



# DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

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- The Abraham Accords: New Strategic Planning or Hidden Agenda for West Asia?  
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## ➤ EDITOR'S NOTE

The year 2020 will probably go down in the living memory of all inhabitants of the planet as a year that they wished never happened. There was utter chaos that was evident as the so-called developed nations were unable to cope with the magnitude of the misery brought upon their peoples—mostly the aged—by the ‘unstoppable’ scourge of COVID-19. Social media carried the images of patients affected by the coronavirus lying in corridors of hospitals with no doctor or nursing staff on hand to attend to them. This added to the fear among patients that the disease was incurable. Availability of aeroplanes for intercontinental travel helped in faster transmission of the disease. Once it was realised that the pandemic had a human-to-human transmissibility, flights were cancelled, and airlines stopped their operations completely. Soon, nations across the world went into a lockdown mode and the ‘Work From Home’ ethic was followed by all businesses and most enterprises. Educational institutions shutdown and children slowly began to see a new form of teaching methodology—via ‘Zoom’. Economies around the world collapsed as people were laid-off work; migrant labour was the worst affected. COVID-19 had a catastrophic impact on the aviation industry from which it has not yet recovered; some airlines are believed to have reached the point of no return from where recovery is impossible.

Some countries, however, were not affected by the pandemic. These were mostly island nations in the South Pacific that had enforced strict restrictions on incoming flights. With economies collapsing around the world, China—which had been the epicentre for the spread of the coronavirus (as admitted by its leader Xi Jinping to the visiting WHO Director General at Beijing in the last week of January)—closed internal air traffic within the country but allowed

its people to go to destinations around the world for tourism till March (when the WHO formally announced COVID-19 a pandemic). By the time the world was getting into a lockdown mode, China was recovering from the impact of the coronavirus because of the strict quarantine and other measures it had implemented. It had also bought out all available PPE kits, ventilators from the US and most European nations, leaving them unprepared to fight the pandemic when it struck their nations with full force. Taking advantage of the situation—and in furtherance of its centenary goals—China turned its gaze on Taiwan. It carried out live firing drills in the Bohai Sea to simulate ‘island seizure’ to intimidate the people of Taiwan just prior to the post-election speech by its President (who is considered pro-Independence of Taiwan). The US in a show of solidarity sailed its Arleigh Burke class destroyer in the Taiwan Strait, and cleared the sale of 66 F-16s to Taiwan. China now looked to its western border and the attempts at grabbing territory in the Ladakh sector began.

We have all seen the barbaric manner in which the premeditated attacks by the PLA on unarmed Indian troops unfolded. Of course, despite losing 20 brave hearts at Galwan, the riposte from the Indian troops was swift and even more deadly, leading to an unspecified number of casualties on the Chinese side (some reports now say 40 PLA soldiers died and many more were injured). The actions by the troops of the Special Frontier Force (SFF)—the Vikas battalion—and Indian troops at the Kailash Range south of the Pangong Tso took the Chinese by surprise. Indian troops now control the strategic heights opposite Chushul.

From the above actions taken by China against Taiwan and India, it can be clearly surmised that for China there are no rules, it is only national interests that are supreme. Otherwise, at a time when the world is battling a pandemic, should the country that has vowed to do its utmost to control the spread of the novel coronavirus outside China not be concentrating its efforts on doing just that, rather than ‘hitting a man when he is down’ (a cardinal ‘No No’ in the rules of boxing).

The battle lines are clearly drawn; the Chinese have decided to reinforce their troops and while they talk of disengagement, there are no signs to suggest that the Chinese intend pulling back from

positions they have occupied in the north bank of the Pangong Tso, at Hot Springs, or in the Depsang Plains.

India needs to stay ready for a riposte from the Chinese that is likely in the early part of 2021, as soon as the snow begins to melt, or even earlier. The 'loss of face' suffered by the PLA in not anticipating the pre-emptive and bold actions by India is something that the Chinese would not be able to swallow, particularly in the year that is also the centenary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party.

There is, however, a new administration in the US waiting to take shape. What would be the priorities for Joe Biden on assuming office is something that the Chinese would be watching very carefully before considering their next step. A 'Business as Usual' approach with China is likely to signal a *carte blanche* for China to go ahead and complete its unfinished agenda. Pronouncements about cordial relations with India could spell a different course of action for the Chinese.

India needs to be wary and ready for all eventualities.

With the hope of a successful and healing impact of the various vaccines being readied for widespread application, my best wishes to all my readers that 2021 will be a joyous, healthy, and prosperous year for all.

STAY SAFE STAY HEALTHY STAY HAPPY STAY FOCUSED

Happy reading



# THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS: NEW STRATEGIC PLANNING OR HIDDEN AGENDA FOR WEST ASIA?

ANU SHARMA

One of the historical events in the history of West Asia during these unprecedented times of COVID-19 was the signing of the Abraham Accords<sup>1</sup> between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain in the month of August 2020 and September 2020 respectively. The accord is the one mediated by the US and is a first in the 26-year history of Arab-Israeli peace process. Still, there remains much to ponder whether this accord can present a new strategic design for the West Asian peace process or if there is a hidden agenda related to it. In this context, this paper will try to figure out whether there is a hidden agenda behind the recent Abraham Accords between a few Arab states and Israel brokered by the then US President Donald Trump and how it will change the strategic map of the region. In fact, these accords signed between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, establishing full diplomatic relations between these Arab states and

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1. "Abraham Accords: Declaration of Peace, Cooperation, and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations", *White House-Statements and Releases*, September 15, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/abraham-accords-declaration-peace-cooperation-constructive-diplomatic-friendly-relations/>. Accessed on November 1, 2020.

Israel, made them among the few other nations to do so after Jordan (1994) and Egypt (1979) in the West Asian North African (WANA) region. In such a scenario, the question arises whether this accord has further widened the faultlines in the region already surfacing after the Qatar crisis of 2018.

### **WHAT ARE ABRAHAM ACCORDS?**

Abraham Accords was an agreement that was informed to the world after President Donald Trump tweeted about a ‘diplomatic triumph’ in the West Asian region referred to as an agreement normalising relations between Israel and the UAE, initially. Later on, in September 2020 another Arab nation, Bahrain also joined the accords and formally signed this agreement. On September 15, 2020 President Trump presided over a ceremony in the White House (US) with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Ministers of the UAE and Bahrain Abdullah bin Zayed al Nahyan and Abdullatif al Zayani, respectively. However, a number of scholars, analysts and political pundits have regraded this as a PR stunt by President Trump just before the elections in the US. But the same can become a game changer in the West Asian politics—both regional and international. At the same time, some are also regarding this as an event that could have brought mutual electoral benefits for both President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It has also shattered the prevailing myth that any concessions to Israel or Arab-Israeli peace process can happen only when a meaningful compromise happens between Israel and Palestine. It has also highlighted the divergence in foreign policy and diplomatic thinking in the various Arab nations which are taking steps based on their strategic interests and choices. This indicates the shifting regional priorities. Even though President Trump’s declaration that “historic day for peace in Middle East ...”<sup>2</sup> still seems a distant possibility, this decision by the UAE and Bahrain has definitely changed the contours of future policymaking of the West Asian nations.

Referring to this accord/agreement as “Abraham Accords” can be considered a superb marketing move by President Trump;

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2. President Donald Trump’s Tweet dated September 15, 2020, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1305900664971763712?lang=en>. Accessed on November 19, 2020.



however, the aim of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still seems a little far-fetched American plan for peace in the region. At the same time, it led countries like the UAE and Bahrain, which were concerned about the receding American influence in the region of re-evaluating and resetting their priorities and moving closer towards Israel—one of the leading military powers of the world. Through this, the Gulf monarchies are looking towards ways and means to counter the increasing Iranian influence in the West Asian region. Furthermore, their aim is to diminish the influence of organisations such as Muslim Brotherhood and other organisations affiliated to Sunni Islamist movements backed by Turkey and Qatar, regardless of the impact on the Palestinians.<sup>3</sup>

The question arises, what makes this accord different from all the peace agreements initiated in the past to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue? What makes this accord more significant? The answer is that the Abraham Accords lack the historical baggage. Both the UAE and Bahrain don't share borders with Israel and neither have any ongoing dispute with the Jewish state. The accords are based on shared regional perceptions and have a major potential to boost economic growth, with four mutually beneficial micro-agreements already signed on investment, scientific cooperation, civil aviation and visa exemptions respectively.<sup>4</sup> However, this was unsurprising in the case of the UAE which has built strong economic and cyber-security relations with Israel over the past ten years. Since 2010, Israel and the UAE have been conducting high-level visits regarding renewable energy usage.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the leaders of both the nations have met and discussed various issues related to renewable energy eventually increasing the political interactions between the two nations to other sectors such as the military cooperation, travel, cultural and scientific cooperation, sports and, more recently, medical cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic hitting almost every nation around the

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3. Massimiliano Fore, "The Abraham Accords and the Palestinian Issue", *E-IR*, November 1, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/01/the-abraham-accords-and-the-palestinian-issue/>. Accessed on November 19, 2020.

4. Ibid.

5. Shashank Joshi, "Why Israel and the Arab Nations Are Slowly Drawing Closer Together", *The Telegraph*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/29/the-growing-arab-israeli-thaw-is-an-opportunity-for-the-west/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

globe. All these events have set the stage for the signing of the Abraham Accords between the UAE and Israel. Added to this is the fact that Palestinian urgings to the Arab League—a regional organisation of West Asia—to condemn the actions of the UAE and Bahrain agreement of normalisation of relations was met with a view from the League referring to this agreement as the right of individual Arab states to take a sovereign decision. This was quite different from the League’s vociferous and dramatic opposition to the Camp David Accords (1979).<sup>6</sup> In such a scenario, the situation is turning a little difficult for Palestine in the region.

In the joint statement it was mentioned that the UAE, Bahrain and Israel would establish formal diplomatic relations and, in exchange, Israel would suspend its plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank. This was supported by the US and included in the agreement that Israel “will suspend declaring sovereignty over areas” of the West Bank and “focus its efforts on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world”. In the statement it was also mentioned that the diplomatic delegations from Israel and the UAE would sign the bilateral agreements regarding “investment, tourism, direct flights, security, telecommunications, technology, energy, healthcare, culture, the environment, the establishment of reciprocal embassies, and other areas of mutual benefit, in the near future”.<sup>7</sup>

One of the important aspects of this accord regarding the regional politics is that the West Asia of today is much different and faces a different set of threats—both traditional and non-traditional—which includes a virulent and existential threat of religious extremism, an ascendant Iran that has successfully co-opted governments and citizens across the region, and rash of civil conflict that has created failed states to our north and south. So, this accord was projected as a means of achieving sustainable peace in the West Asian region with cooperation among all the parties to this agreement as a requisite.

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6. David Makovsky, “How the Abraham Accords Look Forward, Not Back”, *Policy Watch—The Washington Institute*, September 16, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/how-the-abraham-accords-look-forward-not-back>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
  7. Stanly Johny, “The Hindu Explains: Why Has the Israel-UAE Pact Unsettled Palestine and Iran?” *The Hindu*, August 16, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-hindu-explains-why-has-the-israel-uae-pact-unsettled-palestine-and-iran/article32364470.ece>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

### A STRATEGIC AGENDA?

Iran is one of the few mutual issues between Israel and the Arab nations. Though not explicitly discussed in the text of the Accords, constraining the increasing Iranian threat is also one of the factors that brought these Gulf nations and Israel together. In a way, it can be said that it compares with the idea of creating an Arab military alliance to counter the rising threat of Iran. This was the prevalent idea that was floated during the Trump Presidency in the US. There are chances that this association or alliance could be utilised by Israel and other American allies in the region in order to restrain Iran and its policies as well as preserve the role of the US in the West Asian region. To achieve this motive, Arab-Israeli reconciliation was an integral part of mediating the Abraham Accords. Another important factor is the Bab el-Mandeb Strait which holds strategic significance for Israel and its significant maritime route to the Indian Ocean. However, the ongoing civil war in Yemen and Iran's support to the Houthi rebel forces is a point of concern for Israel. In such a scenario, Israel will benefit more from a friendly administration next to this strategic strait. Due to its own concerns there, Israel perceives Iran threatening Israel by closing the Bab el-Mandeb through Yemen to weaken Israel, even though this seems quite unrealistic. But Israel's normalisation of relations with the two Gulf nations can act as an example for other Arab nations of the North African region facilitating a favourable channel for Israel in WANA region's politics.<sup>8</sup>

However, if the leadership in Tehran feels increasingly threatened by this increasing bonhomie between Arab nations and Israel there are chances that Iran might feel cornered. This could result in Tehran acting even more confrontationally and challengingly in the region. In such a scenario, the prospect of peace and stability of the region through this accord might prove treacherous for the WANA region.<sup>9</sup>

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8. "With Abraham Accords, have Israel, the US and Arab Allies Opened a New Front against Turkey and Iran?" *The Eurasian Times*, September 22, 2020, <https://eurasianimes.com/with-abraham-accord-israel-us-arab-allies-have-opened-a-new-front-against-turkey-iran/>. Accessed on November 25, 2020.

9. Giorgio Cafiero and Daniel Wagner, "China and the Abraham Accords Peace Agreements", Middle East Institute, September 22, 2020, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/china-and-abraham-accords-peace-agreement>. Accessed on November 25, 2020.

**China's** interests in the region are based on the procurement of natural resources and the advancement of its BRI plans, which largely depends on the West Asian region's stability. If the accord is successful in creating peace in the broader WANA region and reducing conflict, it can prove commercially beneficial for China also apart from other nations of the world which have extensive trade relations with this region, including India. However, there is also increasing speculation amongst the Chinese scholars regarding the accord being the factor that might increase the polarisation and radicalisation in West Asia—a volatile region. In such a scenario, it can become difficult for Beijing to sustain its BRI plans in West Asia.

In the case of Iran-China relations, Beijing definitely desires to maintain deep diplomatic, economic, and military relations with Tehran which has been proclaimed by Beijing as a strategic partner in the region. America's sanctions as part of its maximum pressure policy on Iran had forced China to significantly reduce their oil purchase from Iran as well as its non-oil trade relations with Tehran which has also come under greater scrutiny. Due to this accord, Beijing is anxious that the normalisation between Israel and UAE could have implications for the regional order that could come at the cost of Iran and could end in a bad way for Sino-Iranian relations.<sup>10</sup> However, from this perspective, there is a group of scholars that believes that China needs the American military presence in the West Asian region for broadly two reasons: the first reason is that the American presence will ensure that the shipping lanes remain open, especially for the hydrocarbon trade. The second reason is that China prefers that American naval forces remain busy in the Persian Gulf waters thereby making it more difficult for the US to divert forces to the Pacific theatre.<sup>11</sup>

It is widely accepted in the Chinese leadership about increasing the engagement with the West Asian nations, however, what remains to be seen is the nature and scope of this action. In case China pursues its already burgeoning relationship with this volatile region, there are chances that the normalisation in relations between Arab states

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10. Ibid.

11. Tuvia Gering, "China's View of the Abraham Accords", The Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, October 20, 2020, <https://jiss.org.il/en/gering-chinas-view-of-the-abraham-accords/>. Accessed on November 27, 2020.

and Israel might become an obstacle. It is important here to mention that the basic aim of this accord was to consolidate the diminishing role and influence of the US in the region and counter the increasing Chinese presence there. However, Chinese leadership welcomed this American mediated step as progress towards establishing peace and stability in the region which will help Chinese establishments in the region also. At the same time, there is another group of Chinese scholars who regard this accord as detrimental to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, China needs to be cautious in its approach related to these accords as it might antagonise its strategic partners in the region, i.e., Iran, Turkey and the Palestine. Therefore, it will be correct to say that these accords can become a “Catch-22” situation for China wherein if China chooses to approve and accept the American vision it could become detrimental to its geopolitical interests in the region; and if it rejects it, it could jeopardise the much needed stability in the region that is crucial for its economic interests and the success of BRI.

The US might become the primary beneficiary of this accord. However, it cannot be ignored that the primary objective of President Trump was to achieve a feat in the US presidential elections through mediating this accord. Therefore, the aim of this accord was to underpin President Trump’s carefully cultivated image as being “a dealmaker”. Crucially for the Trump administration, this agreement was supposed to project credibility as an administration that can successfully build a coalition of Israel and other Arab countries that will work together to contain Iran and to stabilise the region. This strategy is a significant departure from the Obama administration’s willingness to accede to Iran a more prominent role in the region and its blunt advice to the Arab Gulf States that they would need to accept that.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the timing of this accord is also crucial when Russian influence in the West Asian region was increasing and American influence was declining. This accord clearly underlined the fact that the US still plays a crucial role in the region and that its influence

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12. Ibid.

13. Joseph V. Micallef, “These are the Winners and Losers from the Abraham Accords”, October 7, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/opinions/2020/10/07/these-are-winners-and-losers-abraham-accords.html>. Accessed on November 27, 2020.

is still integral. Economically also, it is anticipated that this accord will prove beneficial for the trade related services. The favourable movement of goods and people to move more freely throughout the region will definitely help the region commercially and help in somewhat stabilising it. However, this definitely seems like a distant possibility.<sup>14</sup>

**Israel** is another nation that has emerged victorious from this accord—strategically, politically and economically. There are chances that this accord could create wide-ranging opportunities for Israeli business with the Gulf nations. Added to this is the fact that American policy is mostly related to maintaining Israel’s military edge in the region. As part of this strategy, Israel is the recipient of high-tech and military technology, as well as the F-35 fighter jet which is the highest of its class available with the US. Israel is the only West Asian nation to have access to it at the moment. With the signing of this accord, it is widely speculated that there will be sale of F35s to the UAE, even though the Israelis are not too thrilled with this idea. Importantly, it is highly unlikely that there will be an armed conflict between the UAE and Israel utilising the weapons sold by the US to these two nations. The only point of consolation for the Israelis is the fact that the military technology could be used against a common adversary, for example, Iran. The change of leadership in the White House can change the course of policymaking which remains to be seen. Another point of contention related to the accord is the Palestinians who regard the Arab normalisation with the Jewish state a betrayal. The Abraham Accords also adjourns the Israeli seizure of 30 per cent of the area in the West Bank. However, there is set timeline to be followed for the same. Furthermore, the Israelis have not made declaration regarding permanently terminating the process of annexation. Following the signing of the accords, there seems to be a halt on the large-scale annexation but it is not stopped altogether.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Steve Lutes and Josh Kram, “The Business Impact of the Abraham Accords”, US Chamber of Commerce, September 16, 2020, <https://www.uschamber.com/series/above-the-fold/the-business-impact-of-the-abraham-accords>. Accessed on November 28, 2020.

15. Robert Barron, “Abraham Accords”, United States Institute of Peace—Podcast, September 2, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/09/robert-barron-abraham-accord>. Accessed on November 28, 2020.

## CONCLUSION

In the past the normalisation of relations between the Arab states and Israel was firmly entrenched in the idea of Israeli-Palestinian peace process. This has been so deep-rooted that any idea to challenge it or look for other options overriding this issue and reaching normalisation was often met with immediate derision and scorn in foreign policy circles of all the nations concerned, as well as the US. But the signing of the Abraham Accords has indeed highlighted the paradigm shift in the foreign policy vision and thinking of not only the US and Israel but also a few Arab states. It also underpins the idea of national interests and preferences becoming the primary goal of conducting foreign policy and diplomacy. Furthermore, it has unequivocally highlighted that the Israeli-Palestinian issue—though still vying for a solution—has been detached from global and regional affairs. The signing of the Abraham Accords has also indicated that the issue between the Jewish state and Palestine is more of a localised bilateral dispute. At the same time, it has shattered the myth that any mediation or negotiation is not possible until a solution to this problem is reached. It has also dimmed the bright burning flame of the anti-Zionist propaganda that had been the bone of contention between the Zionist ideals of Israel and the Arab thinking. If successfully implemented and all the conditions are fulfilled, the Accords will emerge as a clear victory for peace and diplomacy in the region that will inevitably seek to reorient the regional politics as well as the role of external players in the West Asian region.

# ANALYSING THE MYANMAR ELECTIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

ROHAN KHATTAR SINGH

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has put governments and regimes across the world under severe administrative stress. With the capability of the virus to spread and infect rapidly, states have enforced complete lockdowns on their respective populations, resulting in the loss of economic and social activity. According to the World Bank, the loss of economic activity due to lockdowns has plunged most countries into a recession, with a drop in per capita income globally for the first time since 1870.<sup>1</sup> In addition to stalling economic activity, some states have used the lockdowns to curb political freedom and consolidate political power, as seen in Belarus, Bolivia, Israel and Hungary, as states are using the pandemic to become more authoritarian.<sup>2</sup> On

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1. "The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World", World Bank. [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/08/the-global-economic-outlook-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-changed-world](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/06/08/the-global-economic-outlook-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-a-changed-world). Accessed on November 6, 2020.
2. Selam Gebrekidan, "For Autocrats, and Others, Coronavirus Is a Chance to Grab Even More Power", *The New York Times*, March 30, 2020, [www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/world/europe/coronavirus-governments-power.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/30/world/europe/coronavirus-governments-power.html). Accessed on November 6, 2020.



the other hand, the response of some governments in handling the public health crisis has reaped political dividends as elections in South Korea, Taiwan, New Zealand and Sri Lanka witnessed the re-election of their respective incumbent governments with landslide margins. Myanmar too conducted its elections during the pandemic. On November 8, 2020 the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi won the largest mandate by any party in Myanmar, securing 61.7 per cent of the seats in the parliament.<sup>3</sup> This landslide victory was achieved even though the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) had 25 per cent of parliament seats reserved for itself. Since its independence, Myanmar has had a long period of military and quasi-military rule and the re-election of Aung San Suu Kyi for her second term highlights the population's growing trust in democratic rule.

This article analyses the results immediately after the Myanmar elections in November 2020 (post the victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party). The relevance of the election results traverse South Asia, particularly for Bangladesh and India. The reason for this is the unresolved humanitarian crisis caused by the selective targeting of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. Often coined as the 'Rohingya Crisis', the ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas from Myanmar has become a thorn in the Myanmar-Bangladesh relations. In the run-up to the 2020 elections, the NLD was campaigning with the promises of resolving the Rohingya crisis, bringing peace among the warring ethnic groups, bringing a constitutional amendment to limit the parliamentary seats reserved for the military and reviving the economy impacted by the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> The latter three promises pertain to Myanmar's internal politics and only the humanitarian crisis of the Rohingyas has a direct impact on Myanmar's foreign relations within South Asia and beyond. South Asia has been heavily affected by COVID-19, and the stress on economic activity is a looming threat for governments. Being the most densely

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3. Sebastian Strangio, "How Will Myanmar's Election Affect Its Foreign Policy?", *The Diplomat*, November 18, 2020, [thediplomat.com/2020/11/how-will-myanmars-election-affect-its-foreign-policy/](https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/how-will-myanmars-election-affect-its-foreign-policy/). Accessed on November 6, 2020.

4. Nehginpao Kipgen, "Commentary: Can Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD Win Again despite Not Delivering Many of Its Promises?", CNA, November 17, 2020, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/aung-san-suu-kyi-nld-partly-win-myanmar-elections-rohingya-13340244>. Accessed on November 6, 2020.

populated country in the world, Bangladesh is struggling to control the spread of COVID-19 and the added Rohingya refugee crisis has created serious friction between Dhaka and Naypyitaw. Therefore, the second term of Aung San Suu Kyi is vital for mending ties with Bangladesh in order to prevent the Rohingya crisis from turning into a catalyst for armed conflict.

### **MYANMAR-BANGLADESH FRICTION**

Myanmar shares a 270-km long border with Bangladesh. The volatile Rakhine state of Myanmar shares this border with Bangladesh's Chittagong hill tracts. The state was home to almost 3.5 million Rohingya Muslims who were a majority in the state.<sup>5</sup> The Rakhine state witnessed heavy ethnic clashes in 2017 as the Nationalist Buddhists (supported by the Tatmadaw) targeted the Rohingya Muslims, causing the exodus of millions of Rohingyas into Bangladesh. In retaliation, the Rohingyas formed a militant group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), and targeted the Tatmadaw, killing more than two dozen security personnel.<sup>6</sup> The Tatmadaw rebuked with disproportionate firepower while accusing Bangladesh of providing shelter to the Rohingya militant outfits, exacerbating friction between the two South Asian states.<sup>7</sup> In 2019, a UN report insisted that the Rohingya population was the most susceptible to genocide as the Tatmadaw along with Buddhist nationalist groups continued the targeting of Rohingyas.<sup>8</sup> In November 2019, The Gambia filed a case against Myanmar's handling of the Rohingya crisis in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), with the UN court ruling against Myanmar's preference, ordering the protection of Rohingyas.<sup>9</sup>

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5. "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?", Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>. Accessed on November 10, 2020.

6. Zoltan Barany, "Report. Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 2019". Accessed on November 20, 2020.

7. Ibid.

8. "Genocide Threat for Myanmar's Rohingya Greater than Ever, Investigators Warn Human Rights Council UN News", United Nations, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1046442#:~:text=>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

9. "Top UN Court Orders Myanmar to Protect Rohingya from Genocide UN News", United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

The UN court ruling was halted as COVID-19 spread worldwide and Myanmar went under a strict lockdown, particularly in the Rakhine state. Myanmar has used the pandemic as an opportunity to further suppress the Rohingya Muslims by incarcerating them and blaming them for spreading COVID-19 in Rakhine state.<sup>10</sup> In the run-up to the 2020 elections, the Tatmadaw opted for an aggressive posture, cracking down on ARSA cadres. Conducting air and artillery strikes, heavy casualties were inflicted on ARSA and the civilian Rohingya population, with 32 confirmed deaths and more than 70 casualties.<sup>11</sup> As the intensity and frequency of conflict increased, Bangladesh mobilised its military to the Myanmar border to prevent an influx of refugees due to Myanmar's military campaign. In September 2020, two months prior to the Myanmar elections, the Bangladeshi army deployed its 155 mm heavy artillery, shoulder fired anti-aircraft weapons and armoured vehicles along the border with Myanmar.<sup>12</sup> In a move to mirror Bangladesh's military deployments, the Tatmadaw deployed 2,500 troops along the 270-km long border with Bangladesh, prompting Dhaka to summon Myanmar's ambassador as fears of a repeat of the 2017 Rohingya exodus emerged within Bangladesh.<sup>13</sup> The border tensions between the two South Asian states have taken their diplomatic relationship to a new low, with fears of a potential grey zone armed conflict being heightened.

Historically, Bangladesh and Myanmar have shared people-to-people linkages and Myanmar was one of the first states to recognise the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.<sup>14</sup> In 2019, the bilateral trade

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10. TRT World, "Myanmar Blames the Rohingya for Covid-19, and That's a Death Sentence", September 18, 2020, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/myanmar-blames-the-rohingya-for-covid-19-and-that-s-a-death-sentence-39843>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

11. "Press Briefing Note on Myanmar/Bangladesh—Rohingya", OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25804&LangID=E>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

12. "Bangladesh Deploys Troops on Myanmar's Border", *The Irrawaddy*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/bangladesh-deploys-troops-myanmars-border.html>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

13. "Gravitas: Myanmar Deploys More than 2500 Troops near Bangladesh Border", WION. <https://www.wionews.com/videos/gravitas-myanmar-deploys-more-than-2500-troops-near-bangladesh-border-327800>. Accessed on November 12, 2020.

14. Sreeparna Banerjee, "The Rohingya Crisis and Its Impact on Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations", ORF, September 4, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-rohingya-crisis-and-its-impact-on-bangladesh-myanmar-relations/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

between the two states increased to US\$ 748.36 million, an increase of US \$ 727 million from 2018.<sup>15</sup> Economically, the two states are fairly on par with each other, as Bangladesh's GDP per capita is US\$ 1,855<sup>16</sup> and Myanmar's GDP per capita is US\$ 1,407.<sup>17</sup> In terms of hard power, Myanmar is ranked 35 out of 138 in terms of firepower compared to Bangladesh which is ranked at 46.<sup>18</sup> Despite an arms embargo and various sanctions on senior officials of the military, the Tatmadaw has acquired substantial firepower owing to its arms trade with Israel, Russia, China and India.<sup>19</sup> For a comparison of conventional firepower between Myanmar and Bangladesh, refer to Table 1.

**Table 1: Military Power Comparison of Myanmar and Bangladesh**

Power Comparison	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Military Budget	\$ 2.6 billion	\$ 3.8 billion
Active Personnel	406,000	160,000
Total Aircraft	276	177
Combat Aircraft	80	44
Helicopters	95	67
Combat Tanks	434	276
Armoured Vehicles	1,300	1,200
Artillery	1,804	509
Naval Vessels (Patrol Boats, Submarines and Frigates)	187	112

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).<sup>20</sup>

15. "Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Trade Sees a Dramatic Increase", *Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight*, November 20, 2020, <http://mizzima.com/article/myanmar-bangladesh-border-trade-sees-dramatic-increase>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
16. "GDP per Capita (current US\$)—Bangladesh". Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=BD>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
17. "GDP per Capita (current US\$)—Myanmar". Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=MM>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
18. "Comparison Results (Bangladesh vs Myanmar)". Global Firepower—World Military Strength. <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-comparison-detail.asp?form=form&country1=bangladesh&co>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
19. Joshua Carroll, "UN Calls for Sanctions, Arms Embargo against Myanmar Army". Myanmar | Al Jazeera, August 6, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/6/un-calls-for-sanctions-arms-embargo-against-myanmar-army>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
20. "Arms and Military Expenditure", Database. SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/military-expenditure>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

The two states possess the means to inflict substantial damage if a conflict were to ensue. Combined with the humanitarian Rohingya crisis, tensions between Bangladesh and Myanmar often attract international attention, particularly from Asian powers. It is in the interest of regional powers like India and China to prevent friction between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

### CHINA'S PREFERENCES

For China, Bangladesh and Myanmar are both vital for its Superpower ambitions as the two are strategically located Indian Ocean littorals. In addition, as part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR), Bangladesh and Myanmar have been designated as important destinations for infrastructure building and investment. China has provided Bangladesh with US\$ 26 billion in funding with an additional promise of US\$ 38 billion along with a zero tariff commitment on 97 per cent of Bangladesh's exports to China.<sup>21</sup> China is also funding and constructing the Chittagong shipping port that would allow Chinese merchant ships to dock in Bangladesh. Apart from its economic interests in Bangladesh, China is also the largest arms provider, with Bangladesh importing 71 per cent of its total arms from China.<sup>22</sup> In return, China's trade and military cooperation has ensured silence from Bangladesh on the treatment and detention of China's Muslim minority Uyghur ethnics.<sup>23</sup> For China, the vitality of involvement in Bangladesh is an attempt to wean Bangladesh off India's influence as India is considered the regional great power in South Asia.

Chinese interests in Myanmar are strategic, economic and cultural as the Buddhist state is of vital importance for China's Superpower ambitions. China requires stability in Myanmar to import oil and gas via and from Myanmar. Popularly known as the 'Myanmar Corridor',

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21. K. J. Varma, "Xi Hails 'steady' China-Bangladesh Friendship, Seeks Joint Promotion of Belt & Road Initiative", *The Print*, October 4, 2020. <https://theprint.in/world/xi-hails-steady-china-bangladesh-friendship-seeks-joint-promotion-of-belt-road-initiative/516430/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
  22. "How Dominant Is China in the Global Arms Trade?" ChinaPower Project, August 25, 2020, <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-global-arms-trade/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.
  23. Samira Alim, "The Muslim World Remains Largely Mute on Uyghurs' Plight", *The Diplomat*, December 11, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/the-muslim-world-remains-largely-mute-on-uyghurs-plight/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

oil and gas pipelines were built across Myanmar, ultimately reaching China's Yunnan and other densely populated Southern provinces.<sup>24</sup> China is also the largest trader and investor in Myanmar for minerals and hydropower generation.<sup>25</sup> China is also the largest arms provider to Myanmar, with 68 per cent of Myanmar's arms coming from China.<sup>26</sup> Economic and military engagement has allowed China to have an influential presence in Myanmar. Lt. Gen. Knin Nyunt, who also became Myanmar's Prime Minister in 2003, was openly considered by China as "their man".<sup>27</sup> The 2015 elections brought a lull in Chinese involvement in Myanmar as the pro-democracy NLD led by Aung San Suu Kyi won the elections in a landslide victory. The Rohingya crisis has allowed for a rekindling of ties between the two, as Western powers criticise China for its Uyghur crisis and Myanmar for the Rohingya crisis.<sup>28</sup> For China, Myanmar is more crucial to its interests when compared to Bangladesh. The internal ethnic conflict in Myanmar has direct implications for China. The ethnic conflict in Myanmar could spiral into another humanitarian displacement crisis resulting in another refugee crisis for China. "In 2009, Myanmar troops moved against a non-state armed group in Kokang area in the northeast. More than 30,000 civilians sought temporary shelter in China. Not surprisingly Beijing felt compelled to express its unhappiness with the Myanmar military".<sup>29</sup> Ongoing internal ethnic conflict in Myanmar poses a serious threat to China's oil and natural gas supply lines that pass through Myanmar's volatile provinces. In a realist sense, China will continue to tow Myanmar's line till the conflict impacts Chinese assets and interests.

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24. Bertil Lintner, *The Costliest Pearl: China's Struggle for India's Ocean* (Hurst & Company, 2019).

25. Neelam Deo, "China in IOR: 'Peaceful Rise' No More", Gateway House, December 21, 2017, <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/china-in-ior/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

26. Grace Shao, "China, the World's Second Largest Defense Spender, Becomes a Major Arms Exporter", CNBC, September 27, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/09/27/china-a-top-defense-spender-becomes-major-arms-exporter.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

27. Bertil Lintner, n. 24.

28. Rayhan Asat, "China and Myanmar Face Uighurs and Rohingya That Are Fighting Back after Years of Oppression", NBCNews.com, September 17, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/china-myanmar-face-uighurs-rohingya-are-fighting-back-after-years-ncna1240259>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

29. Bertil Lintner, n. 24.

As the Rohingya crisis continues, internal conflict within Myanmar accompanied by heightened border tensions with Bangladesh have a direct impact on India's national security and strategy.

### INDIA'S MYANMAR LEANING

The Bangladesh-Myanmar tensions place India in an uncomfortable position. India shares its longest border of 4,156 km with Bangladesh and a 1,468 km border with Myanmar. India also shares cross-border social, cultural and religious ties with the two states. India was instrumental in the creation of Bangladesh and has enjoyed a healthy relationship with Bangladesh's Awami League, headed by President Sheikh Hasina. In terms of trade, Bangladesh is India's largest trading partner in South Asia with a bilateral trade of US\$ 10.25 billion in 2019.<sup>30</sup> For India, an economically stable Bangladesh is vital as it prevents migration from Bangladesh into the sensitive and exclusive North East states of India. India's border conflicts with Bangladesh have largely been resolved and the two states share a mutual respect for each other's strategic aims. However, recent domestic policies in India, particularly the passing and implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA),<sup>31</sup> have formed fresh cleavages between the two states. The domestically controversial act irked Bangladesh, drawing criticism from its Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister. This was followed by cancellation of bilateral meets as Bangladesh snubbed India for passing the CAA, though acknowledging that it was India's internal matter.<sup>32</sup> Faultlines between India and Bangladesh increased when India openly backed Myanmar in its handling of

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30. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India Plans to Enhance Trade with Bangladesh", *The Economic Times*, July 10, 2020, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-plans-to-enhance-trade-with-bangladesh/articleshow/76881534.cms>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

31. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) allows an expedited citizenship process for religious minorities, particularly Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Christians and Parsis that are residing in Islamic states, especially Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. To read more about the CAA, refer to this article, "What Is CAA? Know Everything about Citizenship Amendment Bill: India News", *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/what-is-caa/articleshow/73153785.cms>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

32. Elizabeth Roche, "Bangladesh PM Says CAA 'not Necessary', but It Is India's 'internal Affair'", *Mint*, January 19, 2020, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/bangladesh-pm-says-cao-not-necessary-but-it-is-india-s-internal-affair-11579434198319.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

the Rohingya crisis as New Delhi termed it as Myanmar's 'internal matter'.

Though India and China seldom agree on international affairs, both India and China have recognised the Rohingya crisis as Myanmar's internal matter, irking Bangladesh and other Islamic states. In spite of international pressure and criticism, both India and China have sympathised with Myanmar.<sup>33</sup> India's ties with Myanmar took a giant leap in 2015 when Aung San Suu Kyi was decisively elected as Myanmar's State Counsellor. With a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Delhi, Aung San Suu Kyi has historical ties with India and was widely celebrated in New Delhi's academic corridors.<sup>34</sup> The Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) government in India has openly supported Myanmar's handling of the Rohingya crisis. In 2019, the Home Minister of India Amit Shah announced that India would not provide citizenship to Rohingya refugees and ordered the deportation of eight Rohingyas back to Myanmar.<sup>35</sup> Home Minister Amit Shah met his Bangladeshi counterpart in 2019 and flagged the illegal immigration of Rohingyas from Bangladesh, further stoking the spat between India and Bangladesh.<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, India's diplomatic engagement with Myanmar has increased since the Rohingya crisis began. At the peak of border tensions between Bangladesh and Myanmar in September 2020, New Delhi remained a silent spectator. However, in the first week of October, a month prior to Myanmar's elections, New Delhi sent the Indian Army Chief and the Foreign Secretary on a two-day visit to Naypyidaw. This led to

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33. Charlotte Gao, "On Rohingya Issue, Both China and India Back Myanmar Government", *The Diplomat*, September 13, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/on-rohingya-issue-both-china-and-india-back-myanmar-government/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

34. Sanjoy Majumder, "Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Returns to India College", BBC News, November 16, 2012, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-20353052>. Accessed on November 16, 2020.

35. "Rohingya Muslims Will Never Be Accepted as Indian Citizens: Amit Shah Clarifies in LS", *The Statesman*, December 10, 2019, <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/rohingya-muslims-never-accepted-indian-citizens-amit-shah-ls-1502831850.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

36. Deeptiman Tiwary, "Amit Shah Meets Bangladesh Minister, Raises Illegal Immigrants, Rohingya Issues", *The Indian Express*, August 7, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/amit-shah-meets-bangladesh-minister-raises-illegal-immigrants-rohingya-issues-5887055/>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.



the signing of multiple military Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) along with the disbursal of economic aid for development projects.<sup>37</sup> Analysing India's domestic policies and its external outreach, India is outrightly supporting Myanmar and its actions against the Rohingyas. As India and China both back Myanmar, Bangladesh has been sidelined by the two major powers in the region.

### **HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE OR REALPOLITIK?**

Very rarely do India and China merge their strategic interests with each other's, yet the Rohingya imbroglio has done just that. Though both countries engage with Bangladesh and Myanmar economically and culturally, the two powers have chosen to support Myanmar on the Rohingya crisis, contrary to popular international outcry. Although it must be understood that India and China will back Myanmar as long as the Rohingya crisis does not spill into their respective borders. Bangladesh has been the only country which has had to bear the full consequences of the Rohingya crisis. According to the UN, over 742,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar and taken refuge in Bangladesh since 2017.<sup>38</sup> As Bangladesh bears the burden of the Rohingya crisis, it has been consistently sidelined by India and China on the issue, solely due to their strategic interests. Though Bangladesh has received sympathy and aid from Western powers, Islamic states and various international organisations, it has largely been isolated to deal with the humanitarian crisis. It is unlikely that Myanmar will be persecuted harshly for its actions until India and China discontinue their support towards Naypyidaw.

Though it is uncertain whether the Rohingya crisis will spiral into an armed conflict, the possibility of an armed conflict cannot be ruled out, and the troop mobilisation between Bangladesh and Myanmar in September is testament to that uncertainty. India and China play a vital role in ensuring stability in the region, as the two powers are

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37. Kallol Bhattacharjee, "In a Crucial Outreach, Army Chief, Foreign Secretary to Visit Myanmar", *The Hindu*, October 3, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/army-chief-naravane-and-foreign-secretary-shringla-to-visit-myanmar-on-october-4/article32760663.ece>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

38. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Rohingya Emergency", UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2020.

involved in an economic and influence capturing competition. It is rare for India and China to agree on international strategic affairs, and the Rohingya crisis is one of the few instances where the two competing powers have merged their strategic backing. Though India and China have backed the Myanmar government on the Rohingya crisis, a potential armed conflict would require India and China to act as peace mediators, allowing the two to improve their cooperation. This would isolate Bangladesh further from the regional powers. Such a scenario has the potential of drawing other powers or multilateral organisations like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) into the conflict. The possibility of India and China picking different sides cannot be ruled out either, which has the potential of spiralling a conflict into a conventional war as the geopolitical interests of India and China rarely converge.

As Aung San Suu Kyi enters her second term, the fate of the Rohingyas remains uncertain. Her strong stance against the Rohingya militant outfits has been widely celebrated across the Buddhist state. The Tatmadaw however, continues to be critical of Suu Kyi's regime as the friction between the army and the political party continue to grow. The army has had an independent run historically and continues to operate with a large amount of freedom and impunity, something that the NLD government is trying to curb. As the pandemic continues to plague states and their internal functioning, the Rohingya crisis is likely to exacerbate, owing to the Tatmadaw's continued campaign against 'ethnic minorities', in order to establish a unified Buddhist state. Myanmar's administrators have realised that international outcry hasn't had dire consequences on Myanmar due to the support it continues to receive from India and China, as the two regional powers are trying to establish a strategic front against the other, while turning a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis. The Myanmar-Bangladesh tensions shed light on the realities of strategic affairs, where *realpolitik* triumphs over humanitarian response.

# THE ASIAN MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: EXAMINING PRACTICES OF CHINA, JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA

URMI TAT

The Asian model of development cooperation differs from the more conventional western model in its objectives and mode of implementation. It is a refinement of the South-South model, the latter encompassing the economic diplomacy of developing nations in general, and the former taking on a more niche conceptualisation. The Asian model of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is rooted in the experience of development donors in the region. Their basket of services, and the treatment of the concept itself, differs from their western counterparts.

Key characteristics of the Asian model are: the emphasis on development through industrialisation;<sup>1</sup> belief in the role of a strong state to administer and control disbursement of aid; a considerably smaller component of conditionality, as opposed to the practice of

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1. Aid is not seen as separate from private investment and other economic activities. It is seen holistically. Most loans are thus extended to domestic companies to achieve efficiency in production and delivery.

countries which are a part of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, and a larger component of aid via loans as opposed to grants. For instance, a common emphasis among emerging Asian donors like Japan, China and South Korea is on loan aid for building economic infrastructure. What is also interesting about them is that all three remain donor nations as well as recipient nations, often feeding off each other.

The three countries examined here have a considerable number of mutual interactions in the economic and political domain. Their relations span territorial claims, war history and economic cooperation. All three have had enviable growth stories, starting with Japan, then South Korea and now China. As of today, China is Asia's largest economy, Japan comes a close second and South Korea is fourth. Together, they account for a quarter of the global economic output.<sup>2</sup> Although the respective leaders of the countries desire a free trade agreement between them, much needs to be done to propel their own mutual relationships forward.

China, Japan and South Korea also vary considerably in their definition and approach towards development cooperation. For instance, Chinese development assistance has evolved significantly over the ages, with changes in its motives and objectives. It has distinguished itself from the DAC model in terms of how it defines aid assistance or ODA. China includes military assistance, construction of sports facilities and subsidised loans for Joint Ventures and cooperative projects, which are excluded from the DAC definition. Further, it excludes scholarships for students studying in China, costs of managing refugees and its administrative costs in managing aid, all of which are included under the DAC definition. This is significant because Japan and South Korea are members of DAC, thus making the very conceptualisation of development assistance a sticking point between the three countries.

The individual experiences of these three countries in propelling their own domestic growth, as well as emerging as leading donors in their region and the world, has much to offer in terms of lessons

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2. Cary Huang, "China, Japan and South Korea must choose: history or economics", *South China Morning Post*, January 5, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3044565/china-japan-and-south-korea-must-choose-history-or-economics>. Accessed on October 8, 2020.

for India's economic diplomacy. It is important thus to trace the historical motives and practices of the Asian powers to understand contemporary realities in the South Asian theatre.

### **THE CHINESE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: TRACING PRACTICES TO BRI AND BEYOND**

Chinese foreign aid practices began from the time of the inception of the People's Republic of China and has grown and developed across the decades from subtle tools in foreign policy, to more overt mechanisms. Since 1949, China not only embarked on a path of rapid industrialisation, but also provided military and economic aid to countries in its socialist camp, including North Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia. Provision of aid at this point was along the lines of Mao's Proletarian Internationalism. The main aim was to assist people struggling for national liberation, weaken imperialism and achieve economic and political independence for newly independent countries.

Deng Xiaoping's leadership continued the momentum of foreign assistance in the 1970s and 1980s, but laid greater emphasis on economic development in China in order to be in a position to assist developing countries further. China, during 1979-1982, thus decided to reduce its expenditure on foreign aid, but Deng Xiaoping was not willing to compromise on the quality of aid provided. He pruned the method of foreign assistance given in order to make it more effective and to avoid any unnecessary expenditure. For instance, the recipient countries were now required to pay for the 'local expenses'<sup>3</sup> which they did not have to do earlier. China, under Deng Xiaoping, began to make extensive use of multilateral assistance to route its foreign aid.

With the establishment of the Chinese Socialist market economy system in the 1990s, the market began to play an important role in the allocation of resources. The impact of the market saw the mushrooming of Joint Ventures in development projects, both domestically, as well as in foreign countries. Investment by Chinese enterprises and cooperation among businesses now formed a major component of aid.

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3. "Local expenses", which greatly increased the price of China's foreign aid projects due to such unpredictable factors as postponement of projects, and soaring fees.

Since 1995, China started providing soft loans<sup>4</sup> which were largely facilitated by the setting up of the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank) in 1994, which issued loans to the concerned parties, and was backed by the People's Bank of China. As terms of repayment for the soft loans, recipient countries often had to import Chinese made machinery and equipment such as airplanes, electrical products, and telecommunications products, among others.

As of the 21st century, Chinese foreign aid has entered a period of rapid development. Funds for the purpose of foreign investment have seen double digit growth.<sup>5</sup> Foreign aid from China started showing an inclination towards humanitarian and social development projects. Though still retaining its inclination towards economic infrastructure, China has branched out into assisting with construction of schools, agriculture training centres, developing anti-malaria drugs, health and cooperation on human resource development and green energy.<sup>6</sup> One of the key ways in which China promotes its influence abroad is through the employment of Chinese foreign aid workers. The motive for this is not just economic and provision of job security for Chinese nationals, but is also an indirect way of promoting Chinese culture and people-to-people contact with the local people.

One of the major components of China's development policy in the 21st century is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which constitutes a more active foreign policy strategy.<sup>7</sup> Ideologically, the idea of a BRI was built out of the realisation that the external environment may become more hostile in the future as the US comes to perceive China as a strategic rival. Further, China's growth and prominence in the international arena could also invite challenges in the future. Thus, it

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4. Soft loans comprise below market rate interest loans. This is also known as concessional funding. Soft loans are not only a way to support developing nations but also help in forming economic and political ties. The terms of the loan may not simply include repayment but also access to material resources of recipient nations, if they are unable to repay.
  5. From 2004 to 2009, China's foreign aid funds increased rapidly, with an average annual growth rate of 29.4 per cent. State Council General Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's Foreign Aid", White Paper, July 2014, [http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2014/08/23/content\\_281474982986592.htm](http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986592.htm). Accessed on September 12, 2020.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Bruno Macaes, "Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order" (London: Hurst and Company, July 2018).

was better to be in a position to shape China's external environment rather than simply adapting to the changes taking place. BRI was a means to achieve this end.

There were several economic compulsions to adopting the BRI. The quest to find more profitable outlets for its foreign exchange reserves had driven China to increase its investments abroad, particularly in the form of low interest-bearing American securities, at the same time creating new markets for Chinese companies. Similarly, the issue of overcapacity in goods<sup>8</sup> in China led to it seeking markets abroad to ship its produce. China found itself dependent on accessing energy, raw materials and commodities while still fishing for markets for its exports. It was certainly integrated in the global economy just as the major western powers are but it lacked the tools to project the same power abroad.<sup>9</sup> This dependence on global markets brought to light the fact that a level of political influence over global politics could help propel economic relationships even further. Another motivation for the Chinese to capitalise on development aid was domestic. The uneven distribution of growth among the different provinces resulted in large economic disparities. Thus, new infrastructure and trade connections were developed, especially in the border regions, in order to promote development in regions which were falling behind.

Xi Jinping crystallised his thinking at the Working Conference on Neighbourhood Relations in 2013, when he declared that China would take on a more proactive role in promoting diplomacy with its neighbours, and would strive for a peaceful environment which would be beneficial to neighbouring states. It seemed to be a break from the modesty of Deng's foreign outlook.<sup>10</sup> "Keeping a low profile" from the Deng era was sought to be replaced by the slogan of "striving for achievement" in Xi's times. The slogan was the key tenet in Xi's foreign policy approach and seemed more suited to a rising power.

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8. Overcapacity was leading to a steep drop in profits, bankruptcy and unemployment were the ensuing result. It was becoming a threat to economic and political stability.

9. Such tools include the capacity to influence political and economic situations abroad via the power of the Yuan as well as its diplomatic presence.

10. Wenxian Zhang, Ilan Alon and Christoph Lattemann, *China's Belt and Road Initiative: Changing the Rules of Globalization* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018).

## THE SOUTH KOREAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION EXPERIENCE

South Korea has had a unique experience as far as its economic model is concerned. In 1957, close on the heels of the conclusion of a long-drawn-out war, it shared a GDP figure that was close to Ghana's. However, by 1996 it had expanded its growth exponentially and was even in a position to join the OECD countries. In 2010 it joined the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. South Korea is the 15th largest donor country today and it spent 0.15 per cent of its GNI in 2018 on development aid, which amounts to US\$ 2.4 billion on ODA.<sup>11</sup>

What Korea brings with it is a unique personal experience as it went from being one of the poorest countries in the world to being one of the most economically sound.<sup>12</sup> The knowledge and experience gained in the process would form invaluable insights into charting out similar processes for other developing countries.

South Korea was also the recipient of extensive aid packages from the end of World War II until 1975. Foreign aid was the only source of capital till its independence in 1945. And further, during the reconstruction period (1953-1960), more than 70 per cent of imports were financed by foreign aid. With Korea's First Five-Year Economic Development Plan of 1962, economic aid, though significant still, was put to use substantially. The political leadership wanted stability and economic prosperity. They thus channelled the foreign capital they received into filling the gap between the payments deficit and offset in inadequacy in domestic savings or investments. Major donors during these years included the US, UNDP, World Bank and the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund of Japan.

After the end of Japanese colonisation, American involvement influenced economic development in Korea. The period 1945-48 was a time of primarily relief-based aid being extended. Aid is in fact credited with fuelling the modern industrial sector in Korea.<sup>13</sup> Particularly the

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11. Eun Mee Kim and Jinhwan Oh, "Determinants of Foreign Aid: The Case of South Korea", *Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2012, pp. 251-73, [www.jstor.org/stable/23418809](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23418809). Accessed on December 18, 2020.

12. It went from a per capita income of less than US\$ 300 in the 1960s to US\$ 10,000 by 1995.

13. Alice H. Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 112.



Par Chung Hee period was one of high aid dependency. Over 80 per cent of the aid received during this period was used for the industrial sector and others such as mining and transport. Foreign assistance towards infrastructure related sectors allowed a lot of domestic capital to be freed up to build a business climate in South Korea. This led to the establishment of a private and small business elite,<sup>14</sup> which would ultimately grow into the Chaebol.<sup>15</sup>

Before its enrolment in OECD, Korea had started its development programme in the 1970s itself with technical assistance and cooperation. In 1987 Korea formed the Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF) in order to give more of a push and mobilise finances for the programme. Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was subsequently created in 1991. At the beginning of the 1990s, net ODA flows to Korea became negative, indicating that Korean repayments exceeded the influx of assistance.

South Korea's development assistance is focused on countries which are in need of assistance or are even fragile or small island states, as 54 per cent of its bilateral aid goes to them, according to the OECD Review.<sup>16</sup> The top five recipients of Korean aid in 2015 were Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The main aim of South Korean development aid is to ensure alleviation of poverty and to achieve sustainable development.<sup>17</sup>

The strategic plan for Korea's international development cooperation for 2016-2020 highlights the priorities of South Korea's development policy and pegs 40 per cent of the ODA to be in the form of loans. According to the 2019 Annual Plan for Development Cooperation, funding would focus on: transport, health, environment, education, agriculture and fisheries. Its priorities mostly lie in Asia. Further, starting from its G-20 summit in Seoul in 2010, Korea took on the 'Seoul Consensus' which is supposed to be a counter to the

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14. Ibid.

15. It is a large industrial conglomerate that is run and controlled by an owner or family in South Korea. A chaebol often consists of many diversified affiliates, controlled by an owner whose power over the group often exceeds legal authority.

16. Mi-yeon Hur, "The Need for Peace Diplomacy in South Korea", *E-International Relations*, September 2019. <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/09/13/the-need-for-peace-diplomacy-in-south-korea/>. Accessed on October 10, 2020.

17. Kwak Sungil, "South Korea's Economic Outreach", *Joint US-Korea Academic Studies*, 2010.

well-known Washington Consensus way of doing things. The Seoul Development Consensus for Shared Growth consists of a set of principles by which economic development and global targets like SDGs can be achieved. It lays emphasis on global development partnerships, greater private sector participation and policy complementarity.

### **THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

Japan is currently the second largest aid donor in the world.<sup>18</sup> The top recipients of Japanese aid are mostly countries in South East Asia, and it is also one of the largest donors to African countries. Japan's ODA model cannot be understood separately from its own history. It stands out as a development success story of the 20th century since it made an enviable transition from a war-torn and aid dependent country in the 1940s, to one of the most developed countries in the world, all in a span of 50 years. In its foreign policy is ingrained the desire to break out of the legacy of World War II and the desire to regain national respect. The legacy was one of defeat, as much as it was about allaying its image of an 'occupying power'.

In order to allay this image, the aid offered was generous, and devoid of any intention to intervene in domestic processes. Further, Japan's own development strategy after World War II was one which was based on domestic recovery with a spirit of self-help.<sup>19</sup> In this effort it was assisted by loans from the World Bank and the United States. It seeks to advance a similar relationship with its recipient countries.

ODA from Japan was started in 1954 after Japan signed the Colombo Plan<sup>20</sup> which aimed to help developing countries with assistance as and when they needed it. In 2015, Japan decided to publish its Development Cooperation Charter which would encourage a proactive approach to ensuring stability in the world order through development assistance, with emphasis on South East Asia.

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18. JICA, "Program Goals and Overview", 2015, [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/reports/annual/2015/c8h0vm00009q82bm-att/2015\\_04.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/reports/annual/2015/c8h0vm00009q82bm-att/2015_04.pdf). Accessed on November 21, 2020.

19. Fumitaka Furuoka, "Does Export Dependency Hurt Economic Development?", *Economics Bulletin*, vol. 30, issue no. 1, 2010, pp. 204-10.

20. *Ibid.*

The Fukuda Doctrine of 1977 is a speech by the then Japanese Prime Minister, Takeo Fukuda, while on tour of the ASEAN states. He pledged that Japan would never become a military power and was committed to peace. This doctrine served as the basis of its relations with the rest of Asia and sowed the seeds of a focus on economic and technological development. The doctrine was a brainchild of the anti-Japanese sentiments which were being voiced in the 1970s due to overdependence on Japanese trade and investment and glooming fiscal deficits among countries in East Asia. It became important for Japan to extend its soft power in order to broaden its relations with countries in the neighbourhood.

Initially, Japanese aid mostly consisted of tied aid where the recipient country had to buy technical equipment from Japanese companies for the projects funded by them. Post-1990s, however, Japan started looking at implementing untied aid. Japanese investment in infrastructure is a priority area because of the belief that infrastructure is a fundamental precondition for economic growth. Infrastructure is an umbrella term for many services such as public utilities (power, sanitation, sewage, telecom, solid waste collection), public works (roads, dams) and other transport sectors. The viability of this infrastructure is essential in diversifying production, expanding trade, reducing poverty, among others.

The role of FDI in Japanese Foreign Policy increased further in the 1980s with the Plaza Accord of 1985 that appreciated the Yen and thus provided an incentive for Japanese companies to produce abroad. Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand benefited most from the transfer of capital abroad. This soon led to Japan dominating the South China Sea region in terms of economic partnerships by 1992.

The withdrawal of the US from the region by the 1970s saw the Japanese trying to fill this gap. In 1978, they announced their intention to double ODA within three years. This continued commitment saw it being the third largest donor country among DAC members in 1983 and the second largest in 1986.

The Japanese business climate was made more flexible due to the inception of the Overseas Trade Development Foundation of Japan which was instrumental in providing concessional loans to small and medium enterprises. These enterprises were willing to invest abroad.

This saw the entry of private Japanese companies in East Asia, leading to subsequent capital investments in these regions.<sup>21</sup> Growth of the Japanese aid programme can be attributed to two factors: Japanese policy aimed at assuming international responsibilities commensurate with its position as a great economic power, and secondly, the will to be in the good books of the US and other allies for shared security, political and economic interests.

When Japan became a major donor nation in the 1980s, criticisms mounted on the mercantilist nature of its aid provision. Lack of supervision on the implementation of the financial assistance provided, as well as the lack of sensitivity towards environmentally damaging projects, strengthened Japanese resolve to formulate a charter with objectives and principles. Thus, the ODA charter of 1992 was formed. It was revised in 2003 and set out aims and objectives of Japanese foreign aid.

In a continuation of the Japanese Aid strategy, the Abe administration adopted the first National Security Strategy in 2013 and openly called for the strategic use of ODA. As a result of this, new guidelines were adopted. Traditional aid values such as promotion of human rights, promoting governance, and encouraging democracy have been retained. However, new aid values such as 'active pacifism' have been adopted to realise a secure international environment. Its aid programme has become more human security centric and stresses on empowering individuals by focusing on improving human capital, socio-economic infrastructure, etc. The strategy also includes the need for 'quality growth' or growth that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.

Abe's inclusion of a provision titled "Japan's Proactive Contribution to Peace" in the strategy, allowing non-military aid to be included under the ambit of foreign aid, is a new addition to the tools available under foreign assistance. Aid money can now be given to foreign troops in non-military operations like disaster management and relief. This has allowed Japan to provide surveillance ships to Vietnam and the Philippines. The strategic implications of this policy are apparent: both Vietnam and the Philippines have maritime

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21. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, "Specific Initiatives of Development Cooperation: South Asia, 2017", <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000406643.pdf>. Accessed on July 10, 2020.

disputes with China in the South China Sea. Japan also offers educational opportunities for military personnel from South East Asian nations through their educational institutions using its aid budget.

The Japanese model of development is based on a few principles such as self-help, non-intervention, request based assistance, and mutually beneficial assistance. Their modality of functioning involves greater focus on loans than grants, which reflects the emphasis on self-help in their principles. There is greater reliance on procurement by Japanese contractors. Japan also has a traditional focus towards infrastructure and industrial production led growth, though Japan has tried to diversify to areas such as governance and human security. Its approach to poverty reduction not only encompasses service delivery—which is the focus of OECD-DAC nations—but it also lays emphasis on improving long-term factors like economic growth. It has broad coverage across all regions, which includes 140+ countries, with particular emphasis on middle-income countries. Japan has historically focused on Asia but is committed to growth of its development assistance in Africa.

For Japan, extending development cooperation achieves two main purposes: gaining goodwill, as well as maintaining its presence in their markets through Japanese funded projects. One of the means for creating prosperity for the Japanese people is via linking Japanese businesses and contractors to the aid projects it undertakes in other countries. Commercial interest holds great salience for the government, especially in response to Japan's economic slowdown, which has caused Japanese businesses to look for good opportunities overseas.

## **CONCLUSION: EXPLORING CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES IN AID PRACTICE**

Japan, China and South Korea have shown enviable trajectories of growth and resilience. They are quickly settling in to the mantle of being leaders in providing development assistance and pioneers as far as Asian nations are concerned. There are several points of convergence and divergence between the actors.

Between Japan and China, Japan stands out as the most transparent in its aid allocation and delivery. The government machinery and the partners involved regularly publish data on the amount allocated towards projects undertaken, even for the controversial military provisions.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, financial transparency is not high on the Chinese agenda.

Chinese aid assistance aims at obtaining natural resources in return for financial assistance. It is a necessity for China considering its fast-growing population demands. This has often caused growing resentment towards Chinese policy. For example, in Myanmar, there exists widespread resentment over Chinese trade in timber and jade without providing commensurate benefits to the local Burmese population for their extraction. In Indonesia, China had 39 per cent FDI in mining in 2014 and had been criticised for unsustainable mining practices.

Japan and China also differ on labour policies. Japan looks to developing countries for cheap land and labour. For China this need is not so pressing since it is already a world manufacturing hub with cheap labour. China's engagement of local population in foreign countries is an economic and political decision to spread its influence.

Japan, China and South Korea differ on the question of sustainable aid practices. Even though China invests in clean energy, it has scant regard for conducting Environment Impact Assessment practices of its projects. On the other hand, JICA has strict environmental guidelines for selecting the location of its projects. Further, in terms of choice of recipients, China is particular about the strategic and military element, while Japan and South Korea focus on economic and commercial considerations as a priority.

Japan and Korea have had similar successful economic trajectories. Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world in 1961, due to its war-ravaged economy. Now it is among the largest economies and trading nations. It has a per capita income of US\$ 10,548. The Korean *raison d'être* resembled Japan's version greatly. They both promoted

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22. For example, in 2014, the programme gave Cambodia 8.827 billion yen (US\$ 77.1 million) in grants, and it is available online. For defence, Japan offered Vietnam six naval ships worth US\$ 5 million in 2014. China helps the armed forces of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar but published sources give no conclusive sums or lists of equipment provided.

economic cooperation with developing countries rather than focusing on political considerations as a priority. Much of the Korean structures and procedures to give effect to ODA were modelled on the Japanese experience.

The motivations for concentrating ODA in Asia in the initial phases vary slightly for both actors. For Japan, the 1950s and 1960s saw a focus on promoting its exports for the betterment of its home-grown industries and ensuring a steady supply of raw materials. This need was particularly acute due to the loss of colonies—that were suppliers of raw materials and a market for Japanese products—after World War II. Thus, the geographical bias for aid was telling. Korea, on the other hand, relied heavily on foreign trade as the principal engine of growth in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it made Korea extremely vulnerable to protectionism, particularly since its trade was concentrated in a few regions. It was important for Korea to diversify its export market and reduce dependence on major export partners like the US. It looked to developing countries to fill this gap and to secure raw materials required for both export and domestic consumption. Similarly, Chinese involvement is geared towards Asia and securing its neighbourhood for its interests in trade and security.

Korea's ODA process is subject to less scrutiny by international donors since it is seen as a developing country, as opposed to Japan. In both cases, the business lobby forms a powerful element in deciding the projects to be undertaken by governments. The ODA administrative structures and mechanisms of both Japan and Korea are decentralised with the involvement of multiple ministries, decision makers and implementing agencies as opposed to other DAC members which are more centralised.

Japan has new priorities of foreign aid assistance with former Prime Minister Abe's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Strategy. A point to be noted here is the similarity that Japan's development policy has with China's Maritime Silk Road initiative in this region. Thus, Chinese and Japanese development strategies are often at

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23. Trade as a proportion of GNP varied from up to 56 per cent and 68 per cent of the GNP. Bahri Yilmaz, "The Role of Trade Strategies for Economic Development: A Comparison of Foreign Trade between Turkey and South Korea", *Russian & East European Finance and Trade*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2002, pp. 59-78. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/27749619](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27749619). Accessed on December 18, 2020.

loggerheads in terms of their priorities. For instance, Japan, under its ODA policy, has financed patrol boats for South East Asian nations, and infrastructure projects along the coast of Africa as well. Japan has also been providing financial aid to ensure radar installations on remote islands and port facilities in Asia. China's maritime policies involve confrontation in the same sphere. Here, however, we find a difference in motive. While Japan's policies and presence in this region is to counter Chinese strategies, Chinese presence is guided by its grand master plan. The string of pearls network of ports in the region is meant to encircle India and keep the US at bay. Further, in terms of impact, while China is spending aggressively to boost its presence in strategically important regions, Japan is under domestic pressure to increase the effectiveness of aid. Thus, their *modus operandi* and pace of development assistance in the region differs.

The rise of Japan, South Korea and China, as the face of development cooperation in the East, has posed a challenge to the hierarchical donor-recipient relationship which was dominated by the developed countries. Key takeaways for emerging donors like India would be to learn from these three countries in terms of their growth strategy, their juxtaposition of economic and political motives, as well as putting in place effective structures which allow for the proper utilisation of aid.



# TECHNIQUES AND TACTICS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

**SAURAV SARKAR**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Islamic State (IS) terror group's emergence in 2014 out of Al Qaeda in Iraq had caught the world's attention by storm due to a series of initial successes in the battlefields of Iraq and Syria that were already in turmoil due to sectarian violence, withdrawal of US forces, and an ongoing civil war in Syria. IS was able to mount a series of quick offensives and managed to capture important and major territories in Iraq and Syria, including cities such as Mosul and Raqqa. Its victories came not just via opportunistically crafted military campaigns but also by its employment of fear and propaganda that was able to penetrate the minds of both supporters and those offering resistance.

Outside of Iraq and Syria, its supporters had also attempted to carry out various attacks overseas. Even though attacks were not always sanctioned by IS, the group was always ready to take responsibility for any stray attacks committed in its name. IS has encouraged all forms of attacks by its supporters abroad including crude methods such as knife attacks and ramming people using vehicles. This paper attempts to study the various techniques and tactics used by IS and its supporters worldwide in terms of weaponry, numbers, targets

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and explosives. While, on the whole, IS methods do not differ much from those of other groups, it has attempted to adapt techniques and measures more suitable to the digital age by amplifying the impact of its attacks using the internet and other technological means.

The internet and cyberspace have been greatly weaponised by IS to make its attacks seem more impactful as well as providing the group some much needed logistical and communication capabilities. Sourcing of arms and ammunition can also be done online these days using the dark web and other illicit platforms, along with meeting up with fellow sympathisers in clandestine online chatrooms to discuss and plan possible attacks. Smartphones and cameras are as important a weapon as assault rifles for today's jihadists as they thrive on attention and publicity. The ability to display their carnage to their supporters as well as to their enemies is an important component of their strategies. Often inciting sympathisers online to carry out attacks and providing possible targets become crucial for groups like IS to stay relevant in the minds of their supporters and rivals.

### *Online jihad*

Islamic State media and online operations are given equal priority and resources as their battlefield exploits. IS propaganda has come a long way and has expertly managed to cultivate a carefully constructed image of itself since the Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) days. Its media operations chiefs are given the title of emir, giving them equal status as IS military commanders. Its media team is a professional and privileged class within IS. Two weeks before IS captured Mosul in June 2014 it released a video titled "*Saleel al-Sawarim*", or "Clanging of the Swords" which displayed the ability of its media arm to produce an hour-long documentary-worthy recruitment film. The video glorified the same bloody content that Western policymakers hoped would make people loathe IS. The video exhibited the supposed omnipresence of IS and its intelligence capabilities. The video was released just as rebel groups in Syria were fighting IS and they had nothing comparable to showcase a sense of togetherness or mission.

However, despite the fanfare shown in such propaganda, the reality on the ground is often disparate and anticlimactic, leading many jihadists to become disillusioned. The production quality

reflects a basic knowledge of video-making, with slow-motion shots of jihadi fighters, with multiple camera angles and different filters being applied. The amount of post-production effort alone sets IS videos far apart from the grainy, unedited Al Qaeda videos that came before; however, they are still average and not sophisticated. IS media content is familiar, yet profoundly alien all at once, to disturbing effect. The cinematography is ordinary and the techniques are familiar to amateur cinematographers.<sup>1</sup>

In 2016 the Islamic State circulated a document titled *Media Operative, You Are a Mujahid, Too*, a “revised and updated” edition of an al-Himma Library booklet that was first revealed in a video produced by IS in 2015.<sup>2</sup> The document’s aim was to inspire would-be jihadists handling IS media operations. It details, in common extremist rhetoric, the reasons why media management is crucial to IS, and to this end, has much exaggeration and hyperbole. The document explains that waging the media war is as crucial as fighting on the battlefield and that inciting others to fight for their jihad is equal to fighting in one.<sup>3</sup> This is essentially the Islamic State’s doctrine of information warfare—building appeal, enabling recruitment, forming narratives and counter-narratives.

Social media has greatly enabled IS recruitment, helping it attract as many as 30,000-40,000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) from around 110 nations, to Syria. IS used social media to declare war on the United States by choreographing and making viral the killing of American journalist James Foley who was taken hostage by IS.

When IS was rampaging across northern Iraq in 2014, they spammed Twitter with victorious declarations of captured towns and terrifying visuals of what was in store for those that would resist. A smartphone app that IS had created allowed sympathisers to track these developments from the comfort of their homes and link their social-media accounts in solidarity, letting IS post automatically on their behalf. As many as 40,000 tweets originated from the app in a

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1. Natasha Lennard, “Why Are the Media So Impressed by the Quality of Islamic State Films?”, *Vice News*, September 25, 2014, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/wjyybn/why-is-the-media-so-impressed-by-the-quality-of-islamic-state-films](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/wjyybn/why-is-the-media-so-impressed-by-the-quality-of-islamic-state-films). Accessed on November 26, 2019.

2. Charlie Winter, *Media Jihad: The Islamic State’s Doctrine of Information Warfare*, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2017, p. 8.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

single day as IS fighters moved towards Mosul. Flawlessly staged photos, using Instagram filters, morphed a ragtag force of just around 1,000 IS fighters with small arms riding in dusty pickup trucks into a much larger force than they actually were.<sup>4</sup> This dropped the morale of the Iraqi forces garrisoned in Mosul (numbering some 30,000 soldiers and an equal number of federal police) making them put up no resistance and flee when IS swept through. Hundreds of Twitter bots twisted small, one-sided skirmishes into important battlefield victories.

IS propaganda draws on pragmatic factors—such as stability, security and livelihood—as a medium to justify its politico-military policies and degrade those of its adversaries. This type of messaging is targeted towards exploiting rational-choice decision-making in its target audiences by presenting what are essentially short-term options. Rational-choice messaging was particularly prominent in IS propaganda through 2014-2015 when, unsurprisingly, the caliphate was at its zenith.<sup>5</sup> As its caliphate fell apart and travelling to IS-controlled territories became increasingly difficult, IS introduced terrorist instructional material into its propaganda material in 2016 as an alternative to becoming an FTF.<sup>6</sup>

IS also uses English-language magazines to propagate its propaganda online though it is not the first terror group to do so. These magazines have been a crucial recruitment strategy, mainly aimed at targeting English-speaking Western audiences. The Islamic State's first such publication was called *Islamic State News* (ISN) totalling three issues, all published in June 2014. ISN featured photo reports with captions promoting the Islamic State's strategic efficiency and also the shortcomings or violence of its enemies. While ISN's issues were short publications of maximum ten pages, its authors highlighted topics ranging from military operations in Iraq and Syria, tribal reconciliation efforts, education programmes, the application of *hudud* (restrictions according to sharia) and initiatives to increase

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4. Emerson Brooking and P. W. Singer, "War Goes Viral", *The Atlantic*, November 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/11/war-goes-viral/501125/>. Accessed on December 1, 2019.

5. Haroro Ingram, *Islamic State's English-language magazines, 2014-2017: Trends & implications for CT-CVE strategic communications*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism at The Hague, March 2018, p. 4.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

trade. After ISN, IS transitioned to *Islamic State Report* (ISR), which was a more article dominated format and appeared more formal and authoritative. This allowed for more detailed reporting on not only IS efforts in the field but the strategic, operational and jurisprudential logic behind them from their perspective. ISR had four issues in total, all published in June 2014.<sup>7</sup>

ISN and ISR would soon give way to *Dabiq*, as explained by IS to "...carry on the effort ... into a periodical magazine focusing on issues of tawhid, manhaj [methodology], hijrah [migration], jihad, and jama'ah [organisation]. It will also contain photo reports, current events, and informative articles on matters related to the Islamic State." *Dabiq* consisted of fifteen issues which spanned a tumultuous time for IS, from the establishment of its caliphate and the peak of its territorial control through a period of ultimately decimating resources, personnel and territorial losses. Its primary message remained broadly the same: increase perceptions of crisis and tie these to enemies while showing IS as defenders of Sunni Muslims and their sole hope for solving enemy induced crises. *Dabiq* was published from July 2014 to July 2016 (averaging one issue every two months).<sup>8</sup>

After the IS caliphate disintegrated and after a lull in production following the release of *Dabiq's* fifteenth issue, *Rumiyah* was released as the successor to *Dabiq* in September 2016. Consisting of thirteen issues, *Rumiyah's* content mostly consisted of translated articles and infographics, often drawn from the Islamic State's *Al-Naba* online newspaper, and limited "Exclusive" content specifically for English-speaking readers. *Rumiyah* would last for a year till September 2017 (one issue per month on average).<sup>9</sup>

In seeking new platforms to disseminate its content such as file sharing sites like archive.org, IS has made repeated attempts to set up web pages and blogs. Throughout 2018, the Islamic State's *Amaq* News Agency put in a lot of effort into staying on these websites and blogs but they were either hacked or taken down. Thus, messenger apps—particularly those with features such as encryptions, chat

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7. Ibid., pp. 6-10.

8. Ingram, n. 5, pp. 11-21.

9. Ibid., pp. 21-31.

groups, channels, and media-sharing—were used alternatively.<sup>10</sup> Some popular examples of such apps are Telegram, RocketChat, Riot, Zello, Discord, etc. Telegram is a cross-platform messaging service that allows users to send chats, self-deleting messages, media files and documents, all integrated directly within the app. Telegram was used to recruit terrorists and coordinate the November 2015 Paris attacks and 2016 Brussels bombings by IS.<sup>11</sup>

Another popular app is Zello that allows users to send encrypted audio messages. Zello had been repurposed by IS for pledging allegiance to the Caliph initially. It essentially turns cellphones into walkie-talkies, through which anyone curious about IS or looking to join can listen in. Zello is quite user friendly and quite popular among younger audiences. It has been used to great effect by Tajik IS members such as Sayvaly Shafiev (a leader of IS Khorasan Province's Central Asian contingent), to carry out recruitment in Tajik language and plot attacks abroad.<sup>12</sup>

### **SOWING DISCORD USING PROPAGANDA AND DECEPTION**

After Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death on October 27, 2019 the Islamic State's *Al-Furqan* news agency called on supporters to follow al-Baghdadi's directives and threatened Western countries. IS was also keen to showcase a semblance of order and business as usual after al-Baghdadi's death by informing that its *shura* had convened immediately to choose a successor and had also claimed about 30 attacks within 48 hours of his death.

After the Sri Lankan Easter serial blasts in April 2019, the Islamic State's *al-Naba* online newsletter had encouraged followers to use guerrilla attacks and published a detailed manual on how to carry out

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10. Rita Katz, "A Growing Frontier for Terrorist Groups: Unsuspecting Chat Apps", *Wired*, September 1, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/terrorist-groups-prey-on-unsuspecting-chat-apps/>. Accessed on November 26, 2019.

11. Mia Bloom, "Telegram and Online Addiction to Terrorist Propaganda", Minerva Research Initiative, May 29, 2019, [https://minerva.defense.gov/Owl-In-the-Olive-Tree/Owl\\_View/Article/1859857/telegram-and-online-addiction-to-terrorist-propaganda/](https://minerva.defense.gov/Owl-In-the-Olive-Tree/Owl_View/Article/1859857/telegram-and-online-addiction-to-terrorist-propaganda/). Accessed on November 27, 2019.

12. Farangis Najibullah, "Tajik Man Emerges in Afghanistan as Leader of IS Unit of Central Asian Fighters", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-islamic-state-central-asia-leader-sayvaly-shafiev/30105372.html>. Accessed on November 25, 2019.

guerilla raids.<sup>13</sup> IS is looking to use such tactics beyond its Iraq and Syria centres and while IS has been operating as an armed insurgency for more than a while now, such guidelines make it clear that it is now a standard operating procedure. After losing its territory IS has been forced to return to its original form: a grassroots insurgency that avoids direct clashes, relying on weakening the enemy in a war of attrition and winning support of the populace. Al-Baghdadi in a video in April 2019 encouraged his followers to carry on this war of attrition, suggesting that continuing the war is secondary to winning one.

IS has in recent months resorted to a tactic of seizing small towns temporarily using guerilla tactics to attract media attention and indicate its war of attrition as part of its new strategy. *Al-Naba* had published a four-part article series titled, "The Temporary Fall of Cities as a Working Method for the Mujahideen". The articles explained how guerrilla fighters can weaken the enemy without taking casualties. Among the objectives of guerilla attacks, the articles said, was to take hostages, get their fighters released from enemy prisons and seize cash from the enemy.<sup>14</sup>

IS leadership is keen to revive the caliphate in light of recent losses, especially in areas outside of Syria and Iraq. To this end it has claimed multiple attacks worldwide and claimed to have established provinces worldwide. By striking in different places, IS is proving it can reorganise and change its strategy accordingly. IS temporarily captures areas, flexes its might, overpowers scattered local resistance, even recruits from amongst them, and mocks governments by exposing their alleged inability to prevent attacks; this is an important tactic for its growth.

### *Terror Tactics of the Islamic State*

The terrorist attacks by IS range from sophisticated attacks such as suicide bombings, mass shootings, blowing up a passenger aircraft in flight and hostage taking to simpler but effective attacks such as

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13. Lena Masri and Ali Abdelaty, "Instructions from headquarters: Islamic State's new guerrilla manual", Reuters, May 24, 2019, <https://in.reuters.com/article/security-islamic-state/instructions-from-headquarters-islamic-states-new-guerrilla-manual-idINKCN1SU18J>. Accessed on November 25, 2019.

14. Ibid.

vehicular homicide and knife attacks. IS has carried out attacks against hard targets (such as military bases and security checkpoints) and soft targets (civilian targets in metropolitan areas), against Sunni and Shia Muslims, against non-Muslims and even against other terrorist groups. IS attacks have the hallmark of using innovative methods of bombings (using suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices or SVBIEDs is quite a common tactic in Iraq and Syria to overwhelm large opposition forces), vengefulness of its attacks and image management.

Perhaps the most sensational IS attack was the 2015 Paris attacks which was a mix of coordinated suicide bombings, mass shootings and hostage taking in metropolitan Paris in France. There were a total of nine attackers, split into three teams of three members each, striking six targets in total. The terrorists killed a total of 130 people and seven of the nine attackers were killed by the police.<sup>15</sup> The attacks were planned in Syria and organised by an IS cell based in Belgium. Most of the terrorists had French or Belgian citizenship, and some had fought in Syria. Some of them had come to Europe among the influx of migrants and refugees.

After the attacks French authorities confiscated about 174 weapons, including assault rifles, in follow-up raids. The terrorists had used Zastava M70 assault rifles and triacetone triperoxide (TATP) suicide belts. The M70 is a 1970s assault rifle of Yugoslav (Serbian) origin similar to the AKM assault rifle.<sup>16</sup> The M70 remains in service with all former Yugoslav nations but is slowly being replaced with newer weapons. It has also been widely exported and encountered often in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Incidentally, the M70 assault rifle was also used in the terror attack in Vienna on November 2, 2020 by an individual who had earlier attempted to travel to Syria and was a known IS sympathiser.<sup>17</sup> The attacker was also wearing

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15. CNN, "2015 Paris Terror Attacks Fast Facts", November 13, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/08/europe/2015-paris-terror-attacks-fast-facts/index.html>. Accessed on November 26, 2019.

16. Zastava Arms, Assault Rifle M70 AB2, <https://www.zastava-arms.rs/en/militaryproduct/assault-rifle-m70-ab2>. Accessed on November 26, 2019.

17. Sky News, "Vienna terror attack: Gunman posted photo of himself with his weapons on social media before rampage", November 3, 2020, <https://news.sky.com/story/vienna-terror-attack-gunman-posted-photo-of-himself-with-his-weapons-on-social-media-before-rampage-12122638>. Accessed on November 7, 2020.



a fake suicide vest which seems to be a commonality in recent lone wolf terror attacks in Europe.<sup>18</sup> The attack followed knife attacks in France by Islamists over the Charlie Hebdo controversy regarding the cartoon of Prophet Muhammad<sup>19</sup> which many Muslims found blasphemous.

TATP is a primary high explosive (HE) and had been used before as improvised explosive devices (IED) in other IS terrorist attacks such as the 2016 Brussels bombings, 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, 2017 Brussels attack, 2017 Parsons Green bombing in London, 2018 Surabaya bombings in Indonesia and the April 2019 Sri Lankan Easter serial blasts, along with other non-IS terrorist attacks. TATP is a favourite of terrorists because it is easily made from readily available retail materials like hair bleach and nail polish remover. It is also able to evade detection because it is one of the few HEs that do not contain nitrogen, and so can pass undetected through standard explosive detection scanners. A primary disadvantage is the high susceptibility of TATP to unintended explosions, and TATP production on a large-scale is often exposed by an overwhelming bleach-like or fruity smell. This smell can even soak into clothes and hair in amounts that are quite apparent making a person who has been making TATP “smell like chemicals”.<sup>20</sup>

Another deadly IS attack involved the blowing up of a passenger aircraft—Metrojet Flight 9268—using explosives over northern Sinai killing 224 people in 2015. An Egypt Air mechanic whose cousin joined IS in Syria was suspected of planting the bomb onboard the aircraft. Islamic State’s online magazine *Dabiq* displayed a photo of a can of Schweppes Gold soft drink it said was used to make an IED that brought down the aircraft. The photo also showed what appeared

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18. *The Independent*, “London Bridge attack: Knife attacker wearing fake suicide vest dies after being shot by police”, November 29, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/london-bridge-attack-shooting-latest-terror-suspect-suicide-vest-police-today-a9226576.html>. Accessed on November 2, 2020.

19. BBC, “Seven detained after knife attack near ex-Charlie Hebdo offices”, September 29, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54302337>. Accessed on November 1, 2020.

20. Andrew Higgins and Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, “In Brussels Bombing Plot, a Trail of Dots Not Connected”, *New York Times*, March 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/world/europe/in-brussels-bombing-plot-a-trail-of-dots-not-connected.html>. Accessed on November 23, 2019.

to be a detonator and switch on a blue background.<sup>21</sup> This was quite an interesting method of planting a bomb on an aircraft and had a precedent during World War II when dissenters in Nazi Germany attempted to bomb Hitler's aircraft by smuggling explosives onboard inside a liquor bottle (however, the bomb failed to explode). Around 1.5 kg of TNT was believed to have been used in the Metrojet bombing.<sup>22</sup> TNT is one of the most frequently used explosives for military and industrial purposes. TNT is preferred partly because of its resistance to shock and friction, with reduced risk of accidental explosion compared to more sensitive explosives. It neither absorbs nor dissolves in water, allowing it to be used in wet environments also.

In the January 2019 Jolo Cathedral bombings in the Philippines that killed 20 people, ammonium nitrate pipe bombs were used. The terrorists used a tactic similar to the 2002 Bali bombings to inflict additional casualties among first responders. The IEDs were estimated to weigh not less than two kilograms, with a cellphone suspected to have been used as a detonation device.<sup>23</sup> Ammonium nitrate is predominantly used as a fertiliser. Its other major use is for industrial purposes. In pipe bombs the containment provided by the pipe means that simple low explosives can be used to create a relatively large explosion due to the containment causing increased pressure, and the disintegration of the pipe itself creates shrapnel.

In the Sri Lankan Easter suicide bombings RDX explosives were used along with TATP in suicide vests along with TNT and shrapnel. Some of the attackers had travelled to Syria to join IS where they received weapons training<sup>24</sup> but the explosives and equipment used

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21. Reuters, "Exclusive: EgyptAir mechanic suspected in Russian plane crash", January 29, 2016, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-crash-suspects-idUKKCN0V712V>. Accessed on November 22, 2019.

22. Gianluca Mezzofiore, "ISIS claims 'Schweppes can bomb' blew up Russian Metrojet flight 9268 in Egypt's Sinai—Dabiq", *International Business Times*, November 18, 2015, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-claim-schweppes-can-bomb-blew-russian-metrojet-flight-9268-egypts-sinai-dabiq-1529374>. Accessed on November 22, 2019.

23. *GMA News Online*, "Suspects in Jolo cathedral used Bali-style bombing—DILG", January 29, 2019, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/regions/683071/suspects-in-jolo-cathedral-used-bali-style-bombing-dilg/story/>. Accessed on November 23, 2019.

24. United Nations Security Council, S/2019/570: Twenty-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al Qaida and associated individuals and entities, July 15, 2019, p. 16.

for the attack were all acquired locally. RDX is a solid compound without smell or taste and is more explosive than TNT and commonly used militarily in plastic explosives such as C-4. RDX is stable in storage and is thought to be one of the most energetic of military HEs. It does not detonate without a detonator, and remains unaffected even by small arms fire. This property makes it useful for military operations. The attacks were in response to the Christchurch mosque shooting in 2019 and the Islamic State's loss of Baghouz, Syria as per IS claims.

## CONCLUSION

It had been observed after the controversy over the freedom of expression issue in France due to the beheading of a teacher by an Islamist over a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad that even though groups such as IS and Al Qaeda had no active hand in the same they were nonetheless galvanising people to attack French targets. IS supporters had in fact launched a coordinated online campaign encouraging attacks against France.<sup>25</sup> This was after a few follow-up attacks in France and even one in Saudi Arabia by Islamists over the cartoon issue. The Islamists used crude weapons such as knives to stab and kill people. These attacks, even though not directed by IS, were still able to give a new breather to IS after a series of setbacks worldwide as it gave it new relevance by taking advantage of the polarisation caused by the controversy. Soon its propaganda mediums began to be flooded with images of the attacks and glorification of the attackers.

Therefore, it remains imperative to observe and be prepared for any such evolution in tactics to better counter the terrorism threat. In today's times, guns and bombs are not the only tools available to jihadists (and in some cases have become even harder to come by); rather, they are using everything at their disposal, even perfectly normal things like cars to cause damage. These developments present a host of new security challenges as potentially anything can

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25. SITE Intelligence Group, "IS Supporters Launch Coordinated Social Media Campaign Inciting Violence against France", October 30, 2020, <https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Chatter/is-supporters-launch-coordinated-social-media-campaign-inciting-violence-against-france.html>. Accessed on October 31, 2020.

be weaponised. If Al Qaeda was able to turn passenger airliners into guided missiles on 9/11 to bring down the twin towers, then IS has been able to turn cyberspace and everyday items into crude offensive implements. Thus, today, law enforcement and security agencies need to actively monitor and track suspected individuals by looking at the larger picture of how attacks are planned and executed along with considering the various chain of events leading up to attacks that have to be disrupted in their tracks.

# ASSESSING THE INCREASING APPEAL OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

**ZOYA AKHTER FATHIMA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 20th century witnessed tremendous scientific development. In 1898 when the phenomenon of radioactivity was discovered for the first time, it was considered a scientific miracle holding the promise of a diverse range of benefits. It gained the interest not only of the scientific community but also of the public. This period witnessed what is known as the 'radium craze'. In fact, scientists who died because of excess radium exposure were considered martyrs to science. Similarly, when nuclear fission was discovered in 1938, there was optimism about the new 'atomic utopia' which had created imageries of nuclear-fuelled airplanes and cities powered by unlimited electricity. However, this nuclear optimism burst when the dark side of nuclear power was exposed with the dropping of nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by the United States during World War II. The development of nuclear energy since then has been in a state of flux. Several factors have marked highs and lows in the development of nuclear energy. These include rising oil prices during the 1973 oil crisis, decreasing price of fossil fuel, the Three Mile Island and the Chernobyl nuclear accidents, subsequent

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increasing energy demands, increased awareness of climate change, and most recently, the Fukushima accident. Thus, nuclear energy has gained and lost prominence in phases over the years.

Nuclear energy is once again gaining prominence after the hiatus post-Fukushima, and projections of nuclear energy development appear to be optimistic. According to the World Nuclear Organisation, over 50 nuclear power reactors are currently being constructed, more than 100 reactors are being planned for construction and over 300 plans to develop reactors are being proposed.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the paper attempts to assess the reasons why nuclear energy has gained prominence today and explores the main factors that have led countries to employ nuclear power. In doing so it also makes a comparative assessment of nuclear energy with other forms of renewable energy.

## FACTORS THAT MAKE FOR NUCLEAR APPEAL

### *Sustainability*

Since electricity is central to economic growth, countries' desire for energy security has focused on looking out for sources of electricity generation that are long-lasting and sustainable. Coal, oil, and gas are predominant sources but these are non-renewable and are expected to run out eventually, though the exact timeline estimates vary. Therefore, even oil-rich countries are looking at alternative sources of energy. Nuclear power is believed to be a sustainable form of energy because nuclear reactors use uranium as nuclear fuel, which is a compact or dense form of energy. Hence, it requires a small amount of uranium to produce large amounts of energy. This means the energy efficiency factor is higher than coal, gas and oil. Besides, as technology improves further, molten salt reactors and fast reactors are capable of attaining up to ten times the energy from an equivalent amount of uranium fuel.<sup>2</sup> In addition, some

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1. "Plans for New Reactors Worldwide", World Nuclear Org. <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/current-and-future-generation/plans-for-new-reactors-worldwide.aspx#:~:text=Today%20there%20are%20about%20440,capacity%20of%20about%20400%20GWe>. Accessed on November 16, 2020.
  2. James Conca, "Is Nuclear Power a Renewable or a Sustainable Energy Source?", *Forbes*, March 24, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2016/03/24/is-nuclear-power-a-renewable-or-a-sustainable-energy-source/#18b41f44656e>. Accessed on October 19, 2020.

have also argued that nuclear energy could be a form of renewable energy. Professor Bernard Cohen from the University of Pittsburgh argues in this regard that a breeder reactor can generate more fissile material than what it utilises; hence, it could be considered as a renewable form of energy.<sup>3</sup> It is also believed that if uranium is extracted from seawater, instead of being mined, it could be a form of renewable energy. Oceans are not just the biggest source of uranium but are also constantly replenished through geological processes.<sup>4</sup> Towards this end, for over half a century, scientists have been attempting to extract uranium from seawater. Researchers at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and LCW Supercritical Technologies made significant progress in this regard when they used acrylic fibres to extract uranium from seawater, and created five grams of yellowcake.<sup>5</sup> This will not only make nuclear energy a renewable form but would also make it more commercially viable. It is estimated that approximately four billion tons of uranium from seawater could fuel about one thousand, 1,000 MW nuclear plants for 100,000 years!<sup>6</sup> Moreover, uranium is not the only nuclear fuel that could be used in nuclear power plants. Ongoing research in thorium fuel cycles is expected to develop soon as a new alternative to uranium fuel cycles. As development in nuclear science is taking place at a rapid pace, breakthroughs such as thorium-powered nuclear reactors could provide nuclear fuel flexibility. Not only does thorium release less radioactive waste, it is also considered safer since it is not fissile on its own and thus can be easily stopped. It is also more abundantly available in comparison to uranium; additionally, it prevents the production of weapons grade-

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3. Bernard L. Cohen, "Breeder reactors: A renewable energy source", *American Journal of Physics*, 51(1), January 1983, <http://large.stanford.edu/publications/coal/references/docs/pad11983cohen.pdf>. Accessed on November 2, 2020.
  4. James Conca, n. 2.
  5. "Seawater yields first grams of yellowcake", *Newswise*, June 13, 2018, [https://www.newswise.com/does-science/?article\\_id=696069&returnurl=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubmV3c3dpc2UuY29tL2FydGljbGVzL2xpc3Q](https://www.newswise.com/does-science/?article_id=696069&returnurl=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubmV3c3dpc2UuY29tL2FydGljbGVzL2xpc3Q). Accessed on November 2, 2019.
  6. James Conca, "Uranium Seawater Extraction Makes Nuclear Power Completely Renewable", *Forbes*, July 1, 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesconca/2016/07/01/uranium-seawater-extraction-makes-nuclear-power-completely-renewable/#593fe566159a>. Accessed on November 5, 2020.

plutonium, which helps in minimising chances of proliferation.<sup>7</sup> And for thorium rich countries, this also helps in reducing dependency on other countries for uranium. This technology, however, is still in the process of being commercially proven.

### *The Availability of Resources*

Choices of energy generation technologies are also contingent on where a country is located. For example, photovoltaics would work efficiently only in countries that get enough sunlight throughout the year. Similarly, wind energy requires flat areas of land in windy places. In comparison, nuclear power does not have restrictions when it comes to physical land requirements, except in the case of a few countries that rest on tectonically fragile places, prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. However, development in nuclear technology such as the floating nuclear power plants (FNPPs) counters these challenges. FNPPs can provide electricity to energy-starved countries in remote places, such as in the newly launched project by Russia to power the Arctic city of Pevek.<sup>8</sup> In addition, with regard to land use, nuclear energy requires much less land than wind or solar energy. A study made by the Nuclear Energy Institute revealed that a 1,000 megawatt nuclear facility requires one square mile worth of land. In comparison, wind farms require 360 times more land and solar photovoltaic facilities require 75 times the land area than a nuclear energy facility.<sup>9</sup>

In this regard, nuclear energy is a worthy option for countries that do not have ample natural resources such as Japan, South Korea and France. In addition, lack of natural resources traditionally leads to import of energy resources from other countries. This not only results in high transportation costs but also creates dependency on other

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7. Marin Katusa, "The Thing about Thorium: Why the Better Nuclear Fuel May Not Get a Chance", *Forbes*, February 16, 2012, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/energysource/2012/02/16/the-thing-about-thorium-why-the-better-nuclear-fuel-may-not-get-a-chance/#45ff55db1d80>. Accessed on October 15, 2019.

8. "World's first floating nuclear reactor arrives in Pevek after 4,700 km voyage on Northern Sea Route", *The Siberian Times*, September 9, 2019, <https://siberiantimes.com/other/others/news/worlds-first-floating-nuclear-reactor-arrives-in-pevek-after-4700-km-voyage-on-northern-sea-route/>. Accessed on September 12, 2019.

9. "Land Needs for Wind, Solar Dwarf Nuclear Plant's Footprint", *NEI.org*, July 9, 2015, <https://www.nei.org/news/2015/land-needs-for-wind-solar-dwarf-nuclear-plants>. Accessed on September 13, 2019.



countries. Energy geopolitics also plays an important role here as it could cause significant damage to a country's economy. An example of this is the 1970s oil shocks which led to the power prices shooting up by 50 per cent.<sup>10</sup> This created mayhem in the Japanese economy and was one of the reasons why Japan decided to develop its civil nuclear programme, despite witnessing the horrors of nuclear technology. These crises are difficult to predict as witnessed in the 2019 Abqaiq-Khuras attack in Saudi Arabia which led to a surge in oil prices.<sup>11</sup> Even if a country does not have ample uranium deposits, the advantages of nuclear technology are that a small amount of fuel can generate a huge amount of electricity, hence the problem of dependency on other countries for fuel to operate reactors is also managed.<sup>12</sup>

Besides, factors like transportation could also create hindrances. This is witnessed in the case of coal, where the dependency on railways for transportation causes several challenges. For example, in India, Coal India Ltd. recently stated that there wasn't enough rail capacity to transport coal from Coal India pithead to railhead.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there is also the problem of surging coal prices. Almost 60 per cent of coal in India is transported through railways for electricity generation. On an average, railways account for over 85 per cent of the costs for transporting coal to the power plants.<sup>14</sup> This is because the system in India is such that the freight charges are set higher to offset the lower passenger fares. Thus, it results in overcharging, which in turn causes the price of coal power generation to increase. Nuclear technology, in this regard, faces no such challenges.

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10. Sumiko Takeuchi, "Is there a future for nuclear power in Japan?", *The Japan Times*, July 16, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/07/16/business/future-nuclear-power-japan/>. Accessed on October 18, 2020.

11. Laura He, John Deferios and Anneken Tappe, "US oil prices had their biggest spike in a decade after Saudi attack disrupts global supply", *CNN Business*, September 16, 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/09/15/business/oil-prices-donald-trump-spr/index.html>. Accessed on October 19, 2019.

12. Marin Katusa, n. 7.

13. Mamuni Das, "Coal shortage: Railways claims it is a last mile problem", *The Hindu Business Line*, May 20, 2011, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/Coal-shortage-Railways-claims-it-is-a-last-mile-problem/article20245341.ece>. Accessed on October 17, 2020.

14. Puneet Kamboj and Rahul Tongia, "Indian Railways and coal: An unsustainable interdependency", *Brookings India Report*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/indian-railways-and-coal/>. Accessed on October 16, 2019.

### *Clean and Environmental-friendly Source of Energy*

The burning of fossil fuels for generating electricity is the key cause of global warming. Fossil fuels release an immense amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the environment. Nuclear plants, in comparison, have a low carbon footprint. In fact, the only time greenhouse gases are released with regard to nuclear technology is from the use of fossil fuels during the construction of nuclear power plants, decommissioning of power plants, etc. Some studies even indicate that nuclear energy has helped in preventing deaths that would have been caused due to air pollution. It was revealed in a study by the *Goddard Institute for Space Studies* and *Columbia University* that nuclear energy helped in avoiding the death of almost 1.8 million people since 2009 due to air pollution by replacing coal plants with nuclear power plants.<sup>15</sup> In fact, it is estimated that the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emission that is reduced because of the use of nuclear energy for electricity generation is the equivalent of removing more than 400 million cars from the roads each year.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of environmental impact, nuclear energy is an important tool for countries that are striving to meet the decarbonising goals set up by the Paris Agreement. The key goals of the Paris Agreement are to “keep a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius”.<sup>17</sup> It is estimated that the source of about 70 per cent of the world’s electricity comes from burning fossil fuels. If the decarbonising goals have to be met, it is imperative that about 80 per cent of the electricity needs be generated from a low carbon source. The importance of nuclear power to achieve sustainable development is evidenced by France, where nuclear power contributes to over 70 per cent of its power supply. France, in this regard, has the lowest CO<sub>2</sub> emissions among all developed countries in the world.<sup>18</sup> Currently, although nuclear power

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15. “Nuclear Power Has Prevented 1.84 Million Premature Deaths, Study Says”, *Yale Environment 360*, May 30, 2013, [https://e360.yale.edu/digest/nuclear\\_power\\_has\\_prevented\\_184\\_million\\_premature\\_deaths\\_study\\_says](https://e360.yale.edu/digest/nuclear_power_has_prevented_184_million_premature_deaths_study_says). Accessed on July 4, 2019.

16. “Nuclear Technology for Climate: Mitigation, Monitoring and Adaptation”, IAEA, September 18, 2018, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/nuclear-technology-for-climate-mitigation-monitoring-and-adaptation>. Accessed on August 30, 2019.

17. “What is the Paris Agreement?”, *UNFCCC*, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/what-is-the-paris-agreement>. Accessed on October 20, 2019.

18. Robert Rapier, “Russia’s Floating Nuclear Power Plant Has Great Potential for Decarbonization Trends”, *Forbes*, October 20, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/>

generates only 11 per cent of the total global electricity, it makes up for almost one-third of the global low carbon electricity.<sup>19</sup> The importance of nuclear energy to reduce carbon emissions is further corroborated by the open letter written by a group of renowned scientists in 2019, urging that “there is no credible path to climate stabilization that does not include a substantial role for nuclear power.”<sup>20</sup>

Solar, wind, hydro and nuclear energy are all considered to be environmentally friendly sources. They do not exude anything toxic into the atmosphere or deplete any natural resources. However, they too impact the environment negatively in other ways. For example, it is speculated that Hoary Bats could go extinct due to the increasing number of bat deaths in wind farms.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, hydroelectric energy can cause droughts and affect the marine ecosystem as well.<sup>22</sup> Solar panel dumping has also proved to be hazardous. Similarly, although nuclear energy is a clean form of energy, in case of an accident it can have devastating effects. For example, the Chernobyl accident, apart from resulting in the deaths of thousands of people, rendered an entire town uninhabitable.<sup>23</sup> Thus, calculating the environmental impact of electricity generating technologies is challenging.

However, one of the most effective ways to do so is through a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA). LCA is an analytical tool that enables assessment of environmental impact of any product from its conception to culmination. In the case of energy generating technologies, it

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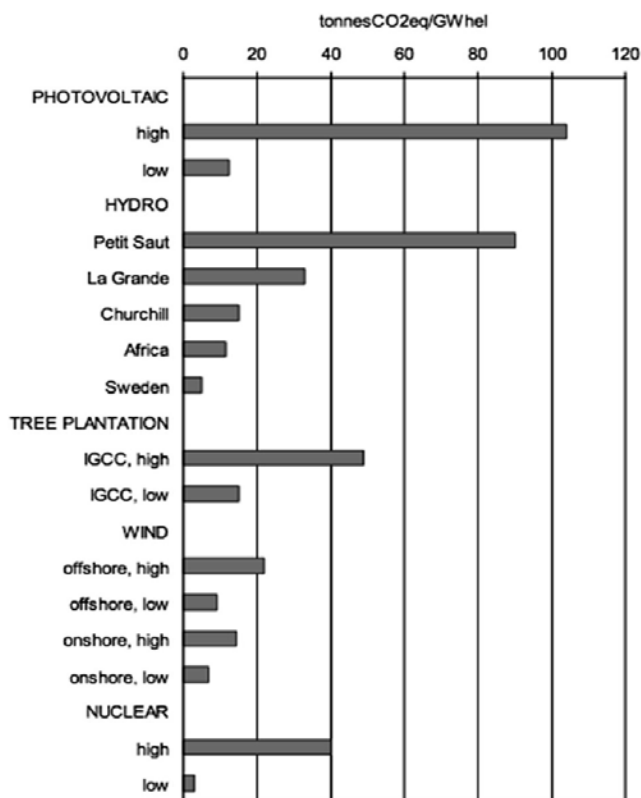
sites/rpapier/2019/10/20/floating-nuclear-power-plants-could-save-numerous-lives/#3a5da4012b17. Accessed on October 23, 2019.

19. “Nuclear Technology for Climate: Mitigation, Monitoring and Adaptation”, IAEA, September 18, 2018, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/statements/nuclear-technology-for-climate-mitigation-monitoring-and-adaptation>. Accessed on August 30, 2019.
20. “Top climate change scientists’ letter to policy influencers”, CNN, November 3, 2013, <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/03/world/nuclear-energy-climate-change-scientists-letter/index.html>. Accessed on September 2, 2019.
21. Michael Shellenberger, “Why Wind Turbines Threaten Endangered Species with Extinction”, *Forbes*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelsellenberger/2019/06/26/why-wind-turbines-threaten-endangered-species-with-extinction/#6791f8c064b4>. Accessed on October 1, 2019.
22. “Drought: Hydropower’s Achilles Heel”, International Rivers.org, May 16, 2019, <https://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/433/drought-hydropower-s-achilles-heel>. Accessed on August 3, 2019.
23. Christian Borys, “Will the Nuclear Ghost Town of Pripyat Ever Be Livable Again?”, *Inverse*, December 6, 2016, <https://www.inverse.com/article/24784-pripyat-chernobyl-city-2016>. Accessed on August 2, 2019.

analyses the environmental impact at all stages including extraction, construction of a plant, transportation, operations and disposal among the other stages. A project by the World Energy Council (WEC) which made a comparative LCA study of several electricity generating technologies as a part of their 2002-2004 Studies Work Programme is notable. The results of the study reveal the following:

(i) **LCA of Electricity Generation Technologies**

**Fig. 1: Greenhouse Gas Emitted from Various Renewable Energy Systems**



Source: "Comparison of Energy Systems Using Life Cycle Assessment", World Energy Council, July 2004, <https://www.worldenergy.org/publications/entry/comparison-of-energy-systems-using-life-cycle-assessment>. Accessed on September 12, 2019.

As indicated in Figure 1, nuclear energy emits the least amount of greenhouse gases in comparison to other forms of renewable energy. It is interesting to note that among renewable forms of energy, greenhouse gases are not emitted during power generation but at other stages of its life cycle such as during the extraction of unprocessed materials, transportation of items, construction of plants, etc.<sup>24</sup> It is for this reason that nuclear energy would play an important role in helping nations meet their climate change commitments.

### *Efficiency*

Technically, the efficiency or productivity of a plant is determined through capacity factor, which is assessed by calculating the amount of energy produced by a source and then dividing it by the amount of energy the source would produce if it functioned incessantly at its highest capacity. Intermittent energy sources, such as solar energy and wind energy in this regard face challenges since the sun isn't always shining (in some locations of the Earth), the wind isn't always blowing and the water does not always fall through turbines in a dam. Nuclear energy, however, has a much higher capacity factor since nuclear reactors require less maintenance, need refuelling only once in two years and do not depend on natural or environmental variables. In addition, as nuclear technology is developing, its capacity factor too is increasing. In the United States, from being less than sixty percent in the 1980s, the average capacity factor of nuclear power plants has now increased to over 90 per cent!<sup>25</sup> In fact, one watt of nuclear energy produces six times more energy than one watt of solar energy.<sup>26</sup>

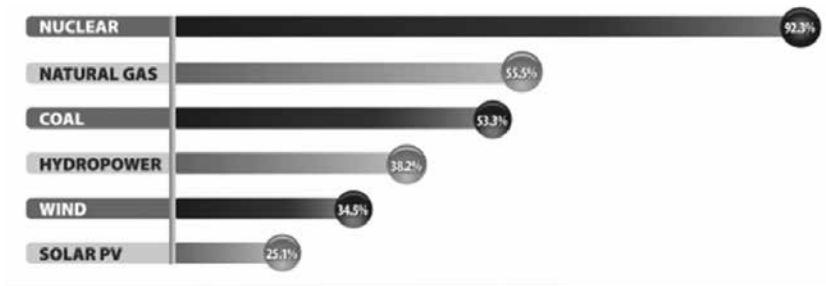
The stark contrast in the capacity factors of various renewable energy forms in comparison to nuclear energy is amply proven by the following graph which denotes the capacity factors of several renewable energy sources in the United States in 2016:

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24. "Comparison of Energy Systems Using Life Cycle Assessment", *World Energy Council*, July 2004, [https://www.worldenergy.org/assets/downloads/PUB\\_Comparison\\_of\\_Energy\\_Systems\\_using\\_lifecycle\\_2004\\_WEC.pdf](https://www.worldenergy.org/assets/downloads/PUB_Comparison_of_Energy_Systems_using_lifecycle_2004_WEC.pdf). Accessed on September 12, 2019.

25. "Nuclear Power in the USA", *World Nuclear.org*, <https://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-t-z/usa-nuclear-power.aspx>. Accessed on August 19, 2019.

26. Matt Wald, "How Nuclear Punches above Its Weight", *Nuclear Energy Institute.org*, June 18, 2018, <https://www.nei.org/news/2018/nuclear-punches-above-weight-updates>. Accessed on August 14, 2019.

**Fig. 2: Capacity Factors for Utility Scale Generators 2016**

Clean. Reliable. Nuclear.

 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
**ENERGY** | Office of  
**NUCLEAR ENERGY**  
\*Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

Source: "Graphic: Capacity Factors for Utility-Scale Energy Sources 2016", Energy.gov. <https://www.energy.gov/ne/downloads/graphic-capacity-factors-utility-scale-energy-sources-2016>. Accessed on October 20, 2019.

As evident in the Figure 2, nuclear energy performs at a much higher capacity than other forms of energy at an average capacity factor of 92 per cent. Hydroelectric power performed at an average capacity factor of 38 per cent, wind energy at 34.5 per cent, and solar energy at 25 per cent.<sup>27</sup> Geothermal energy too has a high capacity factor of almost 70 per cent.<sup>28</sup> Nuclear power plants have a higher capacity factor since they are not intermittent, and once a reactor goes critical, it can perform incessantly until it needs refuelling or unless something malfunctions. They are also not constrained by the paucity of fuel, as in the case of wind or solar energy. In fact, India's Kaiga Atomic Power Station in 2018 set a record of functioning continuously for 962 days!<sup>29</sup> In addition, nuclear power plants demand less maintenance.<sup>30</sup> In the case of

27. "Graphic: Capacity Factors for Utility-Scale Energy Sources 2016", Energy.gov, <https://www.energy.gov/ne/downloads/graphic-capacity-factors-utility-scale-energy-sources-2016>. Accessed on October 20, 2019.

28. "Geothermal Leads in Capacity Factor for Renewables". *Real Clear Energy*, September 16, 2014. [https://www.realclearenergy.org/charticles/2014/09/17/geothermal\\_leads\\_in\\_capacity\\_factor\\_for\\_renewables\\_108020.html](https://www.realclearenergy.org/charticles/2014/09/17/geothermal_leads_in_capacity_factor_for_renewables_108020.html). Accessed on October 20, 2019.

29. Sonal Patel, "Indian-Designed Nuclear Reactor Breaks Record for Continuous Operation", *PowerMag.com*, January 2, 2019, <https://www.powermag.com/indian-designed-nuclear-reactor-breaks-record-for-continuous-operation/>. Accessed on October 3, 2020.

30. "Nuclear Power Is the Most Reliable Energy Source and It's Not Even Close", Office of Nuclear Energy, Energy.gov, February 27, 2019, <https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/nuclear-power-most-reliable-energy-source-and-its-not-even-close>. Accessed on August 30, 2020.

wind energy, the units require servicing at an average of at least once in 6 months.<sup>31</sup> Nuclear power plants in comparison require maintenance once in two years. Low maintenance leads to high efficiency and low operating cost too, making nuclear energy an attractive energy source.

## CONCLUSION

Considering these factors, nuclear energy appears to be an important energy source towards achieving a greener and a more sustainable future. However, when it comes to electricity generating technologies there is no silver bullet that is devoid of shortcomings. While nuclear energy is highly efficient, it also has its own limitations such as the problem of high price and nuclear waste management. In addition, nuclear power falls under the “very low-risk” category, which means that the chances of an accident happening are very small. However, if an accident does happen and it isn’t managed well it could also have severe consequences. Thus, there is still a lot more to be done in terms of making nuclear technology safer. In this regard, assessment can be made not only by comparing one source of energy generating technology with others; rather, a diverse, admixed approach is needed. The importance of energy diversity was witnessed during the polar vortex in 2014, when nuclear and wind energy made up for the inadequacy of coal and natural gas. In this regard, nuclear energy should be an important component of the policy response to the threat of global warming and a vital component of an effective mixed energy basket. The energy revolution that the world so desperately needs is only possible with the formulation of a practical energy strategy. This strategy would require nuclear power to play an important role, since the limitations of other renewable sources of power make them incapable of tackling the problem of global warming all by themselves.

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31. “Wind Turbine Lubrication and Maintenance: Protecting Investments in Renewable Energy”, Power Eng.com, January 5, 2013, <https://www.power-eng.com/2013/05/01/wind-turbine-lubrication-and-maintenance-protecting-investments/>. Accessed on September 19, 2019.

While the future of nuclear energy appears to be positive, it is also challenging to foresee. As history has demonstrated, the highs and lows of the nuclear industry depend on multiple factors. Another nuclear accident could undo the progress the nuclear industry has made so far.



# EX MALABAR 2020: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA-AUSTRALIA TIES

RISHI ATHREYA

## INTRODUCTION

The recent participation by Australia in the Indian Navy's Ex MALABAR once again brings into focus the significance of the *Quad* and the concept of the *Indo-Pacific*.<sup>1</sup> It also highlights India's role as a regional power in the Indo-Pacific. The significance of *Maritime Diplomacy* as a tool of power projection is also in focus. As can be extrapolated from the statements of both India and Australia, it is a seminal moment in their bilateral relations. *Military Diplomacy* is in evidence by all three services of the Indian Armed Forces. Of these, the Indian Navy has been the most active. The two main aims are increasing cooperation and signalling intent to rivals.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Australian Government, Department of Defence, "Australia joins Exercise MALABAR 2020", <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/lreynolds/media-releases/australia-joins-exercise-malabar-2020>. *Navy Daily*, "Enduring partnerships provide the edge", <https://news.navy.gov.au/en/Nov2020/Fleet/6114/Enduring-partnerships-provide-the-edge.htm>. Accessed on January 5, 2021.
2. R. Athreya, "Maritime Diplomacy furthering India's Maritime Aspirations in IOR", in P. Chauhan, R. S. Vasani and R. Athreya (eds.), *Securing India's Maritime Neighbourhood: Challenges and Opportunities* (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation and Vij Books, 2020), p. 60.

## INDO-PACIFIC CONCEPT

Since around 2006, the term Indo-Pacific has been used to describe the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. Different countries have different strategic boundaries and conceptualisation of the 'Indo-Pacific' that are not identical to one another. As far as India is concerned, Prime Minister Modi has unequivocally described the Indo-Pacific as ranging "from the shores of Africa to the shores of the Americas".<sup>3</sup> This was endorsed at the East Asia Summit (EAS) 2019 where the Indian Prime Minister mentioned the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.<sup>4</sup> In the current discourse the Indo-Pacific is the template of analysis for Indian security and foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

Given that many important SLOCs and ISL that are crucial for India run through the Indo-Pacific, it is seen as India's natural habitat and maritime domain. India's maritime domain extends across the Indian Ocean right until the Western and South Pacific Seas.<sup>6,7</sup> Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan gives a comprehensive list of India's Maritime Neighbourhood. These are categorised as Immediate, Proximate, Extended and Strategic Neighbourhood.<sup>8</sup>

The Indian Navy and Coast Guard carry out patrolling within India's Exclusive Economic Zone.<sup>9</sup> The Indian Navy, however, goes even beyond these limits to patrol a larger area.

In pursuit of maritime strategic imperatives, there are various traditional and non-traditional threats. India has embarked on

3. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Media Centre, Speeches and Statements. Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue, June 1, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>. Accessed on January 5, 2021.
4. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Transcript of Media Briefing by Secretary (East) during PM's visit to Thailand, [https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/32007/Transcript\\_of\\_Media\\_Briefing\\_by\\_Secretary\\_East\\_during\\_PMs\\_visit\\_to\\_Thailand\\_November\\_04\\_2019](https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/32007/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_by_Secretary_East_during_PMs_visit_to_Thailand_November_04_2019). Accessed on January 5, 2021.
5. D. Scott, "India and the Indo-Pacific Discourse", in H. V. Pant (ed.), *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, Kindle Edition), p. 196.
6. Indian Navy, 2016, pp. 31-33.
7. S. S. Parmar, "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective", *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, January-March 2014, pp. 49-63.
8. P. Chauhan, "Foreword", in P. Chauhan, R. S. Vasana and R. Athreya (eds.), *Securing India's Maritime Neighbourhood: Challenges and Opportunities* (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation and Vaj Books, 2020).
9. R. S. Vasana, "Indian Navy's 'CAMPING' Expeditions in the Indian Ocean Region", National Maritime Foundation, 2018.

*Maritime Diplomacy*, informed by conceptual principles of *Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR)*.<sup>10</sup> Much of India's foreign policy is seen in the context of two major nuclear armed neighbours, China and Pakistan. India has border issues with both these countries and has fought wars with both. There are continued tensions on both fronts. The recent Galwan incident once again brought into focus the tensions between India and China.<sup>11</sup>

## THE QUAD

The first meeting of the Quad, or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, was held in 2007. It consisted of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States of America. No issue is as divisive as that of the Quad. On the one hand, it is seen as an effective counterweight to China.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, it is also considered to be stillborn.<sup>13</sup> Some Indian scholars believe that the Quad is essential to contain China.<sup>14</sup>

At a political level, the Quad was first experimented with in 2007. Since 1992, the Indian and US navies have carried out various editions of the MALABAR series of exercises.<sup>15</sup> Australia had participated in this exercise in 2007. However, Australia withdrew under Chinese pressure. Australia has long been keen to rejoin the exercise.

This has earlier been resisted by India due to the perceived closeness of Australia to China.<sup>16</sup> There has long been a question of whether Australia should participate in this grouping. The current dispensation in Australia is favourable towards the Quad.<sup>17</sup> Australia

10. R. Athreya, n. 2.

11. R. Athreya, *Galwan Incident: Larger Implications for Sino-India Relations*, ACB Issue Brief, June 28, 2020.

12. G. S. Khurana, "The 'Indo-Pacific' Idea: Origins, Conceptualizations and the Way Ahead", *Journal of Indian Ocean Rim Studies*, October-December 2019.

13. P. Chauhan, "The Security Dimension in the Indo-Pacific: Military-Strategic Issues", pp. 133-50, in National Maritime Foundation, "Indo-Pacific Partnership: Realising the Benefits of Economic and Maritime Cooperation", Indo-Pacific Report, 2019.

14. V. Kaura, "Incorporating Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral into India's Strategic Outlook", *Maritime Affairs*, pp. 78-102.

15. US Embassy, "U.S., JMSDF and Indian Naval Forces Conclude Malabar 2018", Release #032-18, <https://in.usembassy.gov/u-s-jmsdf-and-indian-naval-forces-conclude-malabar-2018/>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

16. A. Singh, "India remains cautious about the 'quad'", 2017, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/india-remains-cautious-about-quad>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

17. L. Lee, "Abe's Democratic Security Diamond and New Quadrilateral Initiative: An Australian Perspective", *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2016), pp. 1-41.

is keen to support US presence in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>18</sup> There has also been increased bilateral engagement with Japan,<sup>19</sup> and there is a Trilateral Security Dialogue in place between the three countries.<sup>20</sup>

The 2020 exercise was planned for mid-November. Australia had been invited to participate.<sup>21</sup> Australia, in a statement, has held that this is a step to increase cooperation with the four navies.<sup>22</sup> The recent successful conduct of this exercise points to increased cooperation.

On October 6, 2020 the Quad Foreign Ministers held a meeting at Tokyo. Australia in a statement used the word *Quad*;<sup>23</sup> however, this word was not used by India.<sup>24</sup> Among the topics discussed were COVID-19, Indo-Pacific, maritime security, ASEAN, UNCLOS, cybersecurity, and humanitarian assistance.<sup>25</sup>

Given the existing close ties of India with Japan and the USA, there is a natural logic for Australia to also align with India. However, Indo-Australian ties remain the weakest of all bilateral relationships.<sup>26</sup>

There was a view that an upgradation of the Quad with more political content to the mechanism provided by participation of political leaders at the highest level may not be very likely soon. Some scholars believe that the most viable alternative on the security front are the East Asia Summit (EAS), along with the ADMM-Plus mechanism.<sup>27</sup> There is, however, not much progress at ADMM-Plus given the hostility by the Chinese. There is, however, a possibility of

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

21. Government of India, Malabar 2020 Naval Exercise, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1665830>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

22. Australian Government, Department of Defence, "Australia to participate in Exercise Malabar 2020", <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/lreynolds/media-releases/australia-participate-exercise-malabar-2020>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

23. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, Australia-India-Japan-United States Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, October 6, 2020, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/australia-india-japan-united-states-quad-foreign-ministers-meeting>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

24. Ministry of External Affairs, 2nd India-Australia-Japan-USA Ministerial Meeting, [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33098/2nd\\_IndiaAustraliaJapan\\_USA\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/33098/2nd_IndiaAustraliaJapan_USA_Ministerial_Meeting). Accessed on January 7, 2021.

25. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, n. 24.

26. L. Lee, n. 17, p. 25.

27. U. B. Singh, "Significance of India's Act East Policy and Engagement with ASEAN", IDSA, 2018.

there being some cooperation among Quad members.<sup>28</sup> In this context Ex MALABAR 2020 exercise becomes important.

**HADR:** The origins of the Quad are seen in the Tsunami Core Group of Australia, India, Japan, and USA formed in 2004 to provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).<sup>29</sup> Some Australian scholars believe that Australia could take a leadership role in the Quad.<sup>30</sup> India too can potentially use HADR to improve alliances with the Quad nations.<sup>31</sup> Japanese scholars believe that cooperation with ASEAN is important in providing HADR. They too see a role for the Quad.<sup>32</sup>

The USA could also build humanitarian relief into the Quad agenda.<sup>33</sup> There are also concerns around poor coordination. India has been reluctant to shed autonomy and join any grouping. Further, it was not keen on inviting Australia to Ex MALABAR. India has also had limited contribution to HADR activities.<sup>34</sup>

**ASEAN:** The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the main regional body in South East Asia, and the primary platform of collaboration. India puts ASEAN at the centre of the Indo-Pacific.<sup>35</sup> India and ASEAN are natural partners in their desire to create a free and inclusive regional architecture. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN. They are active participants in

28. A. Rai, "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue 2 (Quad 2.0)—A Credible Construct or Mere 'Foam in the Ocean'", *Maritime Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 2, p. 146.

29. K. Stevenson and H. D. P. Envall, "The 'Quad' and Disaster Management: An Australian Perspective", in Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li (eds.), *International Disaster Response Rebuilding the Quad?* (Stimson Centre, 2019), p. 14.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

31. A. Vasudeva, "India's role in Disaster Management: Can it give the Quad a leg up?", in Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li (eds.), *International Disaster Response Rebuilding the Quad?* (Stimson Centre, 2019), pp. 25-35.

32. Y. Jibiki, "A Japanese Perspective on Exploring Quad Cooperation in Disaster Management: The Isolation of India and Distance to ASEAN", in Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li (eds.), *International Disaster Response Rebuilding the Quad?* (Stimson Centre, 2019), pp. 35-46.

33. P. Kennedy, "The U.S. and Quad Disaster Cooperation: A Matter of Political Will", in Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li (eds.), *International Disaster Response Rebuilding the Quad?* (Stimson Centre, 2019), pp. 47-60.

34. Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li, "Final Thoughts", in Yuki Tatsumi and Jason Li (eds.), *International Disaster Response Rebuilding the Quad?* (Stimson Centre, 2019), pp. 61-62.

35. V. Anand, "India's Defence Cooperation with South East Asian Countries: Need for Proactive and Substantive Action", Vivekananda International Foundation, 2019, p. 5.

the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).<sup>36</sup> All four countries of the Quad are members of ADMM-Plus.

In June 2019, the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* was adopted by member states at the 34th ASEAN Summit at Bangkok. This is the major policy document laying out the collective foreign policy of ASEAN. It is meant to contribute to the maintenance of peace, freedom, and prosperity.<sup>37</sup> ASEAN would like to be at the centre of the Indo-Pacific narrative.<sup>38</sup> There is a deep desire in ASEAN to avoid taking sides in any Sino-Indian "Cold War".<sup>39</sup>

An important aspect is that the document says it is keen to avoid zero sum games due to rivalry. This can be seen as implying neutrality between US and China.<sup>40</sup>

It is the keenness to strengthen other ASEAN-led regional mechanisms as aforementioned.<sup>41</sup> ASEAN is strongly against the creation of a new military alliance in its region.

Even Australia may prefer the Quad to remain an informal grouping.<sup>42</sup> Given that India considers ASEAN central to the Act East policy, any association with the Quad can only be with ASEAN cooperation.<sup>43</sup> here is little chance of the Quad emerging into an *Asian NATO*. Dr. David Brewster suggests a Quad of Coast Guards that would maintain maritime security and enhance

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36. H. V. Pant and A. Deb, "India-ASEAN Partnership at 25", ORF Issue Brief No. 189, July 2017, p. 3.

37. ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", <https://asean.org/asean-outlook-indo-pacific/>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

38. Kaura, n. 14, p. 84.

39. D. Brewster, "Between Giants: The Sino-Indian Cold War in the Indian Ocean", *Asia Visions*, no. 103, December 2018.

40. M. C. Tyler, "The Indo-Pacific is the New Asia", *Lowy Interpreter*, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indo-pacific-new-asia>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

41. Comde S. Banerjee, "ASEAN Adopts Outlook for Indo-Pacific 2019: Balances Aspirations and Affirms Indonesia's Leadership", Vivekananda International Foundation, July 2019, <https://www.vifindia.org/2019/july/01/asean-adopts-outlook-for-indo-pacific-2019>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

42. L. Lee, n. 17, pp. 30-32.

43. P. Saha, "The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: Why ASEAN Remains Cautious", ORF Issue Brief No. 229, February 2018. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, "India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad", *Survival*, vol. 60, no. 3 (June-July 2018), pp. 181-89.

cooperation, especially for non-traditional threats. This is seen as less confrontational than Navies.<sup>44</sup>

For the Quad to succeed there would need to be cooperation with ASEAN. Any concerns around domination of the region need to be addressed. Given that China is also part of ADMM-Plus this forum becomes especially important. Other ASEAN states would also need to be involved.

### INDIA-AUSTRALIA TIES

Australia remains a nation with which India has one of the most important—albeit complicated—bilateral relations. The Modi government is seen by Australia as initiating a strategic alliance between the two countries. The military, diplomatic, constabulary, and benign roles of the navy are seen as important in the alliance.<sup>45</sup>

Australia considers the AUSINDEX exercise held with India since 2015 an important event.<sup>46</sup> Ex AUSINDEX is seen as a watershed in improving bilateral relations of the two *Middle Powers*.<sup>47</sup> It is believed that India and Australia share a concern about China.<sup>48</sup> This contrasts with the earlier position wherein Australia was not keen to alienate China.<sup>49</sup>

India and Australia held a virtual bilateral summit and renewed their commitment to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. There were agreements to collaborate in the Indo-Pacific. The two countries mentioned a *Free, Open, Inclusive, and Rules-based Indo-Pacific* with multilateral structures. Specifically, for COVID-19 there are to be continued consultations with Quad

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44. D. Brewster, "It's time for a 'Quad' of Coast Guards", *Lowy Interpreter*, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/time-quad-coast-guards>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

45. D. Brewster, "The Australia-India Framework for Security Cooperation: Another Step towards an Indo-Pacific Security Partnership", *Security Challenges*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2015), pp. 39-48.

46. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Defence, 2016, Defence White Paper, Para 5.70.

47. R. Garge, "AUSINDEX—Mid-power bonhomie in the Indo-Pacific", *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*, 2016.

48. A. Singh, "China's strategic ambitions seen in the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka", ORF, July 2018, p. 11, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/chinas-strategic-ambitions-seen-in-the-hambantota-port-in-sri-lanka/> Accessed on January 10, 2021.

49. M. H. C. Tyler and A. Bhutoria, "Diverging Australian and Indian Views on the Indo-Pacific", *Strategic Analysis*, 39:3, 2015, pp. 225-36.

plus South Korea, Vietnam and New Zealand.<sup>50</sup> These are ASEAN and ADMM-Plus countries.

Significantly, there is a separate Maritime agreement. This includes a mention of traditional and non-traditional threats to Maritime Security incorporating ecology, transportation, and connectivity.

Particularly, it is mentioned that there will be Navy-to-Navy, and Coast Guard cooperation. India's Indo-Pacific Initiative has been endorsed. This includes environmental and humanitarian issues thereby implying a joint benign role for maritime forces of both countries.<sup>51</sup>

Australia, in the latest Foreign Policy White Paper,<sup>52</sup> and Defence White Papers<sup>53</sup> lays out the policy on diplomacy and defence. This supports the US-led global order.<sup>54</sup>

Australia believes that it will play a positive role in the larger Indo-Pacific and EAS. While giving primacy to Japan and USA, it is keen to engage India with the EAS as also with the USA and East Asia.<sup>55</sup> Australia is keen to be a mediator between India and the rest of the EAS and ADMM-Plus groupings. India is considered a major defence player, and key to regional stability.<sup>56</sup> The role of India in IORA is noted.<sup>57</sup> India has long had an association with the IORA.<sup>58</sup> This feeds into SAGAR.<sup>59</sup>

Partnership and military diplomacy with India are considered important.<sup>60</sup> In the maritime sphere Australia is keen for joint

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50. Joint Statement on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Republic of India and Australia, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/Pages/joint-statement-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-between-republic-india-and-australia>. Accessed on January 10, 2021.

51. Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between the Republic of India and the Government of Australia, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32730/Joint\\_Declaration\\_on\\_a\\_Shared\\_Vision\\_for\\_Maritime\\_Cooperation\\_in\\_the\\_IndoPacific\\_Between\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_India\\_and\\_the\\_Government\\_of\\_Australia](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32730/Joint_Declaration_on_a_Shared_Vision_for_Maritime_Cooperation_in_the_IndoPacific_Between_the_Republic_of_India_and_the_Government_of_Australia). Accessed on January 7, 2021.

52. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, Foreign Policy White Paper.

53. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Defence, 2016, Defence White Paper.

54. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n. 52, p. 7.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

56. Commonwealth of Australia, n. 53, Para 2.94.

57. *Ibid.*, Para 2.93.

58. G. S. Khurana, n. 12.

59. G. Padmaja, "Revisiting 'SAGAR'—India's Template for Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region", National Maritime Foundation, 2018.

60. Commonwealth of Australia, n. 53, Para 5.70.



exercises and building maritime domain awareness with India.<sup>61</sup> The role of India's Act East Policy and membership of ADMM-Plus and EAS are mentioned as platforms for cooperation.<sup>62</sup>

Pakistan is seen as an unstable country that generates terrorism. Australia, however, wants to continue to engage with Pakistan in defence cooperation and counterterrorism.<sup>63</sup> There is cooperation on border security, counterterror and transnational crime between the two countries.<sup>64</sup>

In July 2020 Australia released a *Defence Strategic Update*.<sup>65</sup> This document highlights strategic competition between the USA and China.<sup>66</sup> There is also a mention of *grey-zone* activity that may be used to coerce countries without actual war.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps for the first time there is a mention of a possible conventional attack on Australia.<sup>68</sup> There is, interestingly, a mention of US nuclear umbrella affording protection to Australia, while also saying that Australia needs to become more self-reliant.<sup>69</sup> In the Strategic Update 2020, while there is an endorsement of continued cooperation with the USA,<sup>70</sup> there is also a mention of India, Indonesia and Japan.<sup>71</sup>

**China Factor:** As noted, Australia had in the past withdrawn from the MALABAR exercise. This was since it did not want to be seen as openly anti-China.<sup>72</sup> There is a view that Australia is effectively a *Regional Power* in the South Pacific, and should take an active role in maintaining regional stability. Thus, it would prefer to neither be singularly pro-US or pro-China.<sup>73</sup> There has been a deterioration of relations between Australia and China over the past few years.

61. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n. 52, p. 46. D. Brewster, "Give light, and the darkness will disappear: Australia's quest for maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 2018, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 296-314.

62. Commonwealth of Australia, n. 53, Para 5.71.

63. *Ibid.*, Para 2.95-2.96.

64. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/pakistan/Pages/pakistan-country-brief>. Accessed on January 7, 2021.

65. Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Defence, 2020, *Defence Strategic Update*.

66. Commonwealth of Australia, 2020, Para 1.2.

67. *Ibid.*, Para 1.5.

68. *Ibid.*, Para 1.11.

69. *Ibid.*, Para 2.22.

70. *Ibid.*, Para 2.17.

71. *Ibid.*, Para 2.18.

72. V. Kaura, n. 14, p. 82.

73. A. Carr, "No longer a Middle-power, Australia's Strategy in the 21st Century", *Focus Strategique*, no. 92, IFRI.

Australia was among the first countries to ban Huawei in 5G Broadband. However, in 2012, the company had already been banned from participating in Australia's broadband network.<sup>74</sup>

There is also tension between Australia and China on the trade front.<sup>75</sup> Overall, Australia is seen by India as a country that has been able to stand up to China.<sup>76</sup>

### OTHER QUAD MEMBERS

There is also a significant role of the other Quad members in any evolving cooperation in the Quad.

**Japan:** Japan has long been an important extra-regional ally of India. Given a pacifist doctrine, Japan has hitherto mainly had a coast guard to counter piracy. There is cooperation with the Indian Coast Guard and Navy.<sup>77</sup> Two major events are the Ex Sahyog-Kaijin and Ex JIMEX. In response to China's Belt and Road Initiative, Japan has pursued the Partnership for Quality Infrastructure and *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*. India, the USA and Australia are considered important partners.<sup>78</sup> There has been joint assistance and technical cooperation in South Asia. Both countries have cooperation in defence and diplomacy, including maritime affairs. They are part of ASEAN and EAS.<sup>79</sup>

**USA:** India and the US are apparently moving closer diplomatically and militarily. In 2015, India and the USA signed US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region. Among other things it affirms the importance of maritime

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74. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-and-the-great-huawei-debate-risks-transparency-and-trust/>. Accessed on January 10, 2021.

75. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-end-of-australias-china-boom-shouldnt-be-such-a-surprise/>. Accessed on January 10, 2021.

76. Bachhawat, "Australia-India relations after Covid-19", in M. Shoebridge, and L. Sharland (eds.), *After Covid-19: Australia, the Region and Multilateralism*, vol. 2, p. 58.

77. S. L. D. Iyer, "Japanese Naval Diplomacy in the Indian Ocean: Prospects and Possibilities", NMF, 2018.

78. Y. Ishida, "China's OBOR Initiative and Japan's Response: The Abe Doctrine, Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and Japan-India Strategic Partnership", in J. Panda and T. Basu (eds.), *China-India-Japan in the Indo-Pacific* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2015), pp. 159-89.

79. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Joint Statement—First India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting", [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32131/Joint\\_Statement\\_First\\_IndiaJapan\\_2432\\_Foreign\\_and\\_Defence\\_Ministerial\\_Meeting](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32131/Joint_Statement_First_IndiaJapan_2432_Foreign_and_Defence_Ministerial_Meeting). Accessed on January 10, 2021.

security and Freedom of Navigation, especially in the South China Sea. It also calls on parties to settle disputes through international law. There are also concerns about piracy, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction.<sup>80</sup> There has been the LEMOA Agreement<sup>81</sup> to use each other's facilities. COMCASA has given India access to the USA's surveillance data.<sup>82</sup>

The USA, in the *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, mentions the relevance of *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*. This includes governance, peace, diplomacy, economics, and security.<sup>83</sup> The USA counts many ADMM-Plus countries as allies. Of these, Australia, Japan and South Korea are considered major allies.<sup>84</sup> India has been named as a major defence partner. There is a mention of collaboration, including a planned tri-service exercise.<sup>85</sup> The US considers ASEAN, ARF, ADMM and EAS as important fora.<sup>86</sup> There is a specific mention of the Quad.<sup>87</sup>

India and the US hold bilateral 2+2 meetings of the Foreign and Defence Ministers.<sup>88</sup> The latest two meetings endorsed India's position in the Indo-Pacific. It also supported naval cooperation and the Quad dialogue. There is endorsement for Rule of Law and Code of Conduct for South China Sea.<sup>89</sup> The 2020 communique also supports developmental activities, disaster relief and peacekeeping

80. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region", [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24728/USIndia\\_Joint\\_Strategic\\_Vision\\_for\\_the\\_AsiaPacific\\_and\\_Indian\\_Ocean\\_Region](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24728/USIndia_Joint_Strategic_Vision_for_the_AsiaPacific_and_Indian_Ocean_Region). Accessed on January 10, 2021.

81. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.

82. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement.

83. United States of America, Department of Defense, "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region", June 1, 2019, p. 3.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-27.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

88. R. Verma and S. Saran, *Strategic Convergence: The United States and India as Major Defence Partners* (New Delhi: ORF and Asia Group, 2019).

89. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Joint Statement on the Second India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue", <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32227/Joint+Statement+on+the+Second+IndiaUS+2432+Ministerial+Dialogue>. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Statement on the Second India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33145/Joint+Statement+on+the+third+IndiaUS+2432+Ministerial+Dialogue>. Accessed on January 11, 2021.

in Indo-Pacific partner countries.<sup>90</sup> The two countries have signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) which facilitates maritime information sharing and maritime domain awareness. There is also a plan for greater defence cooperation.<sup>91</sup>

### STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Both India and Australia have, to different extents, some concept of autonomy in security and diplomacy. India has long maintained a position of Strategic Autonomy.<sup>92</sup> Experts see this position as a natural continuation of the erstwhile Non-Alignment.<sup>93</sup> Thus, while it may have issue-based cooperation, it will never join an alliance. Even Australia and Japan have fears about the viability of the US continuing to be a net-security provider.<sup>94</sup> There are divergences in the perception about the threat posed by China.<sup>95</sup> Chinese scholars view the entire concept of Indo-Pacific, especially the Quad, as being directed against China.<sup>96</sup> There is especially a sense that it is at the US' behest.<sup>97</sup>

The mutual threat of China is a major factor in the US-India cooperation. India, however, is wary of becoming a full-fledged US ally.<sup>98</sup> In the event of a US withdrawal from the Indo-Pacific it may

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90. Ibid.

91. US Department of State, "Joint Statement on the Third U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue", <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-third-u-s-india-22-ministerial-dialogue/>. Accessed on January 11, 2021.

92. Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Prakash Menon, Nandan Nilekani, Srinath Raghavan, Shyam Saran and Siddharth Varadarajan, "Non-Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty-First Century", 2012.

93. C. V. Ranganathan, "India's Regional Alliances in the Indo-Pacific", in P. Chauhan, R. S. Vasani and R. Athreya (eds.), *Securing India's Maritime Neighbourhood: Challenges and Opportunities* (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation and Vij Books, 2020), pp. 31-40.

94. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, "India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad", *Survival*, vol. 60, no. 3 (June-July 2018), pp. 181-94.

95. L. Lee, *Assessing the Quad: Prospects and Limitations of Quadrilateral Cooperation for Advancing Australia's Interests*, Lowy Institute, pp. 7-8.

96. Chengxin Pan, "The 'Indo-Pacific' and geopolitical anxieties about China's rise in the Asian regional order", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 68:4, 2014, pp. 453-69.

97. Z. Xiangyu, "The Indo-Pacific: China's Perception", in S. Chinoy and J. Panda (eds.), *Asia between Multipolarism and Multipolarity* (New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2020), p. 300.

98. Gurpreet S. Khurana, "High End in the Pacific: Envisioning the Upper Limits of India-US Naval Cooperation in Pacific-Asia", *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 11, no. 4, October-December 2017, pp. 51-71.

be expected that India would take the role of Net Security Provider.<sup>99</sup> An exceptional part of the interface is that India too is prevailing on the USA to work as a nominally equal partner.<sup>100</sup> India perhaps is moving in the direction of being a Net Security Coordinator.

Both India and Australia have also come to believe that the USA alone cannot counter China.<sup>101</sup> Thus, it is more likely that India would want 'coordinated' patrols rather than 'joint' operations with a unified command.<sup>102</sup> The MALABAR exercise has been undertaken along with the USA since 1992.<sup>103</sup> Japan has been part of this exercise since 2015.

There is a view that Australia is effectively a *Regional Power* in the South Pacific, and should take an active role in maintaining regional stability. Australia would need larger regional and global support to emerge as a middle power. There are, however, challenges of economic relations with China across the Indo-Pacific.<sup>104</sup> Thus, it may also explain why it was willing to continue Ex AUSINDEX with India even while earlier not being part of Ex MALABAR. One view is that Australia is keen to use multilateral bodies to moderate China.<sup>105</sup> Australia would prefer to use ASEAN institutions as opposed to the Quad to develop a shared view of the Indo-Pacific.<sup>106</sup>

There is, however, a counterview that Australia should balance Japan with China.<sup>107</sup> Australia and India may find convergence in their maritime defence policies.<sup>108</sup>

99. Khurana, n. 12, p. 60. V. Mishra, "India-US Maritime Cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon", *Maritime Affairs*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 15-25.

100. Brewster, "Australia, India and the United States: The Challenge of Forging New Alignments in the Indo-Pacific", United State Studies Centre, 2016, p. 7.

101. A. Bachhawat, n. 76, p. 56.

102. Gurpreet S. Khurana, "America's Expectation versus India's Expediency: India as a Regional 'Net Security Provider'", National Maritime Foundation, 2016.

103. <https://in.usembassy.gov/u-s-jmsdf-and-indian-naval-forces-conclude-malabar-2018/>. Accessed on January 11, 2021.

104. P. Layton, "Australia's Defence Strategic Update: It's All About China", RUSI Commentary, 2020, <https://rusi.org/commentary/australias-defence-strategic-update-it%E2%80%99s-all-about-china>. Accessed on January 11, 2021.

105. R. Medcalf, "Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper: Navigating Uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific", *Security Challenges*, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 37.

106. Kaura, n. 14, p. 92.

107. D. Brewster, "Japan's plans to build a 'Free and Open' Indian Ocean", <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/japan-plans-build-free-and-open-indian-ocean>. Accessed on January 11, 2021.

108. U. B. Singh, "Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper: An Indian Perspective", *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, April-June 2016, pp. 111-20.

Overall, the Indo-Australian relationship has for some years been considered as having reached a balanced stage and there is scope for further cooperation.<sup>109</sup> Australia joining in this Exercise in 2020 is seen by some as a move towards formalisation of the Quad. Australia's participation in MALABAR 2020 is in some ways a fructification of the Quad.

At the diplomatic level, given the historic Commonwealth connection, India should enhance cooperation with Australia.<sup>110</sup> There is also support for India and Australia from the UK.<sup>111</sup> This too should be built up for further historic diplomatic and military ties. Australia's desire to engage with Pakistan can be seen as a natural progression of the role of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

#### **OTHER OFFICIAL FORA**

Besides the Quad, EAS, ASEAN and ADMM-Plus, several multilateral groupings exist that also affect the maritime domain. As with regional bodies these too need strengthening.

**IORA:** The Indian Ocean Rim Association<sup>112</sup> could be said to be the closest to a multilateral body for Indian's Maritime Neighbourhood.<sup>113</sup> There is a need for IORA to collaborate with many regional bodies in the Indo-Pacific. This includes the ADMM-Plus.<sup>114</sup> In this context, the EAS and ADMM would need to cooperate with IORA to be effective.<sup>115</sup> It can be said that the Indian Navy and Coast Guard are effective in promoting bilateral cooperation.

**IONS:**<sup>116</sup> The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), an Indian initiative established in 2008, which brings together 35 navies and

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109. I. Hall, "India in Australia's 2016 Defence White Paper", *Security Challenges*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2016, pp. 181-85.

110. C. V. Ranganathan, n. 93, p. 36.

111. J. Hemings, "Charting Britain's Moves in the South China Sea", *RUSI Commentary*, February 6, 2019, <https://rusi.org/commentary/charting-britain%E2%80%99s-moves-south-china-sea>. Accessed on January 14, 2021.

112. <https://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/Pages/asean-regional-forum-arf.aspx> <https://www.iora.int/en>. Accessed on January 14, 2021.

113. G. S. Khurana, n. 12.

114. Yogendra Kumar and Probal K. Ghosh, "The "Indo" in the "Indo-Pacific"—An Indian View", *Naval War College Review*, vol. 73, no. 2, article 7, pp. 75-76.

115. G. S. Khurana, n. 12, p. 15.

116. <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/node/21302>

coast guards, seeks to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>117</sup>

**MILAN:** This is a biennial congregation of Indian Ocean Littoral navies conducted by Indian Navy at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands facilitating cooperation.<sup>118</sup> It has now grown into a prestigious international event and encompasses participation by maritime forces from not just the Bay of Bengal and South East Asia but the larger IOR. This includes some ADMM countries.

**Malacca Strait Security Initiative:** Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand launched the *Malsindo* coordinated patrols under the *Malacca Strait Security Initiative* (MSSI) in 2004. The success can be attributed to cooperation by all relevant stakeholders. This can be a template to engage not just China but all other stakeholders in Indian Ocean maritime security.<sup>119</sup> This includes ADMM countries. There is a lack of keenness to expand membership to include India. Nevertheless, India has been participating in benign roles.<sup>120</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The invitation by India to Ex MALABAR and the acceptance of this by Australia is a landmark not just for the two countries but the entire region represented by the Quad, ADMM-Plus and ASEAN. Effectively by extending the invitation India has shown the willingness to be net security coordinator if not an actual provider. Australia too has shown a reception of India in such a role.

From a pure maritime diplomacy angle India is effectively cooperating with partners like the Quad states, while signalling intent to the main rival China. China continues to be an enduring shared threat in the region. This is seen especially in the mention of Free and Open Indo-Pacific by all four Quad countries. ASEAN too broadly endorses this view. HADR will continue to play an important role in maritime diplomatic relations of the Quad countries. Non-traditional

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117.G. Padmaja, n. 59, p. 4.

118.Z. D. Singh (2017). "Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India's Maritime Role Flux". *Journal of Defence Studies*, 11(4), p. 34.

119.S. Upadhyaya (2018). "Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region: Assessment of India's Maritime Strategy to be the Regional 'Net Security Provider'", University of Wollongong, pp. 232-233.

120.V. Anand, n. 35, pp. 21-22.

threats continue to be a challenge in the region. In this context there may well be a role for Coast Guards, both in constabulary and benign functions. This is particularly relevant to Japan.

There is multiple security architecture in the region. ASEAN will continue to be an important body representing the better part of the region. All Quad members effectively want to honour these bodies at least in form. As can be seen this would clearly prevent the creation of an Asian NATO among Quad members. The Indo-Pacific will thus have to be a collaborative effort. All countries of the region and regional bodies will need to have a role and make their contribution.

India's long-term position of Strategic Autonomy continues to be in play. Thus, it is not too keen to necessarily be part of a US-led alliance. There is a view in Australia too that it should maintain neutrality between major powers, especially China and the USA. The USA by being willing to support an India-led maritime exercise is effectively accepting India's autonomous role even if only in form. Japan, notwithstanding the pacifist constitution, remains part of the Quad. It too supports the institutional architecture in the region.

Australia and India could build on their bilateral ties. Ex MALABAR shows that the two countries have much in common. Both countries as neutral middle powers have a role not just in the Quad but also in the larger Indo-Pacific. They would also need to collaborate with not just the USA and Japan but also all ADMM and ADMM-Plus states. The role of other official fora, namely IORA, IONS, MILAN and Malacca Straits Initiative is also important in this context.



# EU'S SOFT POWER: POWER, OR NO POWER?

**KHATU JAYESH JAYPRAKASH**

If you wish to rule, make sure your culture does too.

—Anonymous

## INTRODUCTION

The aforementioned quote on culture could be visualised in the context of international relations where scholars like Joseph Nye have argued that one's culture could dictate the rules of the international order. It can be considered true regarding the American culture which had generated larger acceptability globally and contributed to the US' rise in world politics, especially in the post-Cold War world.<sup>1</sup>

The European Union (EU), upon its formation, was primarily an economic grouping.<sup>2</sup> It was more of an economic union than a political one. Economic integration leading to conflict resolution and avoidance formed the genesis of the formation of this European

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1. Eric Li, "The Rise and Fall of Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/20/the-rise-and-fall-of-soft-power/>. Accessed on October 12, 2020.
2. The EU was initially conceptualised as a European Coal and Steel Community aimed at multilateral cooperation for ensuring lasting peace in the continent of Europe.

collectivity. Cooperation further spilled over to having common policy areas like climate change, terrorism, environment and migration. Being the largest trade bloc in the world, the EU possesses a large expanse of trading relations all across the globe.

With the European Economic Cooperation of 1957 taking shape as the EU, making it a legal political entity, the EU project received wide momentum in 1993 for collectively addressing issues like internal security, climate change and common policies on various issues of external security.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, externally, the Union further ventures into humanitarian aid and assistance at the global level; it is also active at the cultural diplomacy front. It is seen to be the world leader in climate change negotiations, aspiring soon to be the first carbon neutral continent on the planet.<sup>4</sup> With such diverse aspects of diplomacy, the EU has ventured into the field of soft power. But “Is the EU’s soft power just a normative one or a transformative power?” This is the question to be pondered upon.

## NOTION OF POWER IN WORLD POLITICS

Power is like the weather. Everyone depends on it and talks about it, but few understand it.<sup>5</sup>

—Joseph Nye

Power and its existence are recognised by almost everyone, but defining power in its exactness has always been an arduous task. ‘Power’ can be roughly defined as the ability to get things done by others by influencing their behaviour in order to achieve the desired results. Classical realist, Hans Morgenthau in his book, *Politics among Nations*, has asserted, “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.”<sup>6</sup> For him, power is central in the sphere of international politics which remains an arena for power acquisition.

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3. For further details, refer to “The History of the European Union—1993”, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1990-1999/1993\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1990-1999/1993_en)

4. The 2050 EU long-term strategy aims to make the continent carbon neutral by 2050 by targeting zero Green House Gases emissions. For further information, refer to [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2050\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2050_en)

5. Joseph Nye, “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics”, *Public Affairs*, April 27, 2005, United States, p. 1.

6. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (McGraw-Hill Education, May 16, 2005).

It is the power relations between nations, or group of nations, which shape global politics; thus, understanding the notion of power becomes important.

Traditionally, power was talked about from military and security perspectives where scholars and world leaders argued for increasing one's military capabilities, acquiring weapons which provide an edge over other nations, having vast territories, resources and population as well as winning wars. Thus, the focus of usage of power was constrained to coercion or use of force for achieving one's foreign policy objectives. But, with the advent of Globalisation and Information Technology advancements, world politics witnessed an emergence of new power equations. Economic relations started dictating political relations between nation-states and direct confrontation with one's adversaries in battlefields became farfetched. The notion of hard power started losing its ground and 'the second face of power',<sup>7</sup> that is, 'soft power', started gaining currency in the field of international politics by the end of the 1980s.

### **SOFT POWER**

Soft power of a nation, according to Nye, is based primarily on three resources: its culture, political values, and foreign policy. Culture forms the basis of a nation-state's identity and pride which is defined by its foundational ideas, customs and civilisation values. In the context of soft power of a country, culture has been linked to progress and development. Development and prosperity in economic, political and international sphere is attributed to culture as well, among many other factors. America's rise as a global power is majorly attributed, along with its military might, to its multicultural ethos and an all assimilating 'melting-pot', which the United States has been described as. Export of the concept of Americanisation has been crucial to the US strategy of dominating the world through its soft power.

Similarly, political values are the attributes which are defined in a country's constitutional ethos. They have direct and indirect effects on a country's political economy, and values like freedom, democracy and rights are directly associated with economic

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7. Nye, p. 5.

growth, equal opportunities in employment and reduced socio-economic inequalities. Even the Arab world woke up to the call for internalising democracy over autocracy during and after the Arab Spring for attaining a stable polity which would work towards better opportunities for everyone, corruption-free states and accountability and transparency in governance.

Foreign policy, according to Nye, is also an important tool in effectively manoeuvring influence, forming a crucial component of soft-power dynamics. If foreign policy is seen as legitimate and principled, then it remains appealing to other nation-states. European countries like Sweden and Norway are ahead in playing the role of mediator and garnering legitimacy for their foreign policy through their 'diplomacy of peace'.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, culture, ideology and values form a core system of soft-power dynamics for Nye.

According to critics of Nye, Soft Power dwells around more important components than just the three aforementioned. Attraction and persuasion in global politics cannot be restricted to just culture, political values and foreign policy. Factors like technological advancements, military might, trade opportunities and economic prowess can possess greater far-reaching impact as sources of attraction. For instance, China's growing popularity in Africa and South America is attributed to the size of its economy, investments in infrastructure projects and timeliness of its project delivery mechanism.<sup>9</sup>

This paper attempts to analyse four parameters of soft power in context of the EU, namely, values and democracy; trade and economic relations; humanitarian aid; and diplomacy and security.

### **DOES THE EU'S SOFT POWER WORK?**

The idea of European integration still appeals to many regions of the world. They want to reach the level of integration that the Europeans have reached to reap the fruits of steady integration,

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8. Anette Wilhelmsen and Javier Fabra-Mata, "Criteria for successful Norwegian peace engagement", *Norad*, August 21, 2018, <https://norad.no/en/front/evaluation/news/2018/evaluation-views-criteria-for-successful-norwegian-peace-engagement/>. Accessed on May 3, 2020.

9. Wei Liang, "China's Soft Power in Africa: Is Economic Power Sufficient?" *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 4, 2012: 667-92, [www.jstor.org/stable/42704810](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704810). Accessed on May 27, 2020.

economic advantages and integrated citizenry. Early theories of regionalism suffer from euro-centrism in which the phenomenon of European integration is sought after as a perfect and ideal example to be followed.<sup>10</sup> Comparative studies have been common between the EU and other regional organisations like the Arab Maghreb Union, ASEAN and SAARC, where the latter are portrayed in poor light due to their failures in achieving the level of regional integration that the EU has successfully achieved. Thus, the EU is viewed as a benchmark for ideal regional integration. Moreover, the Union's achievement of transforming former communist countries into successful market economies has been an acknowledged idea.<sup>11</sup>

The EU is a principled global actor based on values crucial to its existence like rule of law, democracy, freedom, equality and human rights.<sup>12</sup> It is a known fact that the countries adhering to these basic values are considered to move ahead with accession of membership of the EU which is determined by the accession or the Copenhagen criteria.<sup>13</sup> It remains one of the fulfilments for getting entry into the world's largest regional organisation, i.e., the EU. For instance, Turkey's journey towards membership of the EU can be seen as a roller-coaster ride with numerous ups and downs. The current setbacks which the aspirant country faces are with respect to human rights violations and constraints on freedom in the country, rather than the previous debates on whether Turkey is an Asian nation-state or a European nation-state.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Treaty of Lisbon, which is in effect from December 1, 2009, has the aforementioned values enshrined in it. The European Parliament is expected to make legislations by fundamentally adhering to these principles. These

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10. Amitava Acharya, "Regionalism beyond EU-Centrism", *Oxford Handbooks*, February 1, 2016, [www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199682300.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199682300-e-7](http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199682300.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199682300-e-7). Accessed on November 2, 2020.

11. To know about the Accession criteria for the EU membership, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen.html).

12. For more information, visit the website of the information campaign of the EU here—<https://europarlamenti.info/en/values-and-objectives/values/>

13. To know about the Accession criteria for the EU membership, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen.html)

14. Ozgur H. Chinar, "Chronic Human Rights problems of Turkey during the EU accession process", *OpenDemocracy*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/chronic-human-rights-problems-of-turkey-during-eu-accession-process/>. Accessed on May 10, 2020.

modern-day democratic principles form the bedrock of the Union's existence and are also essential in the Union's dealings with other nation-states at the international level.

The EU remains the world's largest trading bloc, single market as well as the world's largest trader of manufactured goods and services.<sup>15</sup> With a GDP per head of 25,000 Euros for its 500 million consumers, the EU has become the largest economy in the world.<sup>16</sup> The Union carries out its economic activities in line with its well-defined trade policy. It remains one of the important instruments of the Union's soft power as well. The EU carries out its external relations based on values and norms enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty through the lens of its trade policy.<sup>17</sup> Preferential access to the largest market or trading negotiations are conditioned on aspects like adherence to freedom, labour rights and respect for human rights. In the case of Myanmar, where the human rights violations with respect to the ethnic Rohingya minority are prevailing, implementation of the recommendations by the Kofi Annan-led *Advisory Commission on Rakhine State* has been made conditional for Myanmar to receive continued access to trade privileges from the EU.<sup>18</sup>

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations form an integral part of the EU as well as of its soft-power equation. This programme aims at addressing disasters and humanitarian emergencies within Europe as well as outside the continent. Around 1 per cent of the EU's total annual budget is allotted to this humanitarian component which is actually significant.<sup>19</sup> The Union is a major humanitarian actor in addressing adversities; not only natural calamities, but also modern-day challenges like climate change and terrorism, and populations affected by them. Thus, the EU earns goodwill by taking up responsibilities in the humanitarian sector,

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15. Refer to the European Union and India Trade and Investment 2018 Report.

16. Ibid.

17. San Bilal and Bernard Hoekman, *Perspectives on the Soft Power of EU Trade Policy* (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2019).

18. Thompson Chau, "EU says trade privileges depend on Annan report", *Myanmar Times*, April 8, 2019, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/eu-says-trade-privileges-depend-annan-report.html>. Accessed on November 20, 2019.

19. For further information, please visit the European Union's official page on "Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection", [https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/humanitarian-aid-civil-protection\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/humanitarian-aid-civil-protection_en)

and so is a recognised leading actor on these platforms. When several countries of the world were criticised for being “inward-looking” in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by ignoring calls for collective efforts in dealing with the crisis, the EU stepped up with the launch of its ‘Team Europe’ package.<sup>20</sup> This project aimed at disbursing more than €20 billion worldwide to the “most vulnerable countries” and focusing on the “people most at risk” for mitigating ineluctable effects of the crisis.<sup>21</sup> The Union’s efforts on the humanitarian aid front have been revered, making its soft power an influential tool in the foreign affairs domain.

Moreover, the grouping invests huge capital in diplomacy and security. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU endorses its notion of a peaceful and conflict-free world, the idea due to which the Union members witness peaceful coexistence today. The essential dimension of the CSDP comprises civilian as well as military components spread across three continents, namely, Europe, Asia and Africa, where conflicts have spill-over effects on the EU member states, specifically in terms of refugee crisis and terrorism. Its civilian missions outnumber its military missions which makes it a reliable partner for activities like peacekeeping, conflict prevention and humanitarian support. With its missions like EUBAM in Libya and EUAM in Iraq, the EU’s CSDP is aimed at aiding countries facing conflict in achieving stability through continuous support in terms of capacity-building and augmentation.<sup>22</sup> Its approach towards a peaceful and stable neighbourhood through effective and friendly assistance has been appreciated by the countries at the receiving end. But “does the EU’s soft power actually work?” is a crucial question which needs attention.

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20. “Coronavirus: European Union Launches ‘Team Europe’ Package to Support Partner Countries with More than €20 Billion”, April 8, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/77326/coronavirus-european-union-launches-%E2%80%9Cteam-europe%E2%80%9D-package-support-partner-countries-more-%E2%82%AC20\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/77326/coronavirus-european-union-launches-%E2%80%9Cteam-europe%E2%80%9D-package-support-partner-countries-more-%E2%82%AC20_en). Accessed on May 17, 2020.

21. *Ibid.*

22. For further information, please visit the EUBAM Libya page, [https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eubam-libya/3859/about-eu-border-assistance-mission-libya-eubam\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eubam-libya/3859/about-eu-border-assistance-mission-libya-eubam_en)

**NO POWER?: INEFFECTIVENESS OF EU'S SOFT POWER**

The EU has received applause for lending its hand in various humanitarian causes all across the world, but when it comes to Responsibility to Protect (R2P), the Union has faced criticism more than appraisal. Member states have been at odds at pressing times over the use and principles of R2P. Although the EU has been a staunch supporter of the notion of Responsibility to Protect, member states had remained divided in their decisions during the 2003 Iraq crisis and the 2011 Libyan crisis.<sup>23</sup> Thus, a 'confused' EU was portrayed in front of the world when some of the major humanitarian crises had engulfed the globe. Furthermore, the EU has received criticism for acting after atrocities have been committed and after "escalation of violence".<sup>24</sup> Such instances have hampered the EU's image as a responsible global security actor.

Moreover, the Union's dealings with global actors like China and Saudi Arabia, countries that are criticised for human rights violations, remains questionable. For instance, China has received a lot of criticism from human rights bodies over its handling of the situation in its Uyghur-majority Xinjiang province. But, the EU prefers turning a blind eye towards it and places economic relations prior to the humanitarian situation in the Chinese province. Thus, the Union has been selective in its dealing with nation-states when it comes to choosing between economy and human rights. According to the World Economic Forum figures on the EU's trade from 2000 to 2018, the EU's second largest trading partner is China.<sup>25</sup> In addition to this, when it comes to imports side of the balance of payments, China dominates the list contributing around 20 per cent to the Union's import basket in 2018.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it can be said that economics still dominates the EU's foreign policy architecture.

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23. France and Germany stood shoulder to shoulder and opposed the UK and United States' misadventures in Iraq in 2003. In 2011, Germany had abstained from voting in the UNSC on the resolution 1973 advocating NATO's intervention in Libya.

24. Karen E. Smith, "The EU and the Responsibility to Protect in an Illiberal World", Dahrendorf Forum IV Working Paper No. 3, *LSE Ideas*, London, August 21, 2018, <https://www.dahrendorf-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EU-and-RTP-in-an-illiberal-era.pdf>. Accessed on May 27, 2020.

25. Charlotte Edmond, "Chart of the day: The EU's Trading Partners", *World Economic Forum*, April 28, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/this-is-who-the-eu-trades-with-992cfd51f7/>. Accessed on October 19, 2020.

26. *Ibid.*



The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has further exposed the EU's inability to act together and in cohesion. The EU member states had turned inwards in their outlook at the initial stage of the pandemic. The fissures in the EU solidarity were visible when Italy was grappling with the pandemic's negative effects in March 2020 and accused the EU of slow help. China's 'mask diplomacy' first reached the shores of Italy when fellow EU member states had turned a blind eye to Italy's needs of medical assistance and aid.<sup>27</sup> Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister, was quick in asserting that China and Italy have "withstood the test of the pandemic".

In addition to this, the EU has been criticised to be living under the shadow of the United States-led NATO for addressing its collective defence needs and lacking an EU-led and EU-oriented defence mechanism. At times when the Union had to venture into the field of hard power to address its own interests in the neighbourhood, it faced difficulty in generating consensus amongst the member states (like 2011 Libya). Moreover, the EU is taken to be a part of the 'Western world' dominated by the United States. It is assumed that the EU lives under the shadow of the United States and confirms with the latter in decision-making on many issues. The P5+1 mechanism collapsed after the United States' withdrawal and Iran was hopeful that the EU could save the deal. The whole world was looking at the EU as a decisive actor in resolving the impasse, but no fruitful gains resulted out of the EU's adventure in saving the Iran Nuclear Deal. Therefore, this questions the Union's leadership role in global politics and weakens its soft power.

The New European Agenda for Culture 2018 released by the EU states that "the legal basis for action in the area of culture at EU level is Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Member States have exclusive competence on cultural policy, while the Union's role is to encourage and support and supplement Member states'

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27. Daniel Boffey, "Italy Criticises EU for Being Slow to Help over Coronavirus Epidemic", *The Guardian*, March 11, 2020, [www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/11/italy-criticises-eu-being-slow-help-coronavirus-epidemic](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/11/italy-criticises-eu-being-slow-help-coronavirus-epidemic). Accessed on October 30, 2020.

actions."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the EU is not empowered to act independently on the cultural front. It is left to the member states to act independently on their respective cultural agendas. Thus, promotion of a common European culture takes a back seat and national cultures are promoted via institutions like Alliance Française and Goethe Institute.

## CONCLUSION

The EU's soft power works on the normative aspects like democracy and human rights promotion. But, when it comes to the transformative elements, the Union's soft power remains feeble. On the economic front as well as on the norms and values, the EU is considered to be the epitome. Regions across the world aspire to be the future EUs, be that ASEAN, SAARC or AMU; the regional organisations' discourses consider the EU as a benchmark. But the Union's soft power is weakened by its considerably slow-growing hard power capabilities in the international politics.

The Chief of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, has affirmed, "Soft Power is no longer enough today, if we Europeans want to assert ourselves in the world." She further reiterated, "Europe must learn the 'language of power'."<sup>29</sup> This includes "building our own muscles, on where we've for a long time been able to rely on others—in security policies."<sup>30</sup> French President Emmanuel Macron has consistently voiced his opinion regarding developing an alternative security arrangement for the continent, especially for the EU, when concerns were being raised by the US President Trump's views on NATO and an appeal for increasing shared responsibility of the EU. Such an arrangement could make the EU independent of the United States' role of decision-making and help in addressing issues through a truly European lens, rather than a transatlantic lens. The EU has been following an independent Foreign Policy in its dealings with countries in the Asian continent. Shada Islam, an expert on

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28. "A New European Agenda for Culture", *European Commission*, Brussels, May 22, 2018. [https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/culture/files/commission\\_communication\\_-\\_a\\_new\\_european\\_agenda\\_for\\_culture\\_2018.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/sites/culture/files/commission_communication_-_a_new_european_agenda_for_culture_2018.pdf). Accessed on October 20, 2020.

29. Paul Carrel, "EU needs to learn the 'language of power', incoming chief says", *Reuters*, November 9, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-commission-von-der-leyen/eu-needs-to-learn-the-language-of-power-incoming-chief-says-idUSKBN1X12BI>. Accessed on October 11, 2020.

30. *Ibid.*

European affairs, says, “By stepping out from America’s shadow in Asia, a self-confident Europe is learning to deal with the complex realities of China and the greater region (Asia).”<sup>31</sup>

As the United States’ soft power is seen to be receding on the global forum—be that on the Climate Change negotiations front, on cultural diplomacy front (with respect to UNESCO and the US pulling out of it) or on the trade liberalisation front—it remains in the EU’s larger interest to fill this power vacuum. The EU’s soft power could be a leading force in channelising resources for tackling issues like the current pandemic, climate change and terrorism collectively at the international level.

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31. Shada Islam, “Ignore Washington: That’s Europe’s China Strategy”, *Politico*, September 14, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-china-strategy-ignore-washington/>. Accessed on November 3, 2020.

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