the countries of Oceania, collaborate with complementary partners such as Japan. For example, if Japan builds a hospital, India could provide the medical training and pharmaceuticals. This could be especially helpful if building Quad-linked resilience networks.
- Launch direct flights between India and Oceania, perhaps hubbing out of Fiji, and bypassing countries with restrictive visas. This would also help those who want to go to India for medical care and education, and for Indian businesses and tourists to get to the region.
- Craft policies based on bilateral relationships, not via third countries. India wouldn't like to be approached via the UK, so why should India approach Samoa via its former colonial power, New Zealand?

What Oceania needs from India is not necessarily MEA-led. It needs more trade, educational opportunities, training – and in many cases, it can pay. In fact, it already is paying in more expensive markets. Many aspects of the growth can be private-sector led. But the links need to be made, and that can perhaps be initiated by MEA, RIS or similar, until something like the India-Oceania Business Council is off the ground.

Oceania is a vast area, currently in flux. Engagement with India based on trade, education, health care, and more could fill the security gaps created by the push and pull between China and the West, benefitting all concerned, including Quad partners, and showing India to be the Indo-Pacific anchor of peace and security that it is destined to be.

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Indo-Pacific: Through the Lens of History

Côme Carpentier de Gourdon*

Introduction

The formation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is only the latest step in the gradual shift of the world's power pole to the Indo-Pacific region. The conventional view is that this process of 'orientalisation' (from a Euro-centric perspective) began symbolically either with the dissolution of western colonial empires in the nineteen fifties or perhaps with the economic rise of China from the eighties or even later in the wake of the US-centric financial crisis of 2007/08. However, historians can look further back into the past, when some South Asian and later European states extended their reach, through explorers, warriors and traders, towards the 'Far East' and the hitherto mythical ocean which Magellan called 'Pacific' in 1521 after reaching it through Cape Horn during his global circumnavigation in the service of the Spanish Crown.

The Indo-Pacific Before European Colonisation

Genetic research has found traces of human migrations from Africa towards the Indian subcontinent and beyond, - when much of now insular South East Asia was still a continent called Sunda - from over 75,000 years ago.[1] The oldest 'Papuan' settlements of Melanesia in New Guinea are dated to 50 or 60,000 years ago. Subsequently, genetic evidence of the arrival of populations of probable Indic origin in Australia about 5000 years ago has also emerged.[2]

From about that same period at least ocean-farers from South Eastern China and Taiwan gradually migrated to Pacific Islands where they are collectively known as Austronesians. There were since undetermined antiquity crisscrossing maritime migrations between Asia and South America as Thor Heyerdahl sought to demonstrate in his 1947 KonTiki expedition from Ecuador to Easter Island. The descendants of those oceanic nomads of diverse origins, who must have mingled on some of the islands where they landed, are called Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians. Theories regarding Japan's Jomon people (believed to have originated on Sundaland) having visited the coast of Peru and influenced the local Valdivia culture[3] are not proven but have not been convincingly debunked either and certain Chinese annals apparently refer to mariners from the Middle Kingdom having landed on the western coast of North and Middle America during the European Middle Ages.

Chinese annals record Xu Fu's far-reaching expedition of 219 BCE in search of the elixir of immortality in the eastern seas. Much older contacts between the two sides of the Pacific

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cannot be ruled out especially when we take into account equally long oceanic voyages proven to have occurred in other directions, such as the crossing of the 'Chamorros' from the Philippines to the Marianas in about 1500 BCE and the transfer of the Merinas from Borneo and other 'Malayan' islands to Madagascar before the 5th century CE, the to and fro journeys of Indian seamen to the East Coast of Africa and as far away as China, Japan and Korea on the other, and later the arrival of traders from Oman, Yemen and the Gulf states to the Indonesian archipelago, China and the Philippines.

Chinese junks are known to have sailed into the Indian ocean for many centuries, even before the famous expeditions of Admiral Zheng He to South Asia and East Africa in the early decades of the 15th century CE. There is speculation that the Indian sailors ventured eastwards beyond their well identified ports of call in the Malayan archipelago and in the 'future' Philippines and landed on some of the South Pacific Islands, where traces of their passage and cultural influence are suspected by certain scholars.

Without drawing definite conclusions, architectural and sculptural similarities between ancient Hindu-Buddhist monuments in Java and Bali on the one hand and more or less contemporaneous landmarks in Mayan, Olmec, Pre-Incan Meso-America are troubling. Books by US Ambassador Miles Poindexter[1] about ancient Pre-Columbian Peru are among the works that argue in favour of religious and cultural contacts with ancient India. Those theories are however now discarded by historians and archeologists, generally biased in favour of indigenous origins and agnostic about transoceanic connections in antiquity. However the extensive reach of Indian navigators is attested by the arrival of traders Buddhists 'missionaries' on China's coast at least fifteen centuries ago[2] and by the fact that lands now under the flags of Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines were ruled for many centuries by Rajas and Sultans who shared at least some cultural and ethnic inheritance from Bharat.[3]

The Pacific hydrosphere which accounts for one-third of the total surface of our planet can indeed be called the liquid hemisphere in comparison to its other half which gathers Eurasia, Africa and the Americas around the narrower Atlantic. Whereas the Indonesian Islands stand as a barrier broken by various straits between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, to the south of Australia the largest and third largest water surfaces merge seamlessly all the way to Antarctica.

During many centuries for Europeans, the Erythrean Sea, as the ancient Greeks called it according to an Egyptian nomenclature, was an almost mythical marine realm, located between Arabia Felix, Ethiopia (the legendary kingdom of Priester John) and the Indies. That ocean harboured paradisiac islands such as Chrysos (the *suvarnadvipa* of Sanskrit and Pali literature) and Argyros, rich in gold and silver and Serendip or Taprobane which was often identified with the biblical Garden of Eden, first home of Adam and of the human race.[4] Further away lay the empires of Cathay and Cipango.[5]

European Competition and Hegemony

The mix of popular legends, graeco-roman

records and accounts of Arab travellers as well as the appetite for spices, precious stones and gold spurred the desire of Atlantic littoral nations to reach those Antipodes by sea as the long and hazardous land routes had been closed by the Ottoman Sultanate's gradual takeover of the Byzantine empire. In the wake of the maiden westward voyage of Cristoforo Colombo on behalf of the Spanish Crown in 1492 and the earlier landing of Portuguese Bartolomeu Dias at the Cape of Good Hope in Africa in 1488, the two Iberian kingdoms laid rival claims to what was believed to be the Indian continent. To avoid a conflict Pope Alexander VI drew an imaginary line across the Atlantic to divide the respective domains of exploration and conquest. The treaty of Tordesillas signed in 1494 between Portugal and Castille-Aragon gave the western side to the Spanish and the other to the Lusitanians. While the Spanish invaders of Mexico first gained access to the Pacific when Nunez de Balboa sighted it in 1513 from the Panama isthmus, the Portuguese going around Africa followed the Indo-Arab sea routes and set up trade outposts in Nusantara (Indonesia) after taking Malacca in 1511. One year earlier the second 'Viceroy of India' and first 'Admiral of the Indian Sea', Alfonso de Albuquerque had seized Goa of which he was titled Duke. The Portuguese reached Taiwan that they called Formosa, coastal China (Guangzhou) in 1513 and in 1543, Japan, where they set up a bridgehead in 1571.

In the China Sea the Portuguese met their Iberian neighbours arriving from the other side of the world. Spain colonised the Philippines and planted its flag on a number of Pacific Islands in the course of and after Magellan's initial periplum. A first treaty was signed between Spain and Portugal in 1529 to delimit their respective claims. From 1580 the two nations were under a single ruler as Philip II inherited the Lusitanian throne but in 1640 Portugal recovered its independence under the dynasty of Braganza at about the time when the two imperial nations began their slow decline, partly as a result of reverses inflicted upon them by envious neighbours, namely the Dutch, the French and the English.

We must however pause for a few paragraphs to consider the extraordinary destiny and fortune of these two rather sparsely populated and resource-poor countries[6] situated at the southern extremity of Europe and long under African-Muslim dominance. For about a century they exercised almost unchallenged control over most of the 'new' non-European world and the Spanish King-Emperor also ruled much of the 'old' continent within his vast Austro-Germanic, Flemish and Italian possessions. The takeover of the antipodal hemisphere began about the time when Charles of Habsburg was enthroned Monarch of Spain at sixteen in 1516 and crowned Kaiser of the Holy German Empire in 1519, thereby reviving the vision of a universal Christian empire with Rome, then the focus of the renaissance as the spiritual capital.

Spain and Portugal both pursued the *reconquista* of the Iberian territory, completed at the end of the 15th century, by attacking the 'Moors' in North Africa and then striking the Ottoman Empire from the Arabian Sea. For them it was a resumption of the aborted Crusades. We can understand the first Portuguese and Spanish expeditions to the 'Indias' from the West

(Colombus) and from the East (Vasco de Gama) as a pincer operation with the combined goals of defeating the Muslims, converting pagans, controlling the spice trade, finding overseas wealth and even discovering the earthly paradise and the fountain of eternal youth.

When Colombus reached what is still known as the West Indies he was convinced to have reached the mythical continent and the name was retained in the Spanish nomenclatures. The western seaboard of the Americas was later eventually reconnoitred and partly settled by the Spanish from Tierra de Fuego to Alaska while the western shores and insular lands of the Pacific from Australia (first sought, named and probably sighted by Queiros and his lieutenant, Torres, in 1605 and 1606) to Korea were explored, mostly by the Lusitanians in the same span of about a hundred years.

The Indian Ocean, between South Africa and the Indonesian archipelago came under the sway of Portugal which pushed out the Turkish and Egyptian Mamluk fleets while establishing diplomatic relations with the Persian, Omanese, Ethiopian, Gujarat and Malabar kingdoms. Contemporaneously, the Pacific Ocean became a Spanish lake whose access was jealously guarded from Mexico, La Plata, Peru and the Philippines and denied to other European states. During the same period the very catholic king of Castille, Aragon, and several other European states claimed supremacy over North America with the exception of the northeastern corner (today's Quebec and New England) where the French, English and Dutch made early inroads.

Thus, the Indo-Pacific maritime domain was to some extent unified (given the seafaring and military means available at the time) under a single power from the second half of the 16th century to the middle of the 17th century, the period which remains known in Spain as *El Siglo de oro*: The Golden Century. The Iberian dyarchy was the first transcontinental hegemon, controlling much of the world through the oceans, as Netherlands and England were to do later when they took over the South Atlantic and Indo-Pacific sea lanes. The later part of this article will remind us that this centuries old contest continued until today when it has entered a new phase.

The early 17th century saw the irruption of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the Indo-Pacific also around the Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch had gained a foothold in today's Indonesia by 1603, reached Japan in 1609 and set up trading factories in Surat in 1616 and in Bengal (Chinsura) in 1627. Soon after, other Hollanders arrived from the East, around South America, beginning with Lemaire and Schouten's exploration of the Pacific during which they laid anchor in New Zealand and other islands in 1616.

The Dutch commercial enterprise was an indirect consequence of the migration of Marrane Jewish financiers and shipping magnates from Inquisition-dominated Portugal to protestant Netherlands, recently freed from Spanish control and still at war with Madrid. That small but wealthy community brought to the Low Countries its knowledge of the hitherto Muslim dominated Indian Ocean trade, its access to the jealously kept secrets of Portuguese overseas *portulans* (navigator maps) and its far flung banking network. In the same period, Hispanic maritime preponderance was decisively weakened by the

allied English and Dutch when most of the 'invincible" Spanish Armada was blown off by a storm and largely destroyed near the Irish coast in 1588. Philip II's attempt to crush the privateers who regularly plundered Spain's overseas ports and convoys had dismally failed.

By 1650, the Netherlands began to take over Lisbon's possessions in India, Ceylon and Indonesia (between 1656 and 1661) while simultaneously expelling the Spanish from Taiwan, establishing themselves in eastern North and South America and encroaching on the Spanish Caribbean. The British closely followed them in India and the Malayan archipelago. French ships also made their appearance at that time and King Louis XIV's reign saw the acquisition of the first French enclaves (Pondicherry and others) in coastal India and the opening of diplomatic relations with Siam (now Thailand).

Holland's supremacy, battered by French invasions and financial bankruptcy was relatively short lived and the United Kingdom, instead of the United Provinces became the main challenger of the sprawling Spanish and Portuguese dominions, even before the 1688 revolution which brought to the throne in Westminster, the Dutch Prince Wilem of Orange accompanied by a large number of traders and bankers from the Low Countries.[7] However, thanks in part to their alliance with London, the Low Countries retained their hold over most of the Malayan islands.

The capitalistic extractive system inaugurated by the giant Dutch East India Company and inherited by its British 'clone' was to gradually replace the old Iberian Catholic state-controlled colonisation. The new shareholder-operated type of organisation would soon be adopted by other empire building states, primarily France, Denmark, Russia, the Austro-German Empire and applied to ever larger annexed territories outside Europe in the course of the following two centuries.

We must however not lose sight of the fact that the matrix of world unification ('the empire on which the Sun never set') which Britain saw itself close to achieving in the late 19th century under Queen Victoria's reign had been projected by Charles V (Carolus Quintus, often described in his day as '*Imago Imperatoris*') and his son Philip II who saw themselves as the paladins and protectors of the Roman Catholic Church and Faith. They were tasked by the Papacy with the mandate to extend its sway 'urbi et orbi' with the backing of the Italian banking houses and christian monastic orders, particularly the Jesuits, in that era of triumphant counter-reformation. It is under the rule of those Hasburg monarchs coincidentally that the silver Thaler or Dollar became the currency of their world-spanning realm.

Britain inherited much from the Spanish-Portuguese imperial experience: the slave and spice trade, sea route secrets, bridgeheads, military and administrative methods but also hard assets—through the plunder of the galleons and commercial harbours of Asia and the Americas—and even the name of the currency later adopted by the future United States as its national denomination.[8] A well known but relatively rare example of legal territorial acquisition was the gift of the settlement of Bombay to England by the Portuguese crown as part of the dowry of Princess Catarina de Braganza, the young bride of British King Charles II in 1662.

The Second Colonial Period

If we glance at the history that unfolded from 1700, when the War of Spanish Succession accelerated the decline of Spain and the rise of Britain (in whose orbit Portugal henceforth gravitated), we need to recall that it took two more centuries for Madrid's rule over much of the New World and the Pacific to end. In 1898, almost a hundred years after losing Latin America, Spain was forced to surrender the Philippines to the USA which, in the course of its continuing westward expansion annexed Hawaii in the same year.[9]

About a decade earlier Madrid had ceded many of the 6000 Pacific islands it occupied or claimed to Bismarck's Germany, the new empire builder. Small Portugal had declined faster, and early in the 19th century lost all but a few fragments of its Asian possessions to the English and Dutch. The other winners in the 19th century were the French who retained several islands in the Indian Ocean, eventually annexed Djibouti and Comoros in 1883 and 1886, Madagascar in 1895 and conquered much of the Indochinese peninsula while taking over several Pacific archipelagos which they have kept until today. France owns the largest maritime exclusive economic zone in the Indo-Pacific after the USA and Australia.

The alliance between the two realms of the House of Bourbon had empowered French navigators such as Bougainville and La Pérouse to explore the Pacific before the Revolution of 1789 in the period when Cook was doing the same for the United Kingdom. In the following century, France used that capital of information to take over huge swathes of the ocean. The Society (Tahiti) and Marquesas archipelagos became part of the French empire in the 1840s and New Caledonia was annexed in 1852, the very year when Commodore Perry, commander of the US 'East India Squadron' landed in Japan and compelled the Empire of the Rising Sun to open its borders to foreign trade. By then Britain had acquired Hong Kong and won increasing influence in the decadent Qing Chinese Empire.

Russia, which had become an Asian power by the close of the 17th century and dispatched the Kruzenstern naval expedition around the world in 1803, opened an ice-free port on the Pacific on land taken from China at Vladivostok in 1860. However the sale of Alaska to the USA in 1867 showed the limits of the Tzarist Empire's means and ambition. The defeat of the Russian fleet at the hands of Japan in 1905 in Manchuria was one of the disastrous events that led to the collapse of the imperial autocracy in 1917. It was only during the second world war that the USSR again projected some naval power in the Pacific theatre.

The 1914-18 war ended in Germany's loss of all its recently acquired overseas dependencies and ushered in the interlude of Japan's occupation of a vast (Asian-Pacific) 'sphere of co-prosperity'. With the total defeat of the Empire of the Rising Sun, the first Asian nation to vie for maritime hegemony in the hemisphere, the second world war brought it under the triumphant USA's control or influence, institutionalised in 1954 by SEATO, the 'Asia-Pacific NATO' in which significantly Pakistan was included.

The defeat of the Kuo Ming Tang regime resulting in the foundation of the Maoist People's Republic of China in 1949 was the first blow to Anglo-Saxon led Euro-American supremacy at the

time when the Soviet Union got the atom bomb. The American defeat in and exodus from Vietnam some two decades later and the dissolution of SEATO in 1977 confirmed that power was changing hands. It would however take more decades for the "Middle Kingdom' to set its sight on maritime expansion for regaining its ancient preeminence in the China Sea and staking claims in the western Pacific.

Certain scholars[10] describe Beijing's push towards the ocean and its rush to deploy a blue water navy as a strategy inspired by the theories of American military scholars A. T Mahan and N. Spykman about the criticality of maritime power. China claims the oceanic space within the 'nine dash line' first drawn by the KMT nationalist government of Chang Kai Shek in 1947 and, in order to gain control, is striving to break in stages through the three island chains that US Secretary of State J F Dulles described in 1951 at the height of the Cold War as the successive barriers the US would utilise to contain the People's Republic. The closest to China's mainland stretches from the Kurils, through Japan, the Philippines, Ryukyu and Taiwan down to Borneo. The second lies between the Bonin archipelago, Guam in the Marianas and New Guinea. The third and outermost chain symbolically connects the Aleutian Islands near Alaska to Hawaii and Australia. The three chains or barriers are all under the direct or indirect sway of the Americans, buttressed by their allies, including South Korea in the North, Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia in the South and once again Vietnam which has conflictual relations with China.

In order to break out of those 'containment belts' from where the USA and its allies could launch attacks on China by air and sea and cut off the marine supply lines, the PRC has fortified several islets in the South China sea while aggressively pressing its ancient but shaky claims on contested archipelagos: the Paracel, Spratley and Senkaku islands. Beijing regards that maritime territory as its own 'Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean', vital to its security and has built major naval surface and submarine infrastructure in the island of Hainan in order to protect it. It is only the second time that an Asian power, after Japan seeks to acquire dominance in the Pacific in the last five hundred years, since the fateful arrival of the first Portuguese and Spanish Caravels into the 'Mares do India'.

Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific was under European hegemony from about 1510 to 1900 and fell increasingly under US control in the 20th century. The second world war turned it into a virtual lake of the United States and of their French, British-Australian and other allies which conducted nuclear tests in their respective possessions. Only Russia could hitherto challenge the western condominium in the North West Pacific while India all along has exercised some control over the Indian Ocean, hedged in by the US bases in Diego Garcia and in the Persian Gulf.

In the last twenty years China has raised its strategic stature at sea and is contesting the long-standing 'Euro-American' hegemons. The US-led 'Five Eyes' strategy is intended to maintain supremacy by sharing some of it, mainly with Japan and Australia in the Pacific and with India and Indonesia in the Indian Ocean. To retain its regional

maritime predominance, New Delhi is working primarily with France the other 'Big' maritime power in the IOR and with Russia, the traditional military partner while engaging in limited and case-specific cooperation with the three other Quad associates and with ASEAN members Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

India's strategy for protecting its interest and influence in the Indian Ocean through the recently set up Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) involves weaving close partnerships with the littoral and island nations of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Oman, Bangladesh and Myanmar and relying on a monitoring and surveillance grid (Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean region or IFC-IOR) connecting seven offshore hubs stretching from the Seychelles and Duqm port in Oman to the naval station at Sabang in western Sumatra, Indonesia[11] close to the Malacca Strait. The ongoing power shift from the western to the eastern hemisphere probably spells the gradual eclipse of Euro-American supremacy in the seas that surround the Asian continent.

References:

1 *The continent of Sunda was gradually submerged by the rise in sea levels from about 19000 to 5000 years ago when only the higher lands that form Indonesia and peninsular Malaysia remained above the water. Bellwood, P (2007)* Prehistory of the Indo-Malayan Archipelago*, Rosen (Ed). ANU Press.*

2 *Some genomic findings led ethno-geneticists to posit the arrival of settlers from India in Australia around 5 or 4 000 years before the present. A more definitive and recent study has concluded that Aborigines were in Australia at least 50 000 years ago but that females of 'Indian origin' (closely related to certain populations in Tamil South India) may have mingled with the earlier settlers a few thousand years back. Many mysteries remain about the routes and dates of migrations across the Indo-Pacific. Cf https://www.vijayvaani.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?aid=5599*

3 *Archeologists inferred this maritime connection from similarities between the styles of pottery found in Japan from the Jomon era which lasted from about 14000 until about 300 BCE and those of the Valdivia coastal culture of Peru (3000-2700 BCE).*

4 *Poindexter, Miles (1930),* The Ayar-Incas *(vol I) and* Asiatic Origins *(vol II), New York.*

5 *Regarding ancient trade routes across Indian Ocean and South China Sea cf: https://www.booksfact.com/history/ancient-maritime-route-india-egypt-africa-china-350-bc.html#:~:text=Ancient%20Maritime%20Route%20Between%20India%2C%20Egypt%2C%20Africa%2C%20China,into%20Europe%20over%20sea%20as%20well%20as%20land.*

6 *The western direction in many of the local Malayan languages is still known as Barat and so it is in Madagascar's national medium because of the South Asian roots of many of the malagasy peoples (even though India lies to the east of Africa).*

7 *Among ancient sources cf* Hereford Mappa Mundi *which situates the Eden of Genesis somewhere in the Indian Ocean. It was later identified either with Ceylon (Serendip), Java or Sumatra (*menoftheweb.net/the-earthly-paradise-part-1*; retrieved on 3/12/2020).*

8 *Cathay (Kitai, the home of Khitans) was usually regarded as distinct from China. Marco Polo calls North China Cathay and South China Mangi. Cipango was the name given to Japan by Marco Polo. Columbus believed he had reached it in the Caribbean and claimed it for Spain. It was thought to be the closest part of India on the westward route.*

9 *In 1550 the population of Portugal was little above 3 million. Spain had 8 million inhabitants then.*

10 *In 1655 the Amsterdam-based Sepharad Cabbalist and Talmudist Menasseh ben Israel won a historic concession from the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell to allow Jews to settle in England from where they had been expelled in 1290. That agreement, opposed by many in the English Parliament, heralded the rise of British overseas expansion and the corresponding loss of Dutch preponderance illustrated by the 'glorious revolution' against the Stuarts which brought to the throne William of Orange-Nassau.*

11 *One fourth of the territory of the United States was gradually taken from Spain and another fourth was acquired from France through the Louisiana purchase of 1803.*

12 *US scholars have noted that the annexation of the kingdom of Hawaii through the machinations of American planters settled in the islands was not in conformity with the US constitution and never went through the due constitutional process.*

13 *Michael Gunter* Chinese Naval Strategy – The influence of Admiral Mahan's Theories of Sea Power*, World Affairs, vol. 24, no. 3, Autumn 2020 (pp.54-73).*

14 *Baruah Darshana M,* Carnegie Endowment's Report on the Indo-Pacific*, June 30, 2020. https:// carnegieendowment.org/files/Baruah_UnderstandingIndia_final1.pdf*

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FOCUS

Maritime Rules-Based Order in the Indo-Pacific

Hamsa Devineni*

The Indo-Pacific, today, is the world's most strategically significant region.[1] Although there is no internationally accepted geographic delineation of the Indo- Pacific region till date[2], it broadly constitutes the entire region encompassed by the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean together.[3] The emerging economic potential, military advantages and the geo-strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific region encompasses both immense opportunities and complex challenges

Significance of the Indo-Pacific region:

The Indo-Pacific is the hub for global trade, commerce and energy supply[4]. The sea lanes of communication (SLOC's) passing through the Indo-Pacific region contain narrow straits like the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb, which form vital choke-points for global commerce.[5] Any interference or disruption in the free flow of international traffic through the choke-points would threaten peace, security and stability in the region, apart from severely affecting the domestic economies of oil & trade dependent nations.[6] Further, the Indo-Pacific is at the center of economic growth in the world as it contributes to over 60% of the global GDP[7] and more than 40% of the global exports[8]. The region is inhabited with more than 50 percent of the global population[9] and the world's largest economies, namely USA, China and Japan are also situated here[10]. The region contains huge quantities of living and non-living resources ranging from lucrative fish stocks[11] to offshore oil and gas reserves[12].

Militarily too, the Indo-Pacific region is a strategic landscape for most maritime nations. In the Indian Ocean Region alone, three major non-littoral powers have established military bases in strategic locations to project and sustain military power at greater distances, namely, the USA in Diego Garcia, France in Reunion and China in Djibouti[13] with reports of Chinese military seeking additional facilities in the region[14] including media reports detailing secret military agreements between China and Cambodia.[15]

The United States of America has renamed its US Pacific Command (USPACOM) as the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) in May, 2018[16]. The unified combatant command of the US Armed forces is responsible for military operations in the waters encompassing the Indo-Pacific region, stretching from the west coast of the USA to the west coast of India.[17] Australia, recognizing the Indo-Pacific region as the center of global economic and military power, has in July 2020, in its '2020 Australian Defence Strategic Update'[18], defined Australia's strategic objectives for the region, restructured its Defense Forces and

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also infused a defence investment of 270$ billion over the next decade.[19] Japan and India have in September 2020 inked a 10 year military pact that will allow for the movement of supplies and services between their armed forces.[20]

The four largest democracies of the region, namely, the USA, Japan, Australia and India have entered into an informal strategic alliance called the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)[21], paralleled by joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, in the Indo-Pacific region, titled Exercise Malabar.[22] The Malabar series of exercises, which began as an annual bilateral naval exercise between India and the US in 1992, has seen increasing scope and complexity over the years. Australia joined the Malabar after 13 years and its 24th edition in November, 2020, witnessed joint military exercises by USA, India, Japan & Australia which aimed at enhancing their military interoperability and exhibited their common commitment to a stable, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.[23]

Existing maritime rules-based order:

The term "international rules-based-order" was coined in the aftermath of the Second World War and refers to the institutions and norms centred around the United Nations (UN).[24] The primary purpose of the UN was to maintain international peace and security and the UN & its institutions are credited to have secured international peace, stability and security for the last seventy years.[25] The global maritime domain too, comprising the world's seas and oceans, has traditionally been governed by the UN and its allied institutions and the laws made by them.

The existing maritime rules-based order comprises Conventions, treaties and protocols established by the UN and its allied institutions concerning both aspects of private maritime law and public maritime law. Private maritime law, also known as admiralty law, is a body of laws, conventions and treaties that govern private maritime business and other nautical matters, such as shipping and liability for offenses occurring in the global seas and oceans.[26] While, safety and security of international shipping and the prevention of pollution caused by ships is governed by The International Maritime Organization (IMO), a UN specialized agency[27]; The International Labour Organization (ILO), another specialized agency of the UN, governs human and labour rights of persons operating in the maritime domain, including sea-farers[28]. Public international maritime law comprises the laws governing the use of the oceans and seas and the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), commonly regarded as the 'Constitution of the Oceans' is at the fulcrum of the existing public international maritime order.[29] This paper is limited to examining the international maritime rules-based order in the public international law domain.

Failure of the existing maritime rules-based-order:

UNCLOS, a universally accepted maritime legal order governing the seas and oceans, with 168 out of the world's 193 countries as its signatories[30], is increasingly failing to address emerging maritime challenges in the Indo-Pacific. International scholars have found that at least one-third of the 168 State parties to the Convention,

are in breach of at least one significant provision of the UNCLOS[31] and as such UNCLOS suffers from rampant non-compliance by its member countries.

The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing a geo-strategic rivalry in the South China Sea between USA and China[32], and USA being a non-signatory to UNCLOS would lack the support of both the substantive international laws and the expertise of the judicial institutions created by the Convention (UNCLOS) and therefore undermines its authority as an effective maritime rules-based-order.[33] Further, the Convention was designed as a broad framework of principles concerning the law of the sea[34] and intrinsically lacks specificity and clarity in its principles making its non-compliance more convenient to state parties, often resulting in varying interpretations of the Convention by State parties.[35]

For instance, the Convention entitles a coastal state to exclusive sovereign maritime rights within its territorial sea, EEZ & continental shelf and also provides the procedure for de-limitation of territorial sea between States with opposite or adjacent coasts. However, the convention doesn't provide for the procedure to delimit the EEZ and Continental Shelf between States with opposite or adjacent coasts.[36] Eventually, the international courts and tribunals, at the request of disputing countries, had to develop a framework for delimitation of the EEZ and continental shelf between states with adjacent or opposite coastlines.[37] In the case of Timor Liste Vs. Australia[38], pertaining to the delimitation of their continental shelf boundary, however, the legal procedure of delimitation of continental shelf boundaries established by the international courts failed to effectively delimit their maritime boundary and therefore, both the States were compelled to mutually arrive at a settlement of their boundary dispute, based on their self-styled procedure[39]. This case exhibits the escalating gap between the Convention and the emerging maritime challenges.

Further, China, a littoral of the Indo-Pacific region, with a coastline encompassing three seas, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea,[40] is increasingly threatening the lawful exercise of sovereign rights of its littoral neighbors, by resorting to aggressive means to control disputed waters.[41] Aspiring to be the superpower of the 21st century, China is using military and economic coercion to strategically expand its influence in the region & establish its maritime hegemony.[42] For instance, China has maritime boundary disputes with its littoral neighbors namely, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, among others, over the delimitation of their overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).[43] While Chinese fisherman have historically been found illegally invading the South Korean[44] and Indonesian waters[45], sometimes as close as their territorial waters; today, illegal fishing incursions by Chinese fisherman are often found escorted and protected by Chinese Coast Guard and Naval vessels, thus evidencing strong state support to China's illegal maritime incursions in disputed waters.[46]

South Korea and China's maritime boundary dispute has, in recent times, also led to the death of Chinese fisherman[47] and South Korean Coast Guard officers[48] as multiple rounds of negotiations between the two have so far failed. While South

Korea strongly opines that the boundary should be determined by the median line principle as provided by international law, China argues that the line should be proportional to its larger population and longer coastline, against established international law and custom.[49] Historically, Vietnam and China have restrained from conducting oil exploration activities in disputed waters in the South China Sea. In 2014, breaking traditional customary practices, China moved a Chinese mobile oil rig into disputed territory resulting in massive anti-Chinese riots and destruction of hundreds of Chinese businesses in Vietnam.[50] The statement of the United States Secretary of State on 13.07.2020 would be of significance to understand China's behavior towards its littoral neighbours:

"Beijing uses intimidation to undermine the sovereign rights of Southeast Asian coastal States in the South China Sea, bully them out of offshore resources, assert unilateral dominion, and replace international law with "might makes right."[51]

Furthermore, China is posing a threat to the peace, security and stability of the region, violating entrenched international maritime customs and established principles of law. China's ownership claim of over 90% of the area comprising the South China Sea, through a self-styled nine-dash line is contrary to international law and established customary practices.[52] Though China has not yet used the nine-dash-line as an inviolable border to its sovereignty, neither has it officially explained the meaning of the line, raising suspicion internationally over its intentions in the South China Sea.[53] 80 percent of the global trade by volume and 70 percent by value is transported through sea of which the South China Sea carries an estimated one-third of the global shipping.[54] Fearing an imminent threat to the free flow of international trade and commerce through the South China Sea, a few concerned nations, including the USA, Japan and Australia have increased their naval presence and are conducting freedom of navigation exercises (FONOP's) in order to ensure commercial ships pass through all areas of the sea permitted by law.[55] China has officially declared these freedom of navigation exercises, legally permitted and historically practiced as customary norms, as provocative,[56] escalating the threat of an armed conflict between competing naval vessels operating in close range in narrow spaces. Furthermore, China categorically and willfully disregards international law by failing to follow the order of an international arbitral tribunal[57] which held that China's claim to the nine-dash line in the South China Sea violates the provisions of UNCLOS, i.e. the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982.[58]

In the South China Sea, China claims sovereignty over four major archipelagic groups, each of which comprise groups of islands, rocks and features.[59] By claiming sovereignty over the groups of islands, rocks and features, China claims sovereignty over their land territory as well in consequence of the operation of the Convention, sovereign rights and entitlements over the maritime zones that the feature, island or rock may be individually, entitled to under the Convention. Further, the Convention defines an 'island' and provides that an 'island' would be entitled to all the maritime zones as provided under the Convention but fails to provide for the procedure to determine claims to sovereignty of the island's

land territory, which pertains to principles of general international law, outside the scope of the Convention.[60] Taking advantage of the vague and ineffective provisions,[61] China is increasingly asserting sovereign claims to the land territory of unoccupied or its recently occupied maritime features. Further, the Convention does not provide for the procedure to determine whether an island is artificial or naturally formed.[62] China is carrying out massive land reclamation activities on semi-submerged rocks and features and constructing artificial islands. China's claim to maritime zonal entitlements for these artificially created islands, if made, should not be a surprise to the international community, considering China's intentions behind the aggressive build-up & reclamation of occupied maritime features has not been stated officially.[63] With its might-makes-right ideology and 'predatory world view', China suppresses international criticism through coercive diplomacy and economic measures critically undermining the established maritime rules based order, namely the UNCLOS. The central political impetus behind the drafting of the Convention was to safeguard the oceans and seas by ensuring equity among the rich and developing nations. Today, China's evident actions seeking to replace the established rules-based order, i.e. the Convention with its 'might makes right' principle, throws light on the magnitude and scale of the failure of UNCLOS to address modern maritime challenges.

Most importantly, the emerging and complex challenges of the Indo-pacific and the aggressive maritime rise of China, as noticed , are increasingly threatening the legitimacy and relevance of the UN along with its principal organ, the UN Security Council.[64] For instance, China's refusal to comply with the order of the international arbitral tribunal in the Philippines VS. China case[65] and Russia's initial refusal to follow the order of the international arbitral tribunal in the Netherlands Vs. Russia case,[66] at the outset, expose the deficiency of UNCLOS to enforce its provisions. But, essentially, the wilful disregard to the orders of the international tribunals by China and Russia, the veto wielding powers of the UN Security Council, only exposes the incapacity of the UN Security Council, the highest enforcement authority under the UN, to enforce the orders of international tribunals against the wishes of a veto power. The refusal of China and Russia to follow the orders of the international tribunals has therefore exposed the antiquity of the veto framework of the UN and the inadequacies of its laws and institutions.[67] Therefore, today veto powers like China and Russia are more powerful than international 'rule-of-law' and the Convention has further proved to be ineffective in achieving its objectives of maintaining a legal order governing the oceans and seas.

An analysis of a few of the reasons among the many, makes it clear that UNCLOS in its present form has become illegitimate and irrelevant as it fails to achieve even its primary objectives of establishing an effective maritime legal order for the seas and oceans. But on a larger dimension, the emerging maritime challenges have exposed the failure of existing international order itself, i.e. UN and its organs including the UNSC. The existing five-decade old legal order is oblivion to the contemporary global circumstances like the change of balance of power in the 21st century from the Pacific-Atlantic to the Indo- Pacific

accompanied by the rise of Asian powers[68]; the global shift from a uni-polar world order to a multi-polar/ hetero-polar world order[69] and lastly, an unpredictable post- covid world[70] defined by new and complex threats and challenges.

Need for an effective international maritime rules-based-order:

The current century is marked by the escalating significance of the Indo-Pacific region evidenced by the increased strategic, economic and military activities in the region. The urgent need for a renewed maritime legal order is increasingly being felt by both coastal and maritime trading nations. In the light of the emerging challenges, most nations have in recent times laid down their perspectives of the new maritime order for the Indo-Pacific. The region's most powerful democracies namely, USA, Japan, Australia & India have all laid out a similar vision for the Indo-Pacific. Their common Indo-Pacific vision is best expressed by the recent statement of India's Foreign Minister at Tokyo on 07.10.2020 which reads[71],

"As vibrant and pluralistic democracies with shared values, our nations have collectively affirmed the importance of maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. We remain committed to upholding the rules-based international order, underpinned by the rule of law, transparency, freedom of navigation in the international seas, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes." (emphasis supplied)

The ten countries that comprise Southeast Asia, namely, Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, closely connect the two oceans, namely the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Oceans in both the geographical and civilizational sense. The South East Asian nations have expressed their collective and shared Indo-Pacific vision through their regional intergovernmental organization namely, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). A recent statement by ASEAN secretariat dated: 23.06.2019 titled, 'The ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific', reads as under:

"ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific is based on the principles of strengthening ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, a rules-based framework, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit and respect for international law, such as UN Charter, the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and 3 other relevant UN treaties and conventions, the ASEAN Charter and various ASEAN treaties and agreements and the EAS Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations (2011)."[72] (emphasis supplied)

Some maritime nations have, therefore, laid out the importance of developing a free, open, transparent and inclusive international maritime rules-based-order, governed by rule of law, that will contribute to peace, stability, resilience, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. All maritime trading nations desirous of a free and open Indo-pacific which is governed by a rules-based-order

must, therefore, forthwith, shoulder the responsibility of creating a new & effective maritime rules-based-order for themselves. Whether the new maritime order is to be created by recourse and amendments to the existing international legal order, namely the UN and UNCLOS or a new regional order for the Indo-Pacific is to be developed, should be the subject of international consultations and deliberations between interested & concerned maritime nations. Either way, developing an international maritime rule based-order based on the principles of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region must be the immediate agenda for all maritime trading nations.

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India-Vietnam Relations: Convergence of Interests- An Interview with H.E. Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of Vietnam to India

Shristi Pukhrem*

Shristi Pukhrem (SP): *How does Vietnam see India in the current regional order?*

Ambassador Pham Sanh Chau (PSC): India is a very important country. The past decades have witnessed strong growth in India's economic and political power, making it not only a major country but an increasingly influential nation in the world. In the next ten or twenty years, India will perhaps become the world's most populous country and the third-largest economy. India is positioned globally and is enjoying tremendous leverages in the international arena. That is too big to be ignored.

The past years have also witnessed the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a new geopolitical reality—bringing together the Indian and the Pacific Oceans—represents the new centre of gravity in global politics. India is clearly a very important actor within the Indo-Pacific arc. As a global player, India will play an important role in contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability and rules-based order, driving for reformed multilateralism to make international organisations, including the UN Security Council, more representative, contemporary and capable of dealing with current challenges.

SP: *Vietnam is a key pillar of India's 'Act East Policy' and an important partner in India's 'Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative,' which is based on our shared values and interests in promoting peace, stability and prosperity of our region. How do you see this partnership?*

PSC: Vietnam and India currently have enjoyed excellent relationship. In the last 2000 years we have never fought each other. We have never had enmity. We have been linked culturally and always supported each other when our histories intertwined. Even our prime minster reckoned that relationship between India and Vietnam stainless.

During the summit between India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, held virtually on 21 December 2020, Prime Minister Modi asserted that Vietnam is an important pillar of India's Act East Policy and is an important partner in India's Indo-Pacific Vision. That is true. Regarding this, it should be recalled that Vietnam strongly supported India's Act East Policy and recognised its active role in contributing to peace, stability and prosperity in the region and the world as well. Vietnam also serves as a bridge between India and ASEAN, helping India extend its reach beyond the Indian Ocean.

Regarding the Indo-Pacific, I have seen key factors shared by both India's Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative and ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook. First, every country has to have respect for international laws, most importantly the UN Charter and UNCLOS 1982. Second, both India

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and Vietnam shared the view that ASEAN will occupy the central role in any evolving security structure in the region. Third, in case of any dispute, it is necessary to stick to dialogues, conflict prevention and peaceful settlements. With all these shared values and interests, I believe that cooperation between the two countries will be further enhanced in years to come and will be an important factor to the peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

SP: *Today, our comprehensive strategic partnership spans a wide-range of collaboration—from political engagement to economic and development partnership, defence and security cooperation, energy cooperation, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts. How far have we achieved in delivering in all these sectors?*

PSC: Never before have our two countries been so close. One clear example is that Indian navy ship INS Kiltan arrived at Ho Chi Minh city to deliver 15 tons of relief materials to flood-affected people in the central part of Vietnam. It then undertook a joint activity with the Vietnamese Navy. The event is indicative of both symbolic and substantive relations between our two countries. In April this year, Vietnam also sent medical equipment and protective gear to help India fight against the pandemic. We are friends both in need and in deed.

Vietnam-India relations have seen steady expansions over the past years, especially since the two countries upgraded their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016. Mutual political trust has continuously been strengthened with regular exchange of visits by top leaders. Even in this very tough year when the whole world is struggling with the globally spreading Covid-19 pandemic, the two countries have managed to continue comprehensive strategic partnership on the basis of traditional friendship, strong bonds in history, culture and religion, mutual understanding and trust, as well as the shared visions and interests in regional and international issues.

It is a vast relationship, and what I could mention here is perhaps tiny bits of that. The most vivid example of the political relations is the virtual summit on 21 December between India's Prime Minister Modi and Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc. It is the first of its kind between India and an ASEAN country and the 9th virtual meeting between Indian Prime Minister and foreign leaders. I believe this alone is enough to talk about the level and the depth of political engagement between India and Vietnam.

In terms of defence and security cooperation, the two sides have achieved significant progress in implementing the credit line of US $100 million. The first high-speed boat has been transferred to Vietnam, and the next boat is being built. It is also noteworthy that we have finished the negotiation on the credit line of US $500, which will be an important element for maritime capacity building cooperation between the two countries. Besides, we are cooperating closely in defence industry, military training and peace keeping operations.

India is also an important economic and development partner of Vietnam. Our bilateral trade has grown quickly over the last decades, from just US $200 million in 2000 to US $12.34 billion in 2019-2020. India has extended aid and loans to a number of infrastructural projects in Vietnam

through its quick-impact scheme. In terms of energy, India's biggest oil corporation, ONGC, is working productively in offshore oil fields in Vietnam. India is a leader in the solar energy, and we are learning from that. The two sides have launched direct flights recently and will promote the establishments of direct shipping routes between major seaports of Vietnam and India.

In the field of cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts, on the basis of deep cultural and historical bonds between India and Vietnam, the two sides are committed to promoting a wide-range of cultural exchanges and people-to-people links in the Plan of Action for 2021-2023. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Vietnam Institute of India and Southeast Asian Studies (VIISAS) will jointly works to publish an encyclopaedia of India-Vietnam Cultural and Civilisational Relations to mark the 50th anniversary of India-Vietnam diplomatic relations in 2020. It is a very meaningful project. In May this year, a 1,100-year-old monolithic sandstone Shiva Linga was unearthed in My Son temple complex, indicative of civilisational connect between our two countries, as depicted by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Both sides will further strengthen institutional linkages such as Parliament exchanges, relations between Indian states and Vietnamese provinces, political party exchanges, exchanges of societies, friendship groups and youth organisations, educational and academic institutions, media journalists, think-tanks, research programs, educational scholarship, films, TV shows and sports. I am also happy to announce that both sides are in the final stage in installing the bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Ho Chi Minh City and the bust of President Ho Chi Minh in New Delhi. It is very important indication of our close cultural and people-to-people ties.

SP: *What are Vietnam's Priorities, Agenda and Challenges as Chair of ASEAN?*

PSC: Vietnam undertook the ASEAN Chairmanship in a very tough and challenging context. When it took over the ASEAN's chairmanship from Thailand in November 2019, Vietnam set out the theme of ASEAN in 2020 as "Cohesive and Responsive", in which 'Cohesive' reflects the need to enhance ASEAN unity and solidarity, economic integration, ASEAN awareness and identity, and work toward a "people-centred" community. Meanwhile, 'Responsive' underlines the importance of promoting ASEAN pro-activeness, creativity and capacity in response to opportunities and challenges brought about by rapid changes in regional and global landscape. It means Vietnam put premium on cementing cohesiveness and strengthening its capacity to cope with changes.Therefore, throughout the year, Vietnam has worked hard on a number of important issues. Firstly, it aims to strengthen ASEAN unity and solidarity, reinforce ASEAN centrality and promote its active contribution to regional peace and stability amid strategic complexities. Secondly, it works with other members to intensify ASEAN's economic integration and connectivity; better equip ASEAN economies and its people to adapt to the dynamic changes from the 4th Industrial Revolution and the digital economy. Thirdly, Vietnam dedicates much of its efforts to promote ASEAN identity and awareness about the ASEAN Community among

the people. Fourthly, it works to enhance ASEAN's global partnership for peace, stability and sustainable development. Fifthly, it tries to increase ASEAN's institutional capacity and effectiveness. As the Chair, Viet Nam was ready to host about 300 meetings, noticeably the ASEAN Summits in April and November, which approved about 80 important documents.

The unexpected eruption of the covid-19 pandemic disrupted some of ASEAN's agenda and shifted its focus. Vietnam, under the theme of 'responsive, worked with other member states to build up its capacity to cope with the crisis at the regional level. The workload has become two or three times heavier than before, but we have fortunately managed to get some deliverables in the field, especially the establishment of a regional fund and reserve of medical items, and the approval of Comprehensive Recovery Framework and Plan of Action.

One year has gone by and we are going towards the end of our chairmanship. Looking at what has been done, it can be said that Vietnam has been doing its best to make ASEAN's agenda and meetings a big success. I can sum up in five major achievements. First, we successfully upheld ASEAN's agenda with more than 550 meetings, the largest number of adopted documents in the history of all ASEAN meetings. Second, the image of an ASEAN and Vietnam of peace, stability and prosperity has been thoroughly communicated to international friends. Third, the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) holds a significant meaning to not only ASEAN but also global trade, helping minimise impacts caused by global supply chain disruption, promote trade flow within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its partners. Fourth, ASEAN has coped well with Covid-19, as compared to other regions. Almost all initiatives proposed by Vietnam at the summits, as the ASEAN Chair 2020, were discussed, approved and warmly welcomed by ASEAN leaders and partners. Last but not least, ASEAN's cohesiveness has been strengthened. As a grouping, it has done important review of the implementation of the charter and the community-building plan, building up a vision for 2025 and beyond.

SP: *Vietnam, an important country of the ASEAN, has territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea region. India has oil exploration projects in the Vietnamese waters in the South China Sea and China has been objecting to it. China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several ASEAN member countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counter claims. How do you view the situation?*

PSC: The South China Sea, (called as the East Sea in Vietnam), is a very important body of waters that links up the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the lifeline for almost all regional economies and many major economies in the world. Unfortunately, the South China Sea situation has been destabilized over the last decades, mainly due to the assertion of unlawful claims and aggressive actions. The case in point is China's nine-dash line to 80 per cent of the South China Sea and its Four Sha doctrine, which aims to round up a large expanse of the sea and insular features under its sovereignty. Such claims go against international law and the normal logic of sovereignty. We believe

that claims have to be staked legally and fairly.

As stated on many occasions, we strongly believe that Vietnam has sufficient legal basis and historical evidence to assert its sovereignty over the Paracels and Spratlys in accordance with international law. We also claim maritime entitlements in accordance with the spirit and letters of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Our hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation projects that Indian companies like ONGC are involved in, are entirely located within the lawful continental shelf of Vietnam. Any objections to these activities are not legitimate.

As a member of the UN, Vietnam is committed to resolving the disputes peacefully. We also worked hard to get the disputes managed properly. For that purpose, ASEAN is negotiating with China to build an effective, substantive and biding Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. We welcome the positions and contributions of other countries for the sake of maintaining peace, stability and rule of law in the region. Therefore, we appreciate India's view on the necessity of ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight, the respect for UNCLOS and its dispute settlement mechanisms. We are also striving for a meaningful COC that does not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of other nations in accordance with international law, especially UNCLOS.

SP: *Assuming the Chair of ASEAN in January, Vietnam's diplomacy has proven adaptable amid the constraints of COVID-19. The successful completion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement under Vietnam's watch this year has been eventful. Eight years in the making and spanning over thirty rounds of negotiations, RCEP promises to buttress the post-COVID-19 economic recovery of its fifteen members. Covering 29 percent of global GDP, its provisions spur the further development of regional value chains and greatly lower regulatory barriers to investment. Vietnam's leadership of RCEP marks its transformation to become one of the region's fastest growing and most internationally engaged economies. How do you see India opting out of RCEP?*

PSC: It is really a sovereign decision and we respect India's preferences. Vietnam worked with India since the very first rounds of negotiations. When India made her choice in 2019, frankly speaking, we were not really happy. It was and is still our sincere wish that India is part of the RCEP for the sake of maintaining an open, effective and fair-trading system. The RCEP without India, a significant economy, is less meaningful than what was envisioned. So even now, we still hope that India will reconsider and join us. That's why, along with Japan and Singapore, Vietnam proposed the Article 20.9 (Accession) of the RCEP Agreement, keeping the door open for India's entry. We have a high hope for the Indian economy will become a new source of global GDP growth and new manufacturing base.

SP: *Outcomes of the ASEAN-India Summit and the East Asia Summit held in November 2020 guided us to cross new milestones and open new vistas for the region while helping us to adapt to the new normal. How do you see the role of Vietnam as the current Chair of ASEAN in the first held Virtual Summit?*

PSC: As mentioned earlier, Vietnam is a strong

supporter of India's Act East policy. In the past, it also facilitated India's involvement with ASEAN and the inclusion of India into the East Asia Summit. As the Chair of ASEAN this year, Vietnam continued that track and worked with India to shape the evolving security architecture in the region. We have seen much of overlapping between India's Indian and Pacific Oceans Initiative and ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook, which put premium on a set of principles to maintain a rule-based order and ASEAN's centrality in the regional structure. It is a tough road to materialise these visions at a time of intense strategic rivalry, and we do believe that cooperation between India and ASEAN, and between India and Vietnam is really important.

SP: *As of June 2020, India has about 278 projects in Vietnam with total invested capital of USD 887 million, according to Vietnam's Foreign Investment Agency. India's investments in Vietnam are in the sectors of energy, mineral exploration, agro-processing, sugar, tea, coffee manufacturing, agrochemicals, IT and auto-components. Vietnamese investments in India are to the tune of USD 28.55 million primarily in areas of pharmaceuticals, IT, chemicals and construction materials. Our bilateral trade turnover is still not commensurate with the levels of our economic development. What do you think we need to do, to broaden and intensify our trade relations to achieve its full potential?*

PSC: Regarding trade and investment, we are far from reaching full potential. In a snapshot, India is one of the 10 largest trading partners of Viet Nam with 2-way turnover at more than US $12 billion in 2019. Both sides are now striving to bring that to the new milestone of US $15 billion at the earliest. Textile and garment, leather, pharma and IT are being promoted to bring new momentum to trade relations.

The two sides should work toward greater market access, including in agricultural and pharmaceutical products, which are globally reputed for their high quality. India is famous for generic medicines, whose manufacturing sites and products are certified by leading and stringent global drug regulatory authorities. In terms of investment, India's capital inflow into Vietnam is currently quite modest with 286 projects, total investment of US $890 million, ranking 26th out of the total number of countries and territories investing in Vietnam (according to data of the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam announced in August 2020). Still, India has great potential to increase direct investment in Vietnam.

Viet Nam welcomes and agrees to facilitate Indian companies investing in renewable energy and energy conservation projects, electricity generation, IT, ethanol fuel and polyester fabrics, fields of agriculture, among others, in Viet Nam. There are some Indian corporations seeking investment opportunities in Vietnam, and there are certain results like Essar and HCL. If these projects come into reality, India will be in the list of major countries and territories investing in Vietnam.

SP: *Vietnam has been a success story in managing Covid-19. Given her size, capacities and ambitions, India will be a major factor in the post-pandemic global revival and indeed has played the role of pharmacy to the world. How do you view India's role in this crisis?*

PSC: India is playing a critical role in the global fight against the pandemic for two reasons. First, India has become the world's largest producer of

generic medicines, accounting for 20 per cent of the total global production. In fact, India has contributed to making sure supplies of necessary drugs are not disrupted. Second, India will be the most important vaccine player. It provides 62 per cent of the worldwide demand for vaccines. For ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability of Covid-19 vaccine for everyone, India is an indispensable player as it is the biggest vaccine provider all over the world.

It is very important that Prime Minister Modi pledged to help humanity to fight the crisis. Being among the hardest-hit countries by Covid-19, and with its size and capacities, India is likely to be the country which has the highest level of Covid-19 vaccination. In the post-pandemic, the recovery of the economy is dependent on the scope of vaccination to the ordinary people. It may mean that India's future is really bright. It will be a key provider of vaccine to people around the globe.

SP: *The India–Vietnam relationship has acquired a qualitatively new character, over the years, with a broad-based and multi-sectoral bilateral cooperation. The relationship has been fortified by historical affinities, pre-colonial and cultural linkages. The significance of the relations has garnered much attention and interest, particularly after the Indo-Pacific construct started receiving international recognition. How do you visualise the future potential of this strategic partnership?*

PSC: India is one of the most important partners of Vietnam, one of the only three comprehensive strategic partnerships. The two countries are in preparation for the 5th anniversary of comprehensive strategic partnership in 2021 and the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between our countries in 2022. In 2021, India and Vietnam will also serve as members of the United Nations Security Council. The two countries are also key stakeholders in the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. This will be an opportunity for us to strengthen our cooperation and coordination in global and regional issues of mutual concern and bolster ASEAN's centrality. These are very important milestone for us to recall and also to think of the future and map out our cooperation. But keep in mind that we are tasked with implementing the joint vision statement and the plan of action for period of 2021-2023 signed by two Prime Ministers.

To be specific, in a time of instability and growing uncertainties, we need to substantially cover all the five different pillars which are essential in making a relationship a comprehensive strategic partnership, namely defence and security, economy and trade, science and cooperation, political visits and people-to-people contact. It is important for both countries to work closely together to assure the rule of law in the region and to make sure that power politics is not a norm. Cooperation on vaccine development, storage and distribution is key for economic recovery. In the meantime, they should keep working on greater access for enterprises of both countries to each other markets. Last but not least, the cultural ties should be enhanced through concrete conservation projects as well as efforts by both sides to improve popular awareness of two countries to each other's public domain. I strongly believe that the partnership between our two countries will grow more strategically and comprehensively along this pathway.

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The Collapse of Societies and Regimes: An Analytical Framework

Jay Bhattacharjee*

A few years ago, this analyst tried to study the reasons why dynasties, regimes and civilisations collapsed.[1] In an essay, written when the country was gearing up for national elections after a ten-year stint of the Congress-UPA regime at the Centre, I focused on the widespread discontent with the Central Government and the Congress Party that was sweeping the nation.

As a matter of fact, many analysts and observers were predicting the end of the hegemony of the Congress Party that had more or less been continuously in power in New Delhi since 1947, when the country became independent. The number of years when we had non-Congress regimes in the Union Government could be counted on one finger tip.

However, the halcyon days of the grand old Indian party and the Nehru family were clearly coming to an end. It is against this backdrop that I attempted to study how similar changes had taken place in history. For the benefit of lay readers, this article took up a number of examples from the past, when empires, regimes, juntas and dynasties had collapsed in different parts of the world. I did add the cautionary note that the Congress Party (under the leadership of the Nehru-Gandhi family) had displayed remarkable survival skills over many decades.

It was because of this dexterity in coping with existential threats and risks, that many observers, researchers and scholars were still hesitant in the first quarter of 2014 to classify the indigenous Grand Old Party (GOP) as a death-bed case. Yet, the warning signs were inescapable—the Congress ship was taking in too much water and the captain and crew in the ship's bridge were manifestly ineffective. The essay then went on to pose the basic question that Edward Gibbon had asked in his landmark study (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) more than two-and-a-half centuries earlier. The great scholar wrote: **"***Instead of inquiring why the Roman Empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted for so long."*

I couldn't resist adding tongue-in-cheek that the study of the collapse of the Roman Empire was most appropriate in the second decade of the twenty-first century because of the Italianate ambience of our country these days. Gibbon had also stressed that the Roman collapse could also be attributed to "*immoderate greatness"*. Moreover, "*prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the cause of the destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and, as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight."*

In a light-hearted interjection, the description of the Congress Party as an organisation that

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possessed "immoderate greatness" was also queried. Thereafter, the essay went on to assess the French Revolution as another major example of a collapse of a dynasty and regime. I described the pre-revolutionary society of France in the second half of the 18th century as a classic template of a completely decadent, inefficient and corrupt system, that had a very close resemblance to the Indian one in 2014.

The economic inequalities in pre-Revolutionary France were appalling, and comparable to the Indian one in 2014. Some segments of the population, like the nobility and the clergy, were exempted from taxation, just like in India. At an informal level, private tax collectors extracted more money than the government's requirement, the additional amount being pocketed by them, a scenario very similar in these shores. All these problems were aggravated by inflation and malnutrition of many ordinary citizens.

The final parallel was that the French Queen, Marie Antoinette, was a totally unpopular Austrian-born import. The statement *"if they can't get bread, let them eat cake"* that was widely attributed to her, was not proved beyond reasonable doubt, but resentment against her lent it credibility. The Indian experience of the extra-loyal courtiers of the Nehru-Gandhi family could have come straight from the Versailles court in the 1780s.

The last example that the essay of 2014 studied was the Russian Revolution of 1917, something that should be most uncomfortable for the Indian communists of various hues who are still around in our country.

In Tsarist Russia, industrialisation had come many years after western Europe and the U.K. The country was predominantly agrarian, with the majority of farmers being small and marginal producers. Statistically, this demographic segment also constituted the predominant majority of the country's population. The government had given these people small tracts of land that were barely cultivable and they were obliged to pay the state a prescribed sum of money for their "freedom". The result was widespread indebtedness, poverty and subsistence-farming among the farmers. Large-scale immigration of farmers to urban areas was the natural outcome. Half the farming families had one member at least who had left the village to find other work in the towns. As the central Russian population boomed, land became scarce. The appalling life-standard of the peasants was in sharp contrast to that of the rich landowners, who held 20% of the land in large estates and were often members of the Russian upper class. The resemblance to India is something that cannot be overlooked.

In the industrial sector and in the urban areas, the situation was equally dismal and here again there are many similarities to the Indian scenario. Russia's cities began to expand and large numbers of peasants moved to the cities to take up new jobs. By the turn of the nineteenth century, millions of Russians were in these tightly-packed and poorly-planned urban conglomerations, experiencing problems like poor and cramped housing, insufficient wages, and limited rights in their jobs.

The government was afraid of the developing urban class, but more afraid of driving foreign investment away by supporting better wages, and, therefore, the country never saw any serious

legislation for reforming the awful economic system that prevailed. It should also be stressed that the urban work-force continued to retain close links and ties to their agricultural families. The similarities with India are manifestly clear.

Soon Tsarist Russia witnessed major social unrest, and revolutionary movements started emerging. The Romanov Tsar Nicholas II had no clue about the solution to the country's crisis. The millstone around his neck was his wife, the German-born Tsarina Alexandra, and her advisors. In 2014 and thereafter, this syndrome of another foreign-born ruler was, naturally most awkward for the Congress power-centres in 24 Akbar Road and 10 Janpath**.** Suffice to say, a few months after the essay was published, the Congress and its allies were swept away in a gigantic political tsunami that had all the hallmarks of long pent-up forces being suddenly unleashed. The same happened after another five years, when in May-2019, the new rulers were re-anointed in power with a greater mandate.

Readers should be reminded that the landmark study which inspired this analyst's article in 2014 was Joseph Tainter's book published three decades ago in 1988.[2] It is to this primary source that we will now return, as we continue our assessment of the subject. This magnum opus examines the collapse of the Mayan and Chacoan civilisations, and of the Western Roman Empire, in terms of network theory, energy economics and complexity theory. Tainter puts forward the thesis that sustainability or collapse of societies depend upon the success or failure of problem-solving institutions. Furthermore, regimes and societies crumble when their "*investments in social complexity and their energy subsidies reach a point of diminishing marginal returns*." He foresees collapse when a society involuntarily jettisons an important proportion of its complexity.

In this theoretical framework of Tainter, societies become more complex as they try to solve problems. Social complexity is present when many different and specific social and economic roles, as well as the numerous mechanisms through which they are coordinated, can be identified. Another ingredient is the reliance on symbolic and abstract communication, as well as the existence of a class of information producers and analysts who are not involved in primary resource production. A complex structure like this needs a considerable amount of "energy" subsidy (meaning the consumption of resources, or other forms of wealth).

When a society confronts a "problem," such as a shortage of energy, or difficulty in gaining access to it, it tends to create new layers of bureaucracy, infrastructure, or social class to address the challenge. Tainter identifies seventeen examples of rapid collapse of societies. However, his detailed case studies are those where he applies his model to the Western Roman Empire, the Maya civilisation, and the Chaco culture.

For example, as Roman agricultural output slowly declined and population increased, per-capita energy availability dropped. The Romans tried to resolve this problem by conquering their neighbours to appropriate their energy surpluses (in concrete forms, like metals, grain, slaves, etc.). However, as the Roman Empire grew, the cost of maintaining communications, garrisons, civil government, etc. increased disproportionately.

Eventually, this cost became so high that any new challenges such as invasions and crop failures could not be solved by the acquisition of more territory.

Intense, authoritarian efforts to maintain cohesion by Domitian and Constantine the Great only led to a growing strain on the population. The Empire split into two halves, of which the western unit soon fragmented further into smaller units. The eastern half, being wealthier, was able to survive longer, and did not collapse but instead succumbed slowly and piecemeal, because unlike the western empire it had powerful neighbours able to take advantage of its weakness.

It is often assumed that the collapse of the western Roman Empire was a catastrophe for everyone involved. Tainter points out that it can be seen as a very rational preference of individuals at the time, many of whom were actually better off after the collapse. Tainter notes that in the west, local populations in many cases greeted the barbarians as liberators.

It must be pointed out that Tainter, in his 1988 study, drew upon a wealth of earlier studies by a number of titanic scholars on the broad issue of regime-collapse. These included Edward Shils[3], Pitirim Sorokin[4,5], Paul Valery[6], among others. The essence of all these studies is that complex societies are problem-solving organisations, in which more and different kinds of parts, more social differentiation, more inequality, and more kinds of centralisation and control emerge as circumstances require.

The increase in complexity of societies over the centuries has involved a change from small, internally-homogeneous, minimally-differentiated groups characterised by equal access to resources, shifting, ephemeral leadership, and unstable political formations, to large, heterogeneous, internally-differentiated, class-structured and controlled societies, in which the life-sustaining resources are not equally available to all. Modern society requires and demands constant legitimisation and reinforcement.

The process of collapse is a matter of rapid, substantial decline in an established level of complexity. A society that has collapsed is suddenly smaller, less differentiated and heterogeneous, and characterised by fewer specialised parts. Because it has less social differentiation, it is able to exercise less control over the behaviour of its members. At the same time, it is able to generate smaller surpluses, to offer fewer benefits and inducements to membership. It is less capable of providing subsistence and defensive security for a regional population. It may decompose to some of the constituent building blocks (e.g. states, ethnic groups, villages) out of which it was created.

The loss of complexity, like its emergence, is a continuous variable. Collapse may involve a drop between the major levels of complexity envisioned by many anthropologists (e.g. state to chiefdom), or it may equally well involve a drop within a level (larger to smaller, or transitional to typical or Inchoate states). Collapse offers an interesting perspective for social scientists. It is a process of major, rapid change from one structurally-stable level to another.

Tainter begins by categorising and examining the often inconsistent explanations that have been offered in various studies for collapse. In Tainter's view, while invasions, crop failures, disease or environmental degradation may be the *apparent*

causes of societal collapse, the ultimate cause is an economic one, inherent in the structure of society, rather than in external shocks, which may batter them. On the intricate issue of diminishing returns on investments in social complexity, he musters up enough modern statistics to show that marginal returns on investments in energy, education and technological innovation are diminishing today. The globalised modern world is subject to many of the same stresses that brought older societies to ruin.

However, Tainter is not entirely apocalyptic: *"When some new input to an economic system is brought on line, whether a technical innovation or an energy subsidy, it will often have the potential at least temporarily to raise marginal productivity"*. Thus, barring continual conquest of a country's neighbours (which is always subject to diminishing returns), innovation that increases productivity is, in the long run, the only way out of the dilemma of declining marginal returns on added investments in complexity.

And, in the final chapters of his 1988 tome, Tainter discusses why modern societies may not be able to choose to collapse, because surrounding them are other complex societies, which will in some way absorb a collapsed region or prevent a general collapse. The Mayan and Chaocan regions had no powerful complex neighbours and so could collapse for centuries or millennia, as could the Western Roman Empire, but the Eastern Roman Empire, bordered as it was by the Parthian / Sassanid Empire, did not have the option of devolving into simpler smaller entities.

Now is the appropriate stage to raise some red flags about Tainter's book. In its scope and coverage, it is indeed encyclopaedic, but that is also its drawback. Tainter draws such an enormous canvas that he often gets lost in it. His conclusions, in many instances, are often revised partially in subsequent segments. Consequently, he sometimes appears to be meandering and "provisional". Other scholars like Valery and Shils come out very often as much more focused than Tainter.

This is a pity, because a path-breaking research study has recently been published by a group of Italian statisticians / mathematical economists that clearly validate Tainter's major propositions. In their 2019 paper[7], Ugo Bardi, Sara Falsini and Ilaria Perissi have made a very convincing case in favour of Tainter's theories on collapse of societies or large/complex social systems, often referred to as civilisations or empires. The Italian scholars presented a mathematical model which proves the theory that societies collapse because of the "diminishing returns of complexity", as propounded by Tainter in his 1988 book.

The Bardi-Falsini-Perissi model is much too complex and esoteric to be assessed here in detail. In lay terms, we can briefly summarise their work. According to their model, a socio-economic system is a chain of energy stocks which dissipate the energy potential of the available resources. The exploitation of a non-renewable resource stock ("production") has a strongly non-linear relation with the complexity of the system. As the entire mechanism continues working, it produces various trajectories of decline of the economy. In some cases, the decline is so pronounced that it can be defined as "collapse."

More research in this extremely interesting area is now also available from other scholars who

have carried on where Tainter ended in 1988. Peter Turchin, another Russian-born social scientist who has a vast analytical canvas like his fellow-Russian, Sorokin, has followed Tainter's theories by suggesting a single mechanism that leads to collapse. This mechanism is the loss of "social resilience" which Turchin describes as the ability of a social system to "cooperate and act collectively for common goals".[8]

According to Turchin, the United States was collapsing well before Covid-19 erupted in the country in early 2020. For the last 40 years, he argues, the population has been relentlessly getting impoverished and more unhealthy, while the elites accumulated more and more wealth. All the while, the legitimacy of institutions is continuously getting eroded, and institutional legitimacy founders. *"The United States is basically eating itself from the inside out,"* he says.

Inequality and "popular immiseration" have left the country extremely vulnerable to external shocks like the pandemic, and to internal triggers like the George Floyd affair. Turchin does not hesitate to predict that the U.S., in the years to come, can expect much more of the variety of social upheaval that it saw in 2020. This is simply because the *"underlying conditions are only getting worse."* Clearly, the Tainter school of civilisational collapse has enrolled new proponents and advocates, who will continue to enlarge the boundaries of this most captivating sociological doctrine.

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Jawaharlal Nehru and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar: Ideological Intersection in the Origins of the Idea of India

Hindol Sengutpa*

Introduction

Perhaps no two political figures in modern Indian history have been considered more antithetical to one another than Jawaharlal Nehru and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The self-professed admirer of socialism, Nehru, the first prime minister of India, is seen as an emblem of pluralism while Savarkar, with his sectarian fusing of Hindu religion with nationalism, is considered parochial and divisive.

This essay analyses two seminal texts, Nehru's The Discovery of India (1946), and Savarkar's Hindutva (1923), both composed when the writers were imprisoned by the British government for participating in the freedom movement, to show how, while these two leaders built differing, even antagonistic political projects, the ideas they used in conceptualising an independent homeland contained areas of significant convergence.

The founding principles of the India that the two men, trained in law in England, dreamt of, and the vocabulary they used – whether quoting Yeats ('balanced all, brought all to mind', Nehru 1946: 22) or Shakespeare ('What's in a name?' Savarkar 1969: 1) – placed them in a "nationalist-collaborator" role (Hussain 1974: 1) simultaneously playing freedom fighter and consummate intermediary with access to the culture of the rulers. Nehru declared that he was "the last Englishman to rule India[1]", while Savarkar promised "to be the staunchest advocate of constitutional progress and loyalty to the English government which is the foremost condition of that progress"[2].

Through this essay I shall chart out four primary areas of confluence in the way Nehru and Savarkar framed the notion of India – (a) construction of a common "sacred geography" (Eck 2011) in which they find their "hidden heart of national identity" (Schama 1995: 56); (b) the shared narrative of masculinity; (c) framing through "Eastern nationalism" (Plamenatz 1973) the lens where they feel compelled to contest a sense of cultural inadequacy; (d) and though both of them avow a moral rejection of a caste-based social structure, they cannot escape its use, even covert defence, as an inherent part of the body polity.

The comparison between The Discovery of India and Hindutva shall show us how the modern Indian nation was created through an ideological tussle whose dispute is well-documented but commonality at origin is often ignored.

Methodology

What bridges the vision of Nehru and Savarkar in The Discovery of India and Hindutva is a permeating sense of devotion, a language of piety, to a spatial topography which they imbibe with metaphysical meaning. For two men who declare aesthetical disinterest in religion, neither can construct the idea of a nation without theological

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tropes.

"I wandered over Himalayas, which are closely connected to old myth and legend… the mighty rivers of India that flow from this great mountain barrier into the plains of India… The Indus or *Sifidhu* from which our country came to be called India or Hindustan…" says The Discovery of India (Nehru 1946: 51), echoing Savarkar's, "…the great Indus was known as Hindu to the original inhabitants of our land and owing to the vocal peculiarity of the Aryans it got changed into Sindhu…" (Savarkar 1969: 12). The ancients, argued Savarkar, were looking to find a word "… comprehensive enough… to express the vast synthesis that embraced the whole continent from the Indus to the sea and aimed to weld it into a nation" (Ibid.).

If nationalism is made up of "cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (Anderson 2006: 4), then these artefacts are to be found, for both Nehru and Savarkar, in geography. If for one, "The story of the Ganges, from her source to the sea, from old times to new, is the story of India's civilisation and culture" (Nehru 1946: 51), for the other, the sense of the nation is created "out of their gratitude to the genial and perennial network of waterways that ran through the land like a system of nerve threads and wove them into a Being" (Savarkar 1969: 5).

Both men emphasise the interweave of co-related geographies, a mountain range here, a river there, all of them in conversation with one another, using the idea that "geography is a science of relationships" (Huntington 1928).

Their imagined communities (Anderson 2006) are plotted in scriptural terms with Nehru pointing to "vast numbers of common folk were continually travelling to the numerous places of pilgrimage… All this going to and fro and meeting people from different parts of the country must have intensified the conception of a common land and a common culture…" (Nehru 1946: 191) and Savarkar claiming to quote from the ancient *Vishnu Purana*, "The land which is to the north of the sea and to the south of the Himalaya mountain is named Bharata[3]".

But using this shared conception, they arrive at divergent destinations. Nehru talks of an India built as an "ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously" (Nehru 1946: 59). But for Savarkar, assimilation (and not coexisting layering) is the key to nationhood, for instance for Muslims, he wants "worship as heroes our ten great avatars only adding Muhammad as the eleventh" (Savarkar 1969: 101) as the criterion for entry into the embrace of nationhood. This difference is stark, for instance, in describing the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni upon India. "Mahmud was far more a warrior than a man of faith and like many other conquerors he used and exploited the name of religion for his conquests… He enrolled an army in India and placed it under one of his noted generals, Tilak by name, who was an Indian and a Hindu. This army he used against his own co-religionists in central Asia" (Nehru: 1946: 235), while "…where religion is goaded by rapine and rapine serves as a handmaid to religion… such were the forces, overwhelmingly furious, that took India by surprise the day Mohammad crossed the Indus and invaded her" (Savarkar 1969: 44) – while they can agree with why their homeland is glorious, Nehru and Savarkar part ways in defining the enemies of India and their attributes.

In Nehru's imagination of India, there is no defined 'other' whereas the 'other' for Savarkar

is acutely established. For Savarkar, India is defined by influences that it must repel, while for Nehru, even in the most repellent of experiences, India is constructed of that which it absorbs—even from those that attack it.

In their imagining of India, there is also a shared sense between Nehru and Savarkar of "Eastern nationalism" (Plamenatz 1973). The Plamenatz model talks of two kinds of nationalism – Western and Eastern. Western nationalism, according to Plamenatz, is seen among Western countries which may have gone into decline but are sure of their cultural apparatus, whereas Eastern nationalism in places like Asia and Africa comes from "peoples recently drawn into a civilisation hitherto alien to them" (Plamenatz 1973: 25) and deals with a feeling of cultural inadequacy.

The Discovery of India has tracts of the questioning of such alien culture with undertones of a pushback against the inadequacy of the native culture. "Ancient Greece is supposed to be the fountainhead of European civilisation, and much has been written about the Orient and the Occident. I do not understand this… India, it is said, is religious, philosophical, speculative, metaphysical, unconcerned with this world, and lost in dreams of the beyond… So we are told, and perhaps those who tell us so would like India to remain plunged in thought… so that they might possess this world…" (Nehru 1946: 152). Savarkar has even more emotive fare: "The Indians saw that the cherished ideals of their race… were trampled underfoot, the holy land of their love devastated and sacked by hordes of barbarians" (Savarkar 1969: 21).

Nehru disagreed with poet Matthew Arnold's description of the East ("The East bow'd low before the blast; In patient, deep disdain; She let the legions thunder past; And plunged in thought again[4]") in The Discovery of India, writing, "But it is not true that India has ever bowed patiently before the blast or been indifferent to the passage of foreign legions. Always she has resisted them, often successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, and even when she failed for the time being, she has remembered and prepared herself for the next attempt." (Nehru 1946: 142). Savarkar makes a similar point of forgotten valour, when attacked, he argued, "… the enlightened would perhaps remain as unaffected as ever… But the rest of the Hindus could not then drink with equanimity this cup of bitterness and political servitude at the hands of those whose barbarous violence could still be soothed by the mealy-mouthed formulas of *ahimsa* (non-violence)" (Savarkar 1969: 19).

Unmistakably, there is a streak of "nationalism is paranoia" (Kis 1966) in this. In fact, the reinforcement of the vision of nationalism based on "an ancient civilisational entity" (Oomen 1999) is consistently used as a counterbalance to the cultural inadequacy, Nehru and Savarkar seem to sense around them. Perhaps it is because of this feeling of insufficiency that both men seep into their description of India, strong undertones of masculinity.

Underlining both texts, there is a sense of romanticist masculinity, a portrayal of adventure – theoretically this is their journey to become "men of consequence" (Ruddiman 2014). Nehru has an effusive description of the moon from his jail room in the beginning of The Discovery of India, "The moon, ever a companion to me in prison, has grown more friendly… a reminder of the loveliness of this world…" (Nehru 1946: 15). His portrayal of prison life as a romantic ideal started early and stayed on. "Nehru thrilled in jail-going, and there is, in his letters and diaries of the early twenties, the glow of virginal suffering and self-indulgent

sacrifice." (Gopal 1976). In The Discovery of India, Nehru brags about how he bravely spurned an invitation to meet Mussolini despite being on a visit to Rome and immense diplomatic pressure (Nehru 1946: 47). On his part, Savarkar's self-imagery and positioning is lucid. He mentions, "Forty centuries, if not more" have gone by to as "prophets and poets, lawyers and law-givers, heroes and historians, have thought, lived, fought and died" establish the legitimacy of the word Hindutva (Savarkar 1969: 3). There is no confusion about his self-placement in that pantheon – Savarkar is, in his own assessment, the latest in the list of historical figures battling to establish the credentials of Hindutva.

There is a difference, though, in the tonality of their masculinity. Nehru develops a voice of "avuncular masculinity" (Krishnamurti 2014), a derivative of the Gandhian "Satyagraha… has been conceived as the weapon of the strongest" (Gandhi 1938). For instance, for all the talk of non-violence, Nehru hastens to explain in The Discovery of India that non-violence did not prevent the Congress from formulating the creation of a military or police force in independent India (Nehru 1946: 444). Savarkar has a more militant ideology and displays an "anxious Hindu masculinity" (Gupta 2011) as he pushes forth the idea of *sangathan* (organisation), "The numerical strength of our race is an asset that cannot be too highly prized" (Savarkar 1969: 134), and in his worldview every enemy of India is defined in terms of "bitter haters of Hindus" (Savarkar 1969: 59) and every hero as "you are the restorer of the Hindu religion and the destroyer of the *Mlechhas* (foreigners)" (Ibid.).

Nehru and Savarkar also denounced caste in the personal and public but failed to escape putting forth its relevance, even defence, in the making of India as they saw it. India may have had caste discrimination, but this was better than the slave labour in ancient Greece, argues Nehru. "Within each caste there was equality… each caste was occupational and applied itself to its own particular work. This led to a high degree of specialisation and skill…" (Nehru 1946: 216). Savarkar is more strident, "… pull down the barriers that have survived their utility… of castes and customs... Let this ancient and noble stream of Hindu blood flow from vein to vein" (Savarkar 1969: 129). Savarkar could only "pull down" dated customs, never completely remove caste as there is always a lurking sense that Hindu unity would be lost without caste.

Conclusion

This essay, for reasons of brevity, does not make a claim to depict in its entirety, the ideological roots and commonality between Nehru and Savarkar. But it does aim to succinctly show that even though contemporary imagination pitches them as irreconcilable adversaries, the men were products of their class and milieu. It is conceivably Nehru's exposure to socialism and Gandhian pacifism that enables him to construct a multicultural teleology (Guttman 2003). Savarkar's early rejection of "mealy-mouthed *ahimsa*" leads to a more radical path including an accusation in the assassination of Gandhi[5]. That the two men differed in their conclusions, and Nehru's subsequent leadership of independent India, established his vision of a mosaic society in India. But it is because of the early commonalities that Savarkar's monochromatic viewpoint never disappeared and, as the rise of Hindu nationalism has shown, may yet be strong enough to mount a sustained challenge as a legitimate and potent political force.

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Notes:

1 *Venugopal, Arun, 'It was India's good fortune to be a British colony': Interview with John Kenneth Galbraith (2001), New Delhi: Outlook*

2 *Majumdar, R. C., Penal Settlements in the Andamans (1975), New Delhi: Department of Culture, Government of India*

3 *Used here synonymously to India but charting a territory covering most of modern South Asia*

4 *Arnold, Matthew, Obermann Once Again, PoetryFoundation.org*

5 *The accusation could not be proved before the law and was subsequently withdrawn.*

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