



DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

VOL. 6 NO. 4

ISSN 2347 - 3703

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2017

Special Issue: India and Its Neighbourhood

- Trump's Afghan Policy: Implications for Afghanistan and Pakistan
Shalini Chawla
- China's Internal Situation Before the 19th Party Congress: Overview
Jayadeva Ranade
- India-China Boundary Dispute: A Review in 2017
Sana Hashmi
- India and Bangladesh: How Do We Stay on Track?
Sreeradha Datta
- India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations Under the National Unity Government of Sri Lanka: Challenges and Future Scenario
Samatha Mallempati
- India's Fight Against Pakistan Sponsored Terror: Case Study Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT)
Radhika Halder
- Understanding the Dynamics of the Chabahar Deal for India and Iran
Anu Sharma
- India-Myanmar Relations in the Era of Myanmar's Political Transition
Piyam Rakesh Singh
- India's 'Act East' Policy: A Means to Ensure Stalemate and Growth in Southeast Asia
Temjenmeren Ao

Book Reviews

DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

VOL. 6 NO. 4 • JULY-SEPTEMBER 2017

Special Issue: India and Its Neighbourhood



CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES

VISION

To be an independent **centre of excellence on national security** contributing informed and considered research and analyses on relevant issues.

MISSION

To encourage independent and informed research and analyses on issues of relevance to national security and to create a pool of domain experts to provide considered inputs to decision-makers. Also, to foster informed public debate and opinion on relevant issues and to engage with other think-tanks and stakeholders within India and abroad to provide an Indian perspective.

CONTENTS

Editor's Note	V
1. Trump's Afghan Policy: Implications for Afghanistan and Pakistan <i>Shalini Chawla</i>	1
2. China's Internal Situation Before the 19th Party Congress: Overview <i>Jayadeva Ranade</i>	15
3. India-China Boundary Dispute: A Review in 2017 <i>Sana Hashmi</i>	25
4. India and Bangladesh: How Do We Stay on Track? <i>Sreeradha Datta</i>	39
5. India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations Under the National Unity Government of Sri Lanka: Challenges and Future Scenario <i>Samatha Mallempati</i>	49
6. India's Fight Against Pakistan Sponsored Terror: Case Study Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) <i>Radhika Halder</i>	61
7. Understanding the Dynamics of the Chabahar Deal for India and Iran <i>Anu Sharma</i>	71

8. India-Myanmar Relations in the Era of Myanmar's Political Transition <i>Puyam Rakesh Singh</i>	81
9. India's 'Act East' Policy: A Means to Ensure Stalemate and Growth in Southeast Asia <i>Temjenmeren Ao</i>	93
Book Reviews	
Pakistan: Courting the Abyss <i>Shreya Talwar</i>	107
Twelve Essays on Terrorism: A VIF Analysis <i>Aersh Danish</i>	113

EDITOR'S NOTE

As this issue of the Journal was being readied for the press, we heard the very sad news of the passing away of Marshal of the Indian Air Force Arjan Singh. He was our patron-in-chief and a keen observer and participant in our activities. His advice was sound without being prescriptive and his loss has left an unfillable void. May his soul rest in peace.

It is providential and fitting that this issue comprises articles about our neighbourhood, an area of great interest to the late Marshal of the Indian Air Force.

We lead with an article by **Shalini Chawla** on the impact of the announcement by President Trump of his Afghanistan policy on August 21, 2017. The statement unequivocally put Pakistan on notice for its harbouring of terrorists. The US aid would be contingent on the actions taken by Pakistan against the terror organisations. Naturally, the Pakistani government was displeased but it is a moot point as to whether the new US policy will stay the course for some time to come or the status quo ante will be soon restored. As for Afghanistan, it has welcomed the statement as it involves an additional 4,000 US troops to be deployed and a call for Afghanistan to take ownership of its future. As far as India is concerned, our policy does not have to alter and we can remain interested bystanders whilst continuing to support Afghanistan, short of active military support.

We continue to lay emphasis on our study of China. In this issue, there are many articles in which China and its influence are discussed but two articles are particularly about China. Firstly, **Jayadeva Ranade**, an experienced, distinguished and knowledgeable student of China studies, discusses the internal situation in China just before the

impending 19th Party Conference, scheduled to take place in October 2017. He broadly recounts the events since the last Party conference and how President Xi Jinping has consolidated his power and worked towards political stability. The anti-corruption drive has had a great influence in his 'disciplining' the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as well as the Party cadres. The article also shows the dark underbelly of China but it is moot as to how many of the problems that the article brings out will be aired at the conference. The second article on China is by **Sana Hashmi** in which she reviews the India-China boundary dispute. There have been 19 rounds of negotiations but there is no end in sight. The increasing differences and tensions in recent months have probably made the issue more intractable. Possibly, we need to adopt a more muscular stand and feel free to fashion, and use, any leverage that we have.

Three articles deal specifically with India's relations with each of three neighbouring countries, namely, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. **Sreeradha Dutta** traces the history of our relations with Bangladesh since 1971. Her argument that the benefits of recent agreements reached and other initiatives taken must percolate to the common people for a more lasting understanding has merit. **Samatha Mallempati**, in an all-encompassing article on Sri Lanka, writes of the limits of a coalition government, China's role in the affairs of the island, and how the trust deficit can be reduced with an understanding on the Tamil issue as well as that of fishing in the waters between our countries. **Puyam Rakesh Singh** suggests that in spite of Chinese influence in Myanmar, there have been gradual and sure improvements in our relations with that country. The Rohingya issue could cause discord but India should concentrate on completion of projects that connect us with Myanmar and beyond.

In a well researched and well written article, **Radhika Halder** writes on the high risk and suicidal terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan. Many will agree with her assertion that the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) is an umbrella organisation that has many organs under it to preach, support and conduct their version of *jihad*. The role of *madrassas* and training camps and the support of the Pakistan government are also discussed. The sense that one gets is that this is a problem that is unlikely to ease in the near or mid-term.

Anu Sharma revisits the Indo-Iran deal on Chabahar. She reiterates the importance of the project and emphasises the need for both countries, particularly India, to give the early completion of the project due impetus and financing. Both countries stand to gain from the full utilisation of the port and communication links.

This is a landmark year for both the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India's relations with the organisation. ASEAN was formed 50 years ago and India's relationship with it began 25 years ago. We joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) 15 years ago and it has been five years since a strategic partnership was forged. We have age old cultural linkages with the area, and **Temjenmeren Ao** opines that we lost out by staying away from it for 25 years. However, our Act East policy has brought in greater realism in our foreign policy and the relationship should strengthen with time.

Two books are reviewed in our book review section. **Shreya Talwar** writes about Tilak Devasher's excellent book on Pakistan titled *Pakistan: Courting the Abyss*. It is difficult to review the research that has gone into writing the book but Shreya's comments are sound and should egg the reader towards a detailed reading of the book. Pakistan will remain of abiding interest to us and the book raises danger signals that should be heeded by Pakistan.

In the second book review, **Aersh Danish** discusses the VIF publication edited by Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee titled *Twelve Essays on Terrorism*. We have been subjected to the scourge of terrorism for many years and this collection of essays by eminent authors helps us to understand the phenomenon. The essays cover considerable ground, geographically and otherwise. We leave it to the reader to judge if the book will also help in 'reading the tea leaves' about what the future holds.

Happy reading



TRUMP'S AFGHAN POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

SHALINI CHAWLA

President Trump's announcement of the Afghanistan policy on August 21st generated varied reactions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The announcement is indeed a deviation from Trump's stance as a private citizen when he supported a complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan.¹ The US has been engaged in an endless war in Afghanistan for the last 17 years – the longest war in American history. Trump himself agreed, as per his announcement, that the “American people are weary of war without victory”.

Trump, in his announcement, talked about America's core interests in Afghanistan and highlighted three issues:

- The nation must seek an honorable and enduring outcome worthy of the tremendous sacrifices that have been made, especially the sacrifices of lives.

Dr Shalini Chawla is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

1. For the full transcript, see Nora Kelly, “Full Transcript: Donald Trump Announces His Afghanistan Policy”, *The Atlantic*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/full-transcript-donald-trump-announces-his-afghanistan-policy/537552/>. Accessed on August 23, 2017.

- The consequences of a rapid exit are both predictable and unacceptable.
- The security threats we face (US) in Afghanistan, and the broader region, are immense. Today, 20 US-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The highest concentration in any region, anywhere in the world. For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror.²

There had been an increasing conviction among the US policy-makers about Pakistan's disruptive role in the region much before President Trump announced his Afghan policy. Lisa Curtis, prior to becoming the senior director of South and Central Asia in the White House National Security Council, in a co-authored report with Ambassador Husain Haqqani said:

The new Trump Administration must review its policies toward Pakistan in order to more effectively contain, and eventually eliminate, the terrorist threats that continue to emanate from the country. The activities and operations of diverse terror groups on, and from, Pakistani soil, and the government's failure to rein them in, threaten vital US national security interests in the region.³

The report highlighted:

Pakistan never changed its policy of supporting certain militant groups that fight Afghan and coalition forces, thus, making it impossible for the United States to achieve its objective of keeping Afghanistan from reverting to a safe haven for international terrorism. The US clearly recognizes that Pakistan's support for the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups is not the sole reason for Afghanistan's security challenges. However, the other problems become insurmountable when the principal insurgent groups enjoy safe havens in Pakistan.⁴

2. Ibid.

3. Hussain Haqqani and Lisa Curtis, "A New U.S. Approach to Pakistan: Enforcing Aid Conditions without Cutting Ties", Hudson Institute, February 6, 2017, <https://www.hudson.org/research/13305-a-new-u-s-approach-to-pakistan-enforcing-aid-conditions-without-cutting-ties>. Accessed on March 17, 2017.

4. Ibid.

Trump's Afghan policy created a significant uproar in Pakistan for obvious reasons. Pakistani policy-makers reacted strongly to the US accusation of Islamabad harbouring militants. The US' position on Pakistan's support to terrorism is not new and there have been occasions in the past when the US took a firm position on the issue. In 2011, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a blunt message to Pakistan, demanding more cooperation in the fight against terrorism said, "You can't keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbours. Eventually, those snakes are going to turn on whoever has them in the backyard."⁵

TRUMP'S AFGHAN POLICY: THE CORE PILLARS

The first core pillar of the policy is a "condition-based approach" and not a "time-based approach". The US has decided to send nearly 4,000 additional troops to Afghanistan. The conditions on the ground would determine the US withdrawal and not "arbitrary timetables", as Trump termed it. The initial policy by Obama, which set the timeline for US withdrawal, was rejected by Trump. According to Trump, "A hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and Al-Qaeda, would instantly fill just as happened before September 11th."⁶

The second pillar of the policy is "the integration of all instruments of American power—diplomatic, economic, and military—towards a successful outcome".⁷ According to Trump, the US does not intend to extend its role in nation-building and it is the responsibility of the Afghans to take "ownership of their future". Thus, an "Afghan owned" and "Afghan led" process of rebuilding Afghanistan is the key, according to the new policy. The US would, however, continue its support and assistance to the Afghan government and military to deal with the Taliban.

The third pillar of the policy is how the US would deal with Pakistan. Trump, in his blunt message to Pakistan, clearly stated

5. "Snakes in Your Backyard Won't Bite Only Neighbours: Hillary to Pak", *NDTV*, October 21, 2011, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/snakes-in-your-backyard-wont-bite-only-neighbours-hillary-to-pak-573412>. Accessed on July 21, 2012.

6. Kelly, n 1.

7. *Ibid.*

that the US can no longer be silent on Pakistan's open support to the Taliban and other terrorist groups which threaten regional security. Also, Washington has no intention to continue its financial aid and assistance to Pakistan. Trump said:

Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists. In the past, Pakistan has been a valued partner. Our militaries have worked together against common enemies. The Pakistanis have suffered greatly from terrorism and extremism. We recognize those contributions and those sacrifices. But Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people.⁸

The fourth pillar of the policy is development of America's strategic partnership with India. Trump has recognised India's contributions to the stability of Afghanistan and urged for India's extended economic and development assistance in Afghanistan.

This latest Afghanistan policy is symbolic of the US' intentions of continued presence in Afghanistan till the *situation stabilises*. Some bigger questions remain to be answered: is the sheer US presence, with an increased number of troops, expected to bring stability in the region? What are an extra 4,000 troops going to do that 100,000 troops couldn't do in 2011? What does the president mean by "conditions on the ground"?

TRUMP'S AFGHAN POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR KABUL

Afghan President Ghani has welcomed Trump's announcement as it projects the US' continued support to Afghanistan. Ghani seems to be happy with the additional number of troops which he feels would assist Afghanistan to counter the Taliban. According to Ghani, the American extended presence would increase the capacity of the training mission for the Afghan forces.⁹ The leadership in Afghanistan strongly believes that additional US troops would help the security

8. Ibid.

9. "World Reacts to Trump's New Strategy on Afghan War", *Al Jazeera*, August 22, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/world-reacts-trump-strategy-afghan-war-170822102826834.html>. Accessed on August 25, 2017.

situation in Kabul.¹⁰ Najibullah Azad, a spokesman for the Afghan president, said, "The strategy is made in accordance with realities on the ground...This is the first time the US government is coming with a very clear-cut message to Pakistan to either stop what you're doing or face the negative consequences."¹¹ The Afghan Ambassador to the US, Hamdullah Mohib, views the new strategy as a break with "micromanagement from Washington" and a "shift away from talking about timetables and numbers to letting conditions on the ground determine military strategy."¹²

The security situation in Kabul has been deteriorating and the Taliban and other insurgent groups continue to perpetrate high-profile attacks, particularly in Kabul, to "attract media attention, create the perception of insecurity, and undercut the legitimacy of the Afghan government."¹³ Reportedly, from December 1, 2016, through May 31, 2017, there were eight high profile attacks in Kabul alone and 42 attacks in other parts of Afghanistan.¹⁴

The Afghan government feels that the increased number of the US troops with an extended timeframe (which is not defined) would help in controlling the worsening security situation in Afghanistan. The extended US presence would also assist in the continuation of international aid and assistance to Afghanistan. The Afghan government relies on international funding for the vast majority of its security costs. The requirement to fund the current Afghan National Defence and Security Force (ANDSF) in Financial Year (FY) 2017 is \$5.72 billion, and is expected to increase to \$6.23 billion in FY 2018.¹⁵ The US official report suggests that for FY 2017, the US will fund \$4.26 billion of the cost of the ANDSF.¹⁶

10. Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, at an interaction at Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi, on September 12, 2017.

11. Sune Eangel Rasmussen and Michaela Safi, "Trump's Afghan Shift Praised in Kabul but Leaves Pakistan Wary", *The Guardian*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/22/donald-trump-kabul-praises-fight-to-win-afghanistan-strategy>. Accessed on August 24, 2017.

12. Ibid.

13. "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan", Report to Congress, Department of Defence, United States of America, June 2017, p. 20, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_2017_1225_Report_to_Congress.pdf. Accessed on July 1, 2017.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 31.

16. Ibid., pp. 31-32.

The US stance on Pakistan has definitely given more comfort to the Afghans who have perpetually blamed Pakistan for the instability in Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, Islamabad's obsession to control Kabul has not allowed Afghanistan to settle down. Pakistan, under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, helped in the creation of the Taliban in the 1990s. Gen Musharraf facilitated the comeback of the Taliban in 2003 when the Americans were distracted in Iraq. Islamabad's support to the Afghan Taliban and its assistance to the Haqqani network have been condemned for a long time by the Americans and the Afghans. It is hardly a revelation that Islamabad has been playing a double game in Afghanistan. In the last 16 years of the war on terror, it has carefully targeted the militant groups which threaten the interest of the Pakistani state, and has aided the militant groups which serve its strategic interests in (and against) Afghanistan (and India). Despite close ethnic and cultural linkages, Pakistan does not enjoy soft power in Afghanistan and most Afghans view it as the root cause of instability. Trump's announcement which carries a firm message for Pakistan, is certainly comforting for the Afghan leadership. Kabul believes that the US positioning would assist in containing Pakistan's moves in Afghanistan.

However, there have been mixed reactions on the outcome of the US' extended presence as a few sections of Afghan society feel that it would lead to a surge in deadly attacks by the Taliban. Also, Afghans fear the rise of corruption and unemployment within the society. The Trump policy certainly symbolises the US' continued support to the Afghan government, but that this would actually deter the Taliban and stabilise the security situation seems unlikely.

TRUMP'S AFGHAN POLICY: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

Pakistan has been infuriated and has hit back at the US' statement on Pakistan harbouring the militants in Afghanistan. *Al Jazeera* reported Pakistan Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, saying during a meeting with David Hale, the US ambassador to Pakistan, "We are not looking for any material or financial assistance ...but trust, understanding and acknowledgement of our contributions".¹⁷ Trump's announcement does outline

17. Asad Hashim, "Pakistan in the Crosshairs of Trump's Afghan Strategy", *Al Jazeera*, August 24, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/pakistan-crosshairs-trump-afghan-strategy-170824052758366.html>. Accessed on August 27, 2017.

Washington's intent of cutting down of the US assistance to Pakistan. Islamabad has received lavish American financial and military assistance amounting to approximately \$33 billion between 2002-17. However, there has been a visible decline in US assistance post Osama's killing in 2011. The Trump Administration has taken a firm stance and has slashed its Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Pakistan from US\$ 255 million to US\$ 100 million.

US-Pakistan Relations: Background

The US and Pakistan have shared an interesting relationship with varying intensity of engagement and there have been three critical phases of the alliance. Pakistan joined the US sponsored military assistance pacts in the 1950s and 1960s, and, thus, became a part of the frontline states which were to deter the Soviets from any strategic and military moves.¹⁸ The US arms supply has always been Pakistan's preferred option due to three reasons: "(i) as a symbol of strategic and political support and engagement by the United States ; (ii) for diversification of sources of weapon systems; and (iii) for higher end-technology weapons."¹⁹

In fact, the massive US arms aid to Pakistan in the late 1950s provided it with both the incentive to initiate the 1965 War (against India) as well as demonstrated the philosophy of high-technology weapons like the Patton tanks and state-of-the-art fighter aircraft, providing a competitive advantage against India which, in any case, was saddled at that time with obsolete systems being employed after the war in 1962. The classic case was the shooting down of the first four Vampire vintage aircraft by the combination of F-104 Starfighters and F-86 Sabres on the opening day of the war, forcing India to withdraw these and older fighters from combat, thus, reducing the quantitative advantage that India was supposed to enjoy.

In 1954, the US officials presented a secret aide-memoire boosting the military aid to Pakistan to \$50 million, with specific programme goals. The aide-memoire committed Washington to equip "4 army infantry and 1.5 armoured divisions, to provide modern aircraft for

18. Ayesha Siddiq-Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Buildup, 1979-99: In Search of a Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) p.91.

19. Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947-2000, Disenchanted Allies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 249.

6 air force squadrons, and to supply 12 vessels for the navy. The estimated cost of this programme was \$171 million.²⁰

America's interest in providing military aid to Pakistan was driven mainly by two factors:

First, the geographical location of Pakistan abutting the oil rich Persian Gulf region (where the US and the UK had extensive commercial interests) and the strategic location of the Strait of Hormuz offered Washington easy access to energy resources and also a monitoring point for the southern Soviet Union and western China. Pakistan's strategically important location, in fact, turned it into a convenient launching pad for the Cold War strategies.²¹ Second, the fear of Soviet expansion into the Middle East.

In the 1950s, the inflow from Washington included sophisticated Patton tanks (Main Battle Tanks – MBTs), modern artillery, howitzers, F-86 jet fighter squadrons, F-104 Starfighter supersonic interceptors, air-to-air missiles, submarine and state-of-the-art-radar, communication and transportation systems. A further qualitative boost came from the military training by the US military teams and also in the US military schools to the Pakistan Army.²²

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 led the Americans to review their South Asian policy, and, consequently, Pakistan entered into a new engagement with the US. Pakistan was declared a "frontline state" and, in return, received massive military aid.²³ Gen Zia-ul-Haq managed to negotiate an elaborate military and security-related aid package of \$3.2 billion. The US military assistance programme included the sale of 40 F-16 Falcon multi-role combat aircraft, one of the most advanced military aircraft in the world at that time. Pakistan also received Harpoon anti-ship

20. Ibid., p. 69.

21. Pran Chopra, "Pakistan Squanders a Strategic Advantage", in Ajay Darshan Behera and Mathew Joseph, eds., *Pakistan in a Changing Strategic Context* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2004), p. 90.

22. Kux, n. 19, pp. 86-87.

23. Immediately after this development, President Carter unveiled his doctrine, which included, "assembly of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), increase of the naval presence in the Indian Ocean, a collective security framework in the region and commitment to the defense of Pakistan by transfer of significant amount of weapons and dollars." *The New York Times*, January 25, 1980, as cited by Hamid Hussain, "Tale of a Love Affair that Never was: United States-Pakistan Defence Relations", at <http://www.defencejournal.com/2002/june/loveaffair.htm>

missiles, artillery, attack helicopters, and second-hand destroyers.²⁴ The second US package worth \$4.02 billion commenced in 1987 but was suspended in 1990 due to the US arms embargo on Pakistan for crossing the nuclear “red line”.

Pakistan’s alliance with the US in the 1980s actually altered Pakistan’s strategic posturing. It not only received significant military aid and modern equipment, but also managed to develop its nuclear weapons programme in the 1980s. American non-interference in Pakistan’s ongoing programme was assured to Gen Zia. Pakistan became nuclear in 1987, and this was pronounced very clearly in an interview given to the Indian journalist Kuldeep Nayar by A Q Khan. The Afghan War provided a legitimate infrastructure to Pakistan for preparing *jihadis* and using them for the covert war against Afghanistan and India. As Pakistan was anyway following the covert war strategy with India, the Afghan War supported the existing strategy and it grew much more in the coming decades.

By the late 1990s, Pakistan’s economy was in shambles and its viability as a state was being questioned. Fears were raised about its prospects as a “failing state”. But the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the US led to a major strategic shift for Pakistan and once again, it became a frontline state for Washington and an ally in the global war on terror. The new US-Pakistan relationship helped Pakistan to move out of economic and military decline and it received substantive military assistance from the US and its Western allies. The immediate step from the Bush Administration was the waiving of the US sanctions on Pakistan resulting from its 1998 nuclear tests and the “democracy sanctions”.

The defence cooperation agreement signed in 2002 allowed the American forces to use Pakistan’s military equipment and air bases for training and other military exercises. The US presence on the Pakistani air bases (Jacobabad, Pasni and Dalbandin) led to substantial US investments for renovating the bases and, in addition, Pakistan was paid for providing security for the bases. Taking a step towards institutionalising the military relationship with Pakistan, the US, in an important strategic move, designated Pakistan as a

24. Rodney W. Jones, “The Military and Security in Pakistan”, in Craig Baxter, ed., *Zia’s Pakistan: Politics and Stability in a Frontline State* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1985), p. 83.

“Major Non-NATO Ally” (MNNA) in March 2004. Previously, only three Muslim countries had been accorded this status: Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan. Australia, Japan, Israel, the Philippines and South Korea are the non-Muslim countries that fall in this category. Becoming an MNNA not only enhanced Pakistan’s stature but also enabled it to obtain state-of-the-art military equipment and spares at rock bottom prices and on a priority basis. The modern US inventories and also the spare parts of the US equipment which were being used in Pakistan, were made available to it. One of the most important advantages of this designation was that Islamabad would be able to obtain what is called the “Excess Defence Equipment (EDA)”. These are the weapons and equipment which the US may not need anymore, and which may be transferred at nominal rates to its allies. Pakistan received the weaponry which the US forces had used during their operations at the Pakistani bases and facilities.

Post 2001, there has been an exponential growth in Pakistan’s defence modernisation with American aid and a steadily increasing Chinese military assistance. There has been a significant investment in the build-up of the air force and maritime strike capabilities of the navy. Major US equipment to Pakistan post 2001 includes: P3Cs, C-130E Hercules, AH-1F Cobra attack helicopters, Harpoons, F-16 A/B and F-16 C/D. The impact of the modernisation can be seen in Table 1 :

Table 1: Modernisation Effect

	1990	2020
Combat*	380	420
AEW&C	Nil	8
Air-to-Air Refuelling	Nil	4
Maritime Petrol & Air Strike Aircraft	3	18
Attack Helicopters	10	60+

*It is interesting to note that the combat number in the table does not give the true picture. Out of the total combat aircraft in 1990, just around 10% were fourth generation ones. But, by 2020, more than 90% would be fourth generation aircraft in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) inventory.

Source: Dr Shalini Chawla, *Nuclear Pakistan* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2012), p. 74.

The May 2011 revelation that Al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden enjoyed state patronage and was hiding in a Pakistani military cantonment area shook the US' faith in Islamabad's commitment to counter terrorism. Osama's death led to a serious debate in the US Congress regarding the rationale of the large amount of US military and financial assistance to Pakistan for its partnership in the war on terror. The US Administration has been increasingly convinced of Pakistan military's unwillingness to target the terrorist groups which support its strategic interests, including the Afghan Taliban, anti-India militant organisations and the Haqqani network. Pakistan launched a much applauded military, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, in the North Waziristan region in 2014. There was some improvement in the dwindling relationship between the two after Pakistan announced its decision to include the Jamaat-ud Dawa and Haqqani network as part of the execution of the National Action Plan.

The Trump Administration has taken a firm stance against Pakistan and has been extremely vocal in condemning Pakistan's support to the militant organisations in Afghanistan, which have frequently targeted the US troops. One of the deadliest terrorist attacks was witnessed on May 31, 2017, in Kabul, when a truck bomb killed more than 80 people and wounded 460. Afghanistan's intelligence agency, and also Washington, believe that the attack was conducted by the Haqqani network, with assistance from Pakistan. Islamabad, of course, remains in denial.²⁵ US Congressman Ted Poe, has been very vocal in condemning Pakistan's role in the destabilisation of Afghanistan. He said, "Despite Pakistan's ongoing treachery, Islamabad is among the leading recipients of US foreign assistance since 9/11 and is praised in some quarters of the US government as a 'vital' ally. This must stop – if we want to stabilize Afghanistan, we must deal first with Pakistan."²⁶

25. Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, "Exclusive: Trump Administration Eyes Hardening Line Towards Pakistan", *Reuters*, June 20, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pakistan-exclusive/exclusive-trump-administration-eyes-hardening-line-toward-pakistan-idUSKBN19B0C8>. Accessed on July 21, 2017.

26. "Cut Pakistan Aid, Revoke Major Non-NATO Ally Status, say U.S. Lawmakers", *The Indian Express*, August 23, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/donald-trump-india-cut-pakistan-aid-revoke-major-non-nato-ally-status-us-lawmakers-4809924/>. Accessed on August 30, 2017.

Islamabad has reacted strongly to Trump's statement. The new US policy would impact US assistance to Pakistan and Islamabad might also lose its major non-NATO ally status, which has been debated very strongly in the US Administration. Insisting on revocation of Pakistan's non-NATO ally status, Ted Poe said, "President Trump's speech marked a positive shift in US policy, but it must not be limited only to words. If Pakistan does not stop aiding terrorists with American blood on their hands, we must cut all aid to Islamabad, revoke their privileged status as a major non-NATO ally, and designate Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism."²⁷

In case the US decides to revoke Pakistan's major non-NATO ally status, it would imply major reductions in the US arms sales and assistance to Pakistan. Although, this debate has certainly created disturbance in the security establishment of Pakistan, it seems to be less worried than before about US military and financial support. China's all out support to Pakistan, which has expanded from purely military and strategic, to economic and diplomatic, support, has given ample confidence to Islamabad and it no longer feels threatened with the loss of US support.

CONCLUSION

Trump's Afghan policy is not a complete surprise: it talks about extended US presence, with an increased number of troops, greater leeway to the US military commanders to make military decisions, a clear warning to Pakistan for its policy of supporting militant organisations and acts of terror, and a larger role for India in Afghanistan.

The Afghan leadership is clearly rejoicing at the new policy as it would help the military build-up of Afghanistan and also the capability development of the Afghan security forces. Whether the unlimited American engagement with boots on the ground will actually manage to settle the security situation is debatable. The Taliban leadership in Afghanistan doesn't seem to be deterred by the extended US presence.

Pakistan has reacted strongly to the policy, and the US' positioning will increase Islamabad's reliance on China. The Sino-Pakistan

27. Ibid.

alliance has grown at an accelerated pace in the last 20 years and Pakistan consistently and proudly describes China as “an all weather friend”. Pakistan has managed to increase its military and nuclear strength with ongoing Chinese assistance. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Beijing’s investment of \$50 billion, is viewed as a “game changer” by most of Pakistanis. Trump’s policy could be viewed as adding further pressure on Pakistan, but to what extent this would actually change Islamabad’s strategic calculus remains to be seen.

India has applauded Trump’s policy on Afghanistan and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs has welcomed the US “determination to enhance efforts to overcome the challenges faced by Afghanistan and in confronting issues of safe havens and other forms of cross-border support enjoyed by terrorists.”²⁸ India has been dealing with Pakistan’s covert war and its strategy of employing terror as a foreign policy tool for more than four decades now. Mounting international pressure on Pakistan to alter its strategic choices does work in India’s favour. India is one of the leading donors in Afghanistan and, by far, the largest regional donor. It enjoys substantive soft power in Afghanistan, and Kabul trusts New Delhi as a sincere friend. However, India’s role has been constrained, given the circumstances and Pakistan’s continued unhappiness over the Indian presence as well as its soft power enhancement in Kabul.

28. Kallol Bhattacharjee, “India Welcomes Trump’s new Afghanistan Policy”, *The Hindu*, August 22, 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-shares-trumps-concerns-on-afghanistan-says-mea/article19538770.ece>. Accessed on August 24, 2017.

CHINA'S INTERNAL SITUATION BEFORE THE 19TH PARTY CONGRESS: OVERVIEW

JAYADEVA RANADE

Especially since the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, and as China moves to convene the 19th Party Congress in November 2017, we have been witnessing the steady hardening of the Chinese state. Political stability and regime survival have been the top items on the Party agenda and this has meant the introduction of progressively restrictive domestic measures and a rise in nationalism.

The first sign of the toughening stance was Xi Jinping being conferred China's three top positions of general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee (CC), chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), simultaneously for the first time in thirty years! The other was the installation in a now reduced 7-member Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) of stolid, doctrinaire apparatchiks. The backdrop to this was the unprecedented domestic political scrabbling for top positions by senior CCP cadres witnessed through 2011-12 when Politburo (PB) member Bo Xilai attempted to usurp the top position. The bid by Wang Lijun, Bo Xilai's chief of public security in Chongqing municipality, a position equivalent to

Mr Jayadeva Ranade is a former Additional Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, and is President of the Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.

a central vice minister, to defect to the US, also severely jolted the Party's top echelons as it revealed that the CCP '*nomenklatura*' had been penetrated by the West.

The 18th Party Congress – a watershed in contemporary Chinese politics – consequently hammered out the unequivocal message of stability, assertive policies, Party supremacy and the 'China Dream'.

Xi Jinping has used nationalism and ideology to promote political stability and regime survival – the top agenda items of the CCP. He has consolidated his position and today chairs 13 central leading groups overseeing all crucial aspects of the state, including direct control over the security apparatus, military, cyber security and the economy. Xi Jinping's titles are: general secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the CCP; chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC); president of the People's Republic of China (PRC); leader of the Central Leading Group for Foreign Affairs; leader of the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs; head of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms; chairman of the Central National Security Commission; head of the Central Leading Group for Internet Security and Informatisation; leader of the Central Leading Group for National Defence and Military Reform; head of the Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs; Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the Joint Battle Command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA); and since January 2017, chairman of the Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development. He now holds more formal positions than any CCP leader, including Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping!

Xi Jinping has paid special attention to the PLA. Among the main reasons are: the rampant corruption in the PLA where ranks were purchased and officers operated 'illegal' businesses; ousted PB member Bo Xilai's success in creating a lobby in the PLA to support his personal ambitions; and persistent propaganda by 'liberal' elements inside China and outside 'foreign forces' that the PLA is an army of the state and not the Party. These are reinforced by Xi Jinping's conviction that by designating the Soviet Army as a national army, the Soviet Union had actually "disarmed" the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Within a day of being appointed chairman of the CMC, Xi Jinping moved to tighten the Party's grip on the PLA

and discipline it. At an enlarged meeting of the CMC, he declared that political reliability would be the key determining criterion for promotions.

At the Third Party Plenum convened in October 2013, Xi Jinping brought the PLA within the ambit of the Party's watchdog anti-corruption body, the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC), as part of the effort to discipline the PLA and eliminate resistance to its restructuring and reform. CDIC investigators soon uncovered instances of corruption in the PLA and arrests of senior officers followed. Many PLA officers, of, and above, the rank of major general/rear admiral committed suicide to ensure that their families received their pension benefits. By September 2016, official reports stated that a total of 86 PLA officers of the rank of major general or above had been dismissed on charges of corruption. An additional 50 PLA officers of the rank of major general or above were retired in January 2017. By the end of 2016, a total of 4,300 PLA officers, or over 30 per cent of the PLA officer corps, were under investigation for corruption. In March 2017, the official news agency Xinhua publicised that a total of 4,885 PLA officers had been 'punished' for graft. There is a high degree of popular support inside China for Xi Jinping in his campaign against corruption in the PLA. The campaign additionally allows Xi Jinping to build a loyal band of at least 135 PLA officers, whom he will promote to the rank of major general and above, strengthens the Party's grip on the PLA and, ensures that PLA officers unquestioningly obey Xi Jinping and the CCP.

Party control on the PLA was stressed again most recently on April 27, 2017, when Xi Jinping visited the Southern Theatre Command and asked the PLA to strengthen ideology and ensure that it "resolutely follows the command of the CCP CC". He pointedly asked officers to "eliminate the impact" of Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou. Such references almost five years after they were punished suggests that the negative influence of their corrupt practices and their mentor, former CCP CC General Secretary Jiang Zemin, continues to linger. That there are still problems in the PLA was clear from the remark earlier in a *PLA Daily* commentary in March 2017, which asserted, "Malpractice, including spreading political rumors, reckless comments on the Party's theories

and policies, and participation of illegal associations should all be prohibited and punished”!

Within days of the Party Congress, Xi Jinping began tackling problems within the Party including corruption, a lazy work style and ostentation. He introduced the practice of obtaining feedback from the people and colleagues to assess the potential of cadres. Standards for admission to the Party were sought to be enhanced and Xi Jinping told Party cadres that the emphasis should be on better quality and not just increasing the number of members. The CCP could, he said, be smaller. In October 2016, the government announced that more than a million of the 88 million Party members had been investigated in the past three years during an intense campaign against corruption. By early this year, 176 Party cadres of the rank of vice minister and above had been dismissed on charges of corruption. The Party mouthpiece, *People's Daily*, complained in October 2016 against “lazy, foot-dragging officials” who were too “scared to do their jobs for fear of being accused of taking bribes, while others were unwilling to act unless the kickbacks resumed”. It added, “...those who complain or are nostalgic for the good old days? Well, they are just rotten with corruption!” Xi Jinping also cut the budget of the Communist Youth League (CYL) and initiated a programme to reduce its membership. At the same time, he initiated an austerity campaign to tackle corruption and ostentation in the Party, and mandated a regime of ‘one soup, four dishes’ at banquets. A large number of restaurants and hotels have consequently closed down, but the austerity measures remain in place despite the estimated annual 2-4 per cent adverse impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The economy is a major factor affecting society and China’s internal situation. The slowdown in growth has been faster than anticipated and the forecast for economic growth in 2017 is now officially pegged at 6.5 per cent, described by Premier Li Keqiang as the minimum essential for job creation. Very few of the 300 reforms decided upon at the Third Party Plenum in 2013 have progressed. The 106 central State Owned Enterprises (SoEs) have been particularly resistant to reform, not least because most are headed by ‘princelings’. For example, while the rules recommended a cap on the salaries of senior SoE executives, the SoEs were permitted to

themselves determine the salaries. The shutting down of 'zombie' enterprises, often owned by SoEs, has also made tardy progress with pilot projects being undertaken in Shanghai. Some major decisions have, however, been taken such as to lay off 5-6 million workers in the coal, steel and mining industries between 2016-18. Official Chinese media reports say that protests by workers have increased by an estimated 30 per cent over the 210,000 reported officially in 2010. Graduate unemployment is up by 30 per cent, adding to the levels of popular dissatisfaction. Early this year, responding to complaints by graduates of the lack of jobs, officials said there were adequate jobs but not of the kind the graduates wanted. Reports of regular protests by veteran demobilised soldiers have also surfaced and with 300,000 more demobilised soldiers likely to join their ranks, the protests can be expected to continue. Hundreds of Chinese military veterans demonstrated in mid-February 2017, outside the the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) in central Beijing for two days, demanding unpaid retirement benefits. A smaller number protested outside the Ministry of Civil Affairs the following day. In October 2016, more than 1,000 veterans demonstrated outside the Defence Ministry headquarters in Beijing.

Income inequality is also growing. Latest official Chinese figures state that while disparity between provinces is gradually reducing, the gap between the poor and rich is widening. As publicised during the National People's Congress (NPC) session in March 2017, one-third of China's wealth is owned by the top one percent households. There is also a lack of confidence in the country's economy as evidenced by the continuing flight of capital. The People's Bank of China (PBoC) estimated that US\$ 1 trillion has fled the country since 2015!

Poverty is causing considerable concern. At the Politburo meeting on February 22, 2017, President Xi Jinping underscored the importance of "precision in the battle against poverty, saying that poverty relief targets should be accomplished as scheduled". Poverty alleviation was the focus again at the Politburo meeting on March 31, 2017, as well as the NPC session that month. To highlight the leadership's concern, Xi Jinping has nominated himself as a delegate to the 19th Congress from Guizhou, China's poorest province.

Very high on the list of concerns of the CCP's higher echelons are the perceived destabilisation efforts, or 'Colour Revolutions', by the West. Early in April 2013, the CCP CC issued Document No. 9, which quoted Xi Jinping as saying "regime dissatisfaction often begins in the realm of ideas". He complained of an intensification of Western cultural and ideological infiltration. The CCP launched a campaign to counter such elements. In January 2015, the CCP CC issued Document No. 30 for strengthening the Party's control over primary and secondary schools and universities. Also in January 2015, the PRC's education minister prohibited the use of Western sources for teaching, and Western books began being weeded out of university and college libraries.

In the third week of December 2016, a seven-and-a-half minute video issued by the CCP CC Propaganda Department focussed on the dangers of a 'Colour Revolution' of which, it said, "Embassies in China are the forward command, combining forces to promote street politics". The video, which has no title, was propagated online under the head "Who most wants to overthrow China". The theme was highlighted in a high-level conference in December 2016 to discuss the strengthening of ideological controls in universities. During the conference, China's Minister of Education, Chen Baosheng observed that "the first option for hostile forces infiltrating us is our education system". He added "To wreck your future, first of all, they wreck your schools". Hongkong was singled out as a bridgehead for subversion. The video ended with the assertion, "Thoroughly expelling 'colour revolution' will be a long war, but if there is war, we will answer the call".

Reflecting the CCP leadership's concern, the 442,000 foreign students studying in China have also -- for the first time -- been formally brought within the purview of the Party's controls. On June 5, 2017, China's Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs and Public Security jointly issued new regulations which mandate that foreign students pursuing higher education diplomas in China will have to take compulsory courses in Chinese. They require universities and colleges to teach international students about China's laws and regulations, plus its institutions and traditional Chinese culture and customs, and require international students

majoring in philosophy and politics to take compulsory political theories courses. The regulations state they were made to “regulate schools’ admissions, the cultivation and management of international students and for the convenience of international students studying in schools in China”. The regulations ban any form of religious activities on campus, such as preaching or religious gatherings and say that schools should respect the customs and religious beliefs of foreign students, but are not allowed to provide any venue for their religious activities. International students who do not live in school dormitories are required to register their address with the police in the neighbourhood. Universities and colleges are now also required to have “instructors” for foreign students, following a similar practice of employing “political instructors” for Chinese students. University political instructors have long been tasked with the political education and overseeing of Chinese students’ ideological teaching. The Social Credit Management system, which ensures total monitoring of the citizenry, is planned to be implemented across China by 2018.

These measures were reinforced by the National Security Education Campaign launched in August 2016 amidst accusations of “hostile foreign forces” meddling in China and fanning domestic discontent. In April 2017, Beijing announced incentives of up to US\$ 72,000 for people providing information on suspected spies. On May 16, 2017, China issued its first public draft of an Intelligence Law that is expansive and allows the detention and monitoring of suspects as well as search of their premises, seizure of vehicles and devices and investigation of individuals and groups. Chinese citizens and foreigners are all within the ambit of this law. There has also been a crackdown on human rights lawyers, with almost 300 arrested till now. There is also apprehension that Buddhist monks, especially Tibetan Buddhist monks, have the potential of being guided and controlled from “outside”. Since March 2017, controls are being enforced on the movements of monks and they have been directed to take prior permission for their ‘teachings’.

Additionally, there is an arc of vulnerability developing around China. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) remains restive despite the implementation of progressively restrictive security measures.

While the 'iron grid' system ensures a response to an incident by the security forces within 3-5 minutes of the occurrence of an incident, in early May 2017, the authorities introduced additional measures. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Public Security Bureau (PSB) enhanced its surveillance and rapid deployment capability across counties. The PSB budget which was US\$ 1 billion in 2014, was increased by 54 per cent in 2016 over the previous year. However, the number of medical teams visiting PLA and People's Armed Police (PAP) personnel deployed in the TAR to treat them for post traumatic stress disorders has increased from one to three each year. Simultaneously, Party surveillance has been expanded with efforts to each year recruit one Party member in each village in the TAR, with 21,000 Party cadres being sent to each of the TARs over 5,000 villages. Monks and monasteries continue to be specially targeted, with Party cadres deployed in each monastery. The Tibetans still do not accept the China-appointed Gyaltzen Norbu as the Panchen Lama—only as a "learned monk". There is also a divide between the Hans and Tibetans with China's provincial media often reporting fights between Han and Tibetan students. China's strong reaction to the Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh is reflective of this tension in the TAR.

There is also no sign of the tension and violence in the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region abating. The public security budget in Xinjiang too was enhanced this year by 54 per cent from the US\$ 1.05 billion last year. A report issued last year by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) highlighted that incidents of terrorist violence by the Uyghurs were spreading to other parts of the country where there are Muslim populations. It said that some countries, like Turkey, were providing travel documents to the Uyghurs to help them escape or enter Xinjiang through Southeast Asia and that China should not expect assistance from foreign countries. In May 2017, China expressed additional concern about the potential danger from the Rohingyas in Myanmar being trained by Islamist terrorist outfits.

There are other tensions developing on China's periphery. There is increasing tension across the Taiwan Strait, with Beijing insisting that Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has plans to 'sneakily' make a bid for independence. The telephone call between US President

designate Trump and Tsai Ing-wen has added to the strain, with Chinese analysts stating that China is exploring non-peaceful options for effecting reunification.

While political tensions in Hongkong have seemingly settled down, it was not before Beijing cracked down hard on the advocates of 'independence'. Beijing has also preempted any bid by Hongkong residents to interpret the Basic Law, declaring that Beijing's would be the final word. Differences between Hongkong 'independence' groups and Beijing, however, remain.

When the 19th Party Congress reviews the achievements since the last Congress, it can be expected to positively evaluate the measures implemented by Xi Jinping to ensure social stability and the CCP's primacy. Despite the pools of dissatisfaction among those adversely impacted, Xi Jinping has initiated substantive steps to 'professionalise' the PLA and cleanse the Party. As Xi Jinping begins his second term at the end of this year and advances the 'China Dream' and 'One Belt, One Road', the hardening of the Chinese state will continue. The ensuing inflexibility will mean that negotiations are unlikely to yield concessions and this has the real potential to impinge on India's interests.

INDIA-CHINA BOUNDARY DISPUTE: A REVIEW IN 2017

SANA HASHMI

With India's refusal to be a part of China's much-ambitious and much-talked about One Belt, One Road (OBOR) and the recent stand-off at Doklam, it is apparent that there is a sense of unease between India and China. Differences between the two Asian giants continue. China's blockade of India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) and India's demand to ban the man responsible for the 2001 attack on the Parliament and the 2016 attack on the Pathankot air base, Masood Azhar, the Jaish-e-Mohammed leader, in the United Nations are hinting towards China's reluctance to accept India's ascendance in the global arena. While these are recent problems, the persistent ones between the two countries continue. First, China's unconditional support to Pakistan has been an irritant in the bilateral relations. While Pakistan is a central part of China's transition from a regional power to global one by virtue of being at the heart of Beijing's plans for a network of ports, pipelines, roads and railways connecting the oil and gas fields of the Middle East to the mega cities of East Asia, China has been Pakistan's diplomatic protector, its chief arms supplier, and its call of last resort when

Ms Sana Hashmi is a consultant at the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of India.

every other supposed friend has left it in the lurch.¹ Second, there has been a huge trade imbalance between India and China. In 2016-17, while the two-way trade stood at US\$ 71.48 billion, India's trade deficit with China reached US\$ 51.1 billion. Third, India and China have been grappling with the boundary dispute for more than half-a-century. Despite the long drawn-out conflict, both sides have been attempting to downplay the dispute for a long time. While China has several reasons to do so, India is well aware that focussing only on the conflict will do more harm than good. China wishes to keep the dispute alive but, at the same time, it does not want the dispute to affect other aspects of the bilateral relationship.

Though the boundary stand-off is a regular feature of India-China relations, the bilateral relations will proceed on the upward track only when the dispute gets resolved in entirety. Till now, 19 rounds of negotiations have taken place, but the dispute is nowhere close to being resolved. To make things worse, China stopped the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage. A few days later, the stand-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers at Doklam (India-China-Bhutan trijunction) began to surface and turned into a major diplomatic row. Once again, the boundary question begins to loom large. It is peculiar to notice that while China has not been mentioning the disputes in the South China and East China Seas, it has, all of a sudden, become assertive vis-a-vis its land disputes. One of the reasons behind such a pattern is that China, by getting assertive in its maritime disputes, does not want to jeopardise its 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) project. However, given that India has not yet consented to be a part of the OBOR, China is flexing its muscles in the Indian subcontinent.

DOKLAM STAND-OFF

Apart from India, Bhutan is the other country with which China is yet to resolve its boundary dispute. In fact, Bhutan and China are yet to establish diplomatic ties with each other. This is primarily because of Bhutan's tilt towards India. However, the dispute between China and Bhutan has not been a major contention. In fact, the Chinese side has shown willingness to resolve the dispute with Bhutan on several

1. Andrew Small, *China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2015), pp. 1-2.

occasions. Of late, such offers have been ignored by Bhutan which got embroiled in a massive stand-off with China. In June 2017, the stand-off between India and China at Doklam plateau near the India-China-Bhutan trijunction took place. On June 16, Indian soldiers had moved into the plateau, an area disputed between China and Bhutan and which abuts the Indian border in east Sikkim, to prevent a road being constructed by the Chinese to eventually reach Jampheri ridge, which India and Bhutan consider to be in Bhutan.² The stand-off remained “localised”, with no movement of Chinese troops detected in any other disputed sector on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries.³ Bhutan expressed discontent and raised this issue with the Chinese government. The Foreign Ministry of Bhutan issued a statement underlining that the construction of the road inside Bhutanese territory comprises a direct violation of the 1988 and 1998 agreements between Bhutan and China, and affects the process of demarcating the boundary between these two countries.⁴ The Bhutanese side has been urging the Chinese side to respect the status quo.

Tensions have not yet been diffused and it was a diplomatic blow to India’s efforts to maintain friendly relations with its neighbours. Both countries have been reluctant to withdraw their troops from Doklam. In fact, China put the withdrawal of Indian troops as a precondition for any dialogue and negotiations. The importance of Doklam plateau is immense for China as it lies immediately east of the Indian defences in Sikkim, and not only has a commanding view of the Chumbi Valley but also overlooks the Siliguri Corridor further to the east.⁵ However, the bigger question is: why has China become assertive with Bhutan now? In this context, Nirupama Rao, former foreign secretary and former Indian ambassador to China believes, “China’s road construction is a deliberate move to trigger a response from Bhutan and from

2. Sushant Singh, “India-China Standoff: Status Quo at Site, No Movement of Forces”, *Indian Express*, July 7, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-china-standoff-status-quo-at-site-no-movement-of-forces-4739453/>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

3. *Ibid.*

4. “Recent Developments in Doklam”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, June 30, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28572/Recent+Developments+in+Doklam+Area>. Accessed on June 30, 2017.

5. Prakash Katoch, “Dealing with Doklam”, *CLAWS*, March 16, 2013, <http://www.claws.in/985/dealing-with-doklam-prakash-katoch.html>. Accessed on April 1, 2017.

India. Through its actions, China seeks to impose its own definition of the tri-junction point of the boundary between Bhutan, China and India (Sikkim). The move has serious security ramifications for both Bhutan's and India's defence interests."⁶ There are direct ramifications of this stand-off on India. Also, by being assertive, China desires to put pressure on India as well as Bhutan. However, Bhutan is less likely to succumb to the pressure for two reasons. First, Bhutan is unlikely to choose China over India. If diplomatic relations are established with Beijing, Thimpu is aware that it has to first accept the iron-clad One China policy of jettisoning fellow Buddhist Tibetans from the Himalayan kingdom, thus, tearing apart the social fabric, and creating tensions.⁷ Second, India is not considered a threat to Bhutan. China is claiming a 495 sq km area in eastern Bhutan and 286 sq km area in the western sector, which includes the Doklam plateau but, at one stage, China had offered to give up its claims in eastern Bhutan if Thimphu were to hand over the Doklam plateau, which will give Chinese troops a commanding position over India.⁸

China's recent aggressive postures are motivated by several factors.

First, with the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party around the corner, the Chinese leadership is leaving no stone unturned to prove that the leadership is working towards realising the country's national interest. Nationalism has clearly emerged as a strong force in both the domestic politics of China and its external behaviour, and in the domestic polity, it is one of the main planks giving legitimacy to the Chinese Communist Party.⁹ Since 2000, with the United States' economy in a crisis, Washington's emerging

6. Nirupama Rao quoted in "Six Expert Views on How India Should Look at the Latest Border Stand-Off With China", *The Wire*, July 5, 2017, <https://thewire.in/154449/expert-gyan-india-china-bhutan/>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.
7. Srikanth Kondapalli, "What Next in the India-China Standoff", *Rediff*, July 2017, <http://www.rediff.com/news/column/what-next-in-the-india-china-standoff/20170714.htm>. Accessed on July 15, 2017.
8. Saibal Dasgupta, "Border Standoff: Why Bhutan will not Ditch India", *The Times of India*, July 10, 2017, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/border-standoff-why-bhutan-will-not-ditch-india/articleshow/59531400.cms?utm_source=toiphoneapp&utm_medium=Twitter&utm_campaign=show. Accessed on July 10, 2017.
9. Ashok Kantha, quoted in "Six Expert Views on How India Should Look at the Latest Border Stand-Off With China", *The Wire*, July 5, 2017, <https://thewire.in/154449/expert-gyan-india-china-bhutan/>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

pivot to Asia, and maritime disputes surfacing with Vietnam and the Philippines, the Chinese elites began to question the continued wisdom of Deng Xiaoping's injunction of hiding capacities and biding time, and the ensuing debate, according to Chinese public intellectual Yan Xuetong, led to a shift in China's strategy from "keeping a low profile" to "striving for achievement," famously outlined in a speech by Xi Jinping in October 2013.¹⁰

Second, China has been irked by the Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh in March 2017—the visit may have contributed to its decision to become more aggressive. China has been opposing the Dalai Lama's visit to any country. For example, the Dalai Lama's visit to Mongolia last year resulted in China imposing economic sanctions on Mongolia. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang, at a regular press conference on July 14, 2017, stated:¹¹

The 14th Dalai is a political exile who has long been engaged in anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion with the attempt to split Tibet from China. China is firmly opposed to Dalai's trip to any country for activities aimed at splitting China in any capacity or name, and contact with any official in any form in any country. China's stance is clear. We hope relevant country can see clearly the nature of Dalai, faithfully respect China's core concern and make a correct decision on the relevant issue.

China gets more assertive when the Dalai Lama visits Arunachal Pradesh which it considers as its own territory.

Third, India's reluctance to join the OBOR, its refusal to attend the OBOR conference in May 2017, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States have not been taken well by the Chinese. It may be said that by being assertive, the Chinese are trying to teach India a lesson.

10. Rohan Mukherjee, "Sikkim Standoff: What Explains China's Coercive Diplomacy", *Business Standard*, July 10, 2017, http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/sikkim-stand-off-what-explains-china-s-coercive-diplomacy-117071000112_1.html. Accessed on July 11, 2017.

11. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on July 14, 2017, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, People's Republic of China, July 14, 2017, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1477975.shtml. Accessed on July 14, 2017.

Fourth, another possible explanation is that China was trying to detach Bhutan from India as it had miscalculated India's response to the stand-off. The Indian agencies were accused of interfering in Bhutan's elections and there were allegations that this Bhutanese government had come to power due to being preferred by India; since then, China has been seeking an opportunity to cause a rift.¹² As the race to establish an Asian order intensifies, China will test the Indian resolve, and portray it as an unreliable partner to smaller neighbours.¹³ Additionally, there is a possibility that it is willing to resolve the boundary dispute with Bhutan and desires to test India's commitment and preparedness towards Bhutan. China's willingness to resolve its dispute with Bhutan is relatively greater in comparison to India; however, Bhutan's treaty obligations with India do not allow it to go for a comprehensive resolution without the consent and involvement of India, while China's interests lie in settling the dispute with Bhutan as soon as possible so that it can use it to leverage its position in its future negotiations with India.¹⁴

Fifth, the Doklam stand-off may be viewed through the prism of the geo-political realities in Asia. China believes that it is destined to lead Asia, and, indeed, the world, by a process in which other actors are but bit players; whereas India is strongly convinced of its destiny as a great power and an indispensable player in any attempt to re-engineer global regimes.¹⁵ China's leaders also view primacy in the Asian region as an essential basis for its eventual catch-up with the United States as a leading global power.¹⁶ Therefore, India is a strong competitor to China's ascendance in Asia. Sixth, India conducted the Malabar Exercise in July 2017. As John Garver succinctly put it:

12. Phunchok Stobdan quoted in "Six Expert Views on How India Should Look at the Latest Border Stand-Off with China", *The Wire*, July 5, 2017, <https://thewire.in/154449/expert-gyan-india-china-bhutan/>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

13. Samir Saran, "In Armed Conflict with India, Why China Would be Bigger Loser", *NDTV*, July 6, 2017, <http://www.ndtv.com/opinion/3-messages-from-china-in-provocation-of-india-1721214>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

14. Sana Hashmi, *China's Approach towards Territorial Disputes: Lessons and Prospects* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2016), p. 173.

15. Saran, n. 13.

16. John Garver, "Stand-off: Is China Telling India to Accept Changing Realities", *South China Morning Post*, July 16, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2102547/standoff-china-telling-india-accept-changing-realities>. Accessed on July 16, 2017.

From Beijing's perspective, New Delhi is colluding with Japan and the United States to stifle China's natural and rightful rise to a position manifesting "the China Dream" and to which China's glorious history entitles it. The appropriate response for India would be, Beijing believes, to credit China's reassurances of non-threat and friendship, partner with China on the BRI and to deal with regional security issues. Instead, New Delhi is linking up with "anti-China forces" in Tokyo and encourages the United States to oppose China's rise.¹⁷

While there could be plenty of reasons for China's assertiveness vis-à-vis its land disputes, getting Bhutan and India involved might not work to China's advantage in the longer run.

IMPORTANCE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH FOR CHINA

The major bone of contention still remains China's claim on Arunachal Pradesh, which the Chinese refer to as Southern Tibet. According to the Chinese, the dispute is confined to only 2,000 km of the India-China border which lies in Arunachal Pradesh, India maintains that the dispute involves the entire Line of Actual Control, including the Aksai Chin which was captured after the 1962 War. It was in 2006, just before the maiden visit of Hu Jintao to India that China's Ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi proclaimed that "not only Tawang but the entire Arunachal Pradesh belongs to China." The same position has been reiterated by other Chinese officials. Dai Bingguo, who was a state councillor and China's special representative on the boundary negotiations for several years, stated in March 2017, that "the border dispute between China and India can be resolved if New Delhi accepts Beijing's claim over the strategically vital Tawang region in Arunachal Pradesh... If the Indian side takes care of China's concerns in the eastern sector of their border, the Chinese side will respond accordingly and address India's concerns elsewhere".¹⁸ Such remarks and the fact that the boundary dispute is still unresolved

17. Ibid.

18. Quoted in "Ex-Chinese Diplomat Says Concession on Tawang Can Resolve Border Dispute, India Says Not Possible", *Indian Express*, March 3, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/aranachal-pradesh-tawang-china-india-border-dispute-4552526/>. Accessed on March 4, 2017.

suggest that China is least willing to resolve the dispute in the eastern sector. There are varied reasons for the same. First, China has declared Tibet as one of its core interests. Chinese interest in the eastern sector has been elevated since 2005, when both countries signed the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles, and China has eyed the Tawang tract, because the 15th century Dalai Lama was born there.¹⁹ Interestingly, China withdrew from that area after the 1962 War with India but control over Tawang will consolidate China's hold over the centres of Tibetan Buddhism.²⁰ Second, control over Tawang would allow China to restrict India's movements and hamper the growth of the entire northeastern region. Third, Thimphu has no diplomatic relations with Beijing, and remains one of New Delhi's closest partners in the region, and control of Tawang would give China the ability to flank Bhutan from the east, and allow it to put pressure on the country.²¹

CHINA'S DEMANDS

This recent stand-off and China's unwillingness to resolve the boundary dispute with India raise the question: is China willing to go for a war with India? The answer is no. It cannot risk going for a war with any country while it is attempting to portray an image of being a responsible power. This will damage its chances of promoting the OBOR among countries that are already anxious about China's intentions. The best option for Xi Jinping is to follow Sun Tzu's advice: "The skilful leader subdues the enemy without fighting" and here, the only option left for Beijing is to convince the world that New Delhi is an existential threat, but this is not an easy task since Doklam is situated in territory disputed between China and tiny Bhutan.²²

19. Srikanth Kondapalli, quoted in Saibal Dasgupta, "China Ready to Cede Land for Part of Arunachal Pradesh", *The Times of India*, March 3, 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/china-ready-to-cede-land-for-part-of-arunachal-pradesh/articleshow/57438182.cms>. Accessed on March 4, 2017.

20. Ibid.

21. "India-China Border Dispute: Why New Delhi Will not Consider Handing Over Tawang", *Firstpost*, March 3, 2017, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/india-china-border-dispute-why-new-delhi-will-not-consider-handing-over-tawang-3312534.html>. Accessed on March 4, 2017.

22. Rajneesh Kumar, "Will the Doklam Standoff Lead to a Second India-China War?", *The Diplomat*, July 18, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/07/will-the-doklam-standoff-lead-to-a-second-india-china-war/>. Accessed on July 18, 2017.

Now the next question is whether China is still open to the option of a 'package deal'? China, till the 1980s, had expressed its willingness to resolve the boundary dispute by offering a 'package deal'. By package deal, China implied that it would give up its claims on Tawang if India accepted China's claims on Aksai Chin. India has repeatedly refused to accept the offer. New Delhi had rejected the offer when it was originally made in 1960 by Zhou Enlai and then again by Deng Xiaoping to External Affairs Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1979.²³ Nehru was concerned that any concession, even in the west, which was neither strategically important to India nor a territory over which New Delhi was sure of its claims, "would betray weakness and only invite further aggression from Beijing all across the frontier".²⁴ The second offer, and better for New Delhi than the "package" deal, was what Shyam Saran has called the "LAC-plus solution" (the LAC is the Line of Actual Control which serves as the *de facto* boundary between India and China).²⁵ According to Shyam Saran, the contours of an LAC-plus solution were arrived during the "back channel talks between A.P. Venkateswaran, the then ambassador of India, and a senior adviser to the then Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang", which involved recognition of the status quo in the east and some concessions by China in the west.²⁶

Both the package deal and LAC-plus solution do not seem to be viable options for India and China. While India will not be ready to accept the package deal, the ultra-nationalist Chinese will not buy the LAC-plus solution. However, considering the LAC-plus solution should not be out of the question for China, as it had accepted the McMahon Line while resolving the dispute with Myanmar. It may consider the same for India too. The problem is that China does not find it feasible to resolve the boundary dispute at the moment. So, it will keep the dispute alive unless it receives more than what it is getting by not resolving it. It has inherent

23. Manoj Joshi, "Operation Falcon: When Gen Sundarji Took the Chinese By Surprise", *Quint*, July 1, 2017, <https://www.thequint.com/opinion/2017/06/30/operation-falcon-sundarji-took-china-by-surprise>. Accessed on July 1, 2017.

24. Kunal Singh, "India-China Border Dispute is Here to Stay", *Live Mint*, March 7, 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/N74wStlMZgxwCqbApV3i3K/IndiaChina-border-dispute-is-here-to-stay.html>. Accessed on March 7, 2017.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

interests in keeping India preoccupied with Pakistan as well as the prolonged boundary dispute.

COPING WITH THE CHINA THREAT

Till now, 19 rounds of special representative talks, begun in 2003, have taken place, with no substantial outcome. The last round was led by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi, in April 2016. While such talks and agreements like the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), signed after the border stand-off in 2013, are confidence-building measures, these are not leading anywhere close to the resolution of the boundary dispute. It is clear that the Chinese side is not keen on resolving the dispute any time soon. China's growing assertiveness is a function of China's own rising power and its own assessment of its interests, and it has very little to do with India's behaviour; India has misunderstood China in the past and there is a danger that it will continue to do so if it does not comprehend the underpinnings of the Chinese behaviour today.²⁷ In such a situation, India is left with only a few options.

Using the Tibet Card

India has been reluctant to use Tibet as a bargaining chip in the boundary dispute. This is largely due to Nehru's commitment of not making use of Tibet, and, not allowing the Tibetans to use Indian soil for any anti-China activity. Tibet has been at the forefront of India-China relations—it has been one of the biggest irritants in the relations. In fact, it seems that till the time India has Tibetans on its territory, China will not resolve the dispute. It is important to keep in mind that it was only after China's annexation of Tibet that the Chinese began to claim India's territory. China claims Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of Tibet being under its control. While using the Tibet card against China would not be a feasible option, India needs to devise a bolder strategy. For example, though India gave consent to the One China policy long ago, it has been refraining from giving

27. Harsh Pant, "China's Conduct and the Logic of Power", *Live Mint*, July 24, 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/cvQxKI5NXXgmRLtEUZ6XFL/Chinas-conduct-and-the-logic-of-power.html>. Accessed on July 24, 2017.

its affirmation to the same in joint statements since 2008.²⁸ In 2014, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj stated, “For India to agree to the One China policy, China should reaffirm its One India policy,” meaning that Beijing should refer to Kashmir as well as Arunachal Pradesh as India’s rightful territories.²⁹

Maintaining Status Quo

When India re-established ambassadorial relations with China in 1987, both sides had reached an understanding that the boundary dispute would not affect other aspects of the relationship. Several steps were taken in this direction. Former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi paid a landmark visit to China in 1988. The engagement resulting from the 1988 visit made a break from the established policy and was an opportunity to separate the border dispute from other issues, and introduce cooperation into a relationship of contention.³⁰ The benefits of the 1988 *modus vivendi* accrued to both sides; bilateral trade flourished, the boundary issue was managed, and both countries could grow as economic powerhouses without being tied down in their backyards.³¹ Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar observed: “India and China must not allow differences to become disputes. This consensus underlines the strategic maturity with which the two countries must continue to approach each other.”³² Statements like these and other moves by the Indian government clearly imply that India’s interests lie in pushing for the status quo. This strategy is the most suitable not only for India but for Bhutan as well.

28. Sana Hashmi, “Is India Ready to Play the Tibet Card?”, *Rediff*, April 3, 2017, <http://www.rediff.com/news/column/is-india-ready-to-play-the-tibet-card/20170403.htm>. Accessed on April 3, 2017.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Deep Pal, “The 30-Year Itch in India-China Ties”, *Live Mint*, July 14, 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/NcJ62v7JN6TuCCHmk7sBuL/The-30year-itch-in-IndiaChina-ties.html>. Accessed on July 14, 2017.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Speech by Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar, to mark 25 years of India-Singapore partnership, at Shangri La Hotel, Singapore, July 11, 2017, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 11, 2017, http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28609/Speech_by_Dr_S_Jaishankar_Foreign_Secretary_to_mark_25_years_of_IndiaSingapore_Partnership_at_Shangri_La_Hotel_Singapore_July_11_2017. Accessed on July 11, 2017.

Infrastructure Development

China's aggressive postures at the border hint towards its reluctance to give India any concessions and incentives for boundary dispute resolution. Assured by several Sinologists that the Chinese has no expansionist designs, India has neglected its military and logistical preparedness, not even bothering about the border infrastructure.³³ In such a situation, the most suitable option for India is to be prepared for a conflict and focus on the border infrastructure. One of the apt ways to tackle the boundary dispute is to make the Chinese aware that India is well-prepared to defend its sovereignty.

India on the Path of Self-Sufficiency

While countries such as the United States and Australia have called for a peaceful resolution of the dispute, these are just statements and hold no relevance. For example, Gary Ross, a US Defence Department spokesman stated, "We [United States] encourage India and China to engage in direct dialogue aimed at reducing tensions, and free of any coercive aspects."³⁴ In the event of a full-scale conflict, no country would openly be taking sides. Also, in the absence of alliances, India needs to weigh its options carefully. Relying on other countries for support will prove damaging. With regard to China, what India needs to do is, while maintaining friendly cooperative relationships with countries such as Japan and the United States, to keep persuading China to maintain the status quo through dialogue.

CONCLUSION

China desires to establish a China-led world order and with the initiation of the OBOR, it has embarked on this journey. US President Donald Trump's ambiguous policy towards Asia has bolstered China's ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. However, getting aggressive in its territorial disputes has certainly tarnished China's image on the international stage, given that it has breached the understanding of maintaining status quo with its boundary with

33. Pant, n. 27.

34. Cited in Shubhajit Roy, "Doklam Standoff: US Approaches Delhi, Beijing, Seeks Talks, Peaceful Solution", *Indian Express*, July 23, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/us-approaches-delhi-beijing-seeks-talks-peaceful-solution-on-doklam-stand-off-4763055/>. Accessed on July 23, 2017.

Bhutan. Therefore, escalating the tension is certainly not in China's long-term interest. It just wants India to be preoccupied with the boundary dispute. However, this approach has the potential to hamper India's growth in the longer run. Hence, India should focus on improving its relations with its immediate neighbours, including Pakistan. This will leave China with a little room to encircle India in its own region. Second, given that the dispute will not be resolved any time soon, India should motivate China to de-escalate the tension and focus on confidence building measures. Escalation of the tension will lead to a deadlock and will not be in either country's interest. Now, the ball is in China's court. What it can do is to show the willingness to resolve the dispute and win India's trust, that it is ready to give space to India in the Asian affairs, and treat it as an equal partner.

INDIA AND BANGLADESH: HOW DO WE STAY ON TRACK?

SREERADHA DATTA

India and Bangladesh are seen as close, friendly neighbours today. While this is the present reality, given the past uneven state of bilateral ties, it will not be out of place to ask whether the present bilateral bonhomie can be sustained for a reasonable period of time. Or will it be subject to the vagaries of different elected governments in Dhaka and New Delhi? Have the two states been able to overcome the past mistrust and turned around the relations to stay on the path of cooperation and mutual goodwill?

Given their subcontinental identity, India and Bangladesh share a common history and geography. But the shared past also entwines them through emotional ties and surrounding expectations. It is this aspect which, in fact, lends itself to a special relationship between the two neighbours. Any two neighbours with common borders and a shared past have several points of both convergence and divergence. What sets apart this bilateral relationship from other neighbours in the region is the element of emotional content emanating from common historical and cultural links that have both smoothed and complicated the bilateral ties, depending on the differing circumstances. The bilateral issues of borders, trade and water have invariably been further complicated given the expectations

Dr **Sreeradha Datta** is an independent political analyst. She was formerly the Director at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata.

surrounding them. For long, Bangladesh, like many of its other neighbours in South Asia, nursed a grouse that big brother India was not doing enough to improve the bilateral ties. India's central geographic location in the region, its extended length and breadth, necessarily gave it an overwhelming presence in the region. While India nursed the wounds of its significant contribution to Bangladesh's liberation war having been forgotten, the two neighbours continued to engage with each other, though falling short of their full potential for many decades. The shared history and cultural familiarity contributed to ensuring a friendly environment but also caused strain in the bilateral relations given the preconceived notions and popular perceptions that tended to colour the outstanding issues. It was only in 2010 that the two neighbours were able to make a break from the past and put in place a large framework of cooperation for a mutual win-win path ahead. The beginning of this new phase was, however, initiated in 2006. A caretaker government in Dhaka, for the first time, formally acknowledged India's role and contribution to the success of its liberation war against Pakistan.¹ The positive atmospherics was further strengthened with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing India's security concerns very comprehensively soon after taking over in 2009. Once India's core security concerns vis-à-vis Bangladesh were addressed, India did not hesitate to open up a panorama of cooperative mechanisms traversing trade and economy, cultural and educational issues.

The two neighbours have subsequently gone from strength to strength, building on the trust deficit, and engaging with each other at different levels. From a variety of infrastructural projects, including connectivity and energy trade, the bilateral relations have touched a new high. Within this context, this paper essentially argues that while India and Bangladesh seem to be positively poised, the shared past continues to impact the bilateral relations. The history of Bangladesh and India's role and its continued close association with the Awami League have always been reference points in the domestic politics and foreign policy of Bangladesh. At the domestic

1. Smruti S. Pattanaik, "Sheikh Hasina's Visit to India: An Opportunity to Broaden the Relationship," *IDS Comment*, April 7, 2017 at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/sheikh-hasina-visit-to-india_sspattanaik_070417. Accessed on August 1, 2017.

level in Bangladesh, there is no closure on the issue of the liberation war. Moreover, in view of the sharp polarisation within the polity, political parties continue to view the event that occurred four decades ago through different lenses of history and emotions entwined with it. Given India's association with the liberation war, this continues to impact the bilateral relations.

Secondly, the paper also argues that during the initial decades of bilateral ties, India viewed Bangladesh as a neighbour that it needed to manage and maintain cordial relations with, not as a neighbour that it could walk together with, to realise its larger foreign policy goals. This perception subsequently changed under different circumstances. Indeed, Bangladesh is now increasingly viewed as a key player and partner in the progress in India's regional and extra-regional aspirations.

The paper will conclude with reviewing the recent bilateral agreements, arguing how India and Bangladesh, while having shown great depth and maturity in the recent times, seem to be ignoring a few ground realities that will impinge upon the bilateral relations. Both in Bangladesh and India, the domestic developments are likely to cast a shadow on the bilateral ties.

HISTORY INFLUENCES THE PRESENT

When it comes to Bangladesh, history plays a critical role. To recall the past briefly, the origin of Bangladesh in 1971, breaking away from Pakistan, was possible due to the support India lent to it and the deep understanding that existed between the two leaders, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Bangladesh's first Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The historic ties that evolved between the two leaders of the subcontinent, Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, only deepened in the intervening years post the liberation of Bangladesh. Unfortunately, in the very early phase of its state formation, Bangladesh lost its *Bangabondhu* Mujib to the bullets of the assassins from within the Bangladesh Army, altering both the domestic and bilateral environment drastically. From a nascent secular democratic state, Bangladesh was taken over by military leaders who used religion to buy their legitimacy and longevity. The development of a number of factors also led to a gradual loss of the

goodwill that was initially generated, especially at the popular level. Beginning with the plundering and looting of relief supplies meant for Bangladesh by Indian traders, the ordinary people of Bangladesh soon began to nurse misgivings about the Indian intentions. The consecutive military governments from 1975 onwards largely limited India's scope for greater involvement in Bangladesh. This was both a factor of India's policy of encouraging a pro-democratic orientation as well as Bangladesh's necessity to expand its scope of interest and influence with a wider cross-section of nation states. With Bangladesh gaining wider acceptance of its independent status, India's primacy in the Bangladeshi foreign policy was slowly relegated in favour of other nations. India, for its part, did not pursue Bangladesh aggressively.

From a secular democratic polity, Bangladesh soon turned into an Islamic military-led republic for over 15 years till parliamentary democracy returned in 1991. Given the changing nature of the Bangladeshi government and India placing a high value on democratic processes, it was not unexpected that India and the military leaders could not find much common ground. The removal of the Awami League and the establishment of a military regime in Bangladesh for almost two decades thereafter was reflected foremost in its foreign policy and especially in the Indo-Bangladesh bilateral relations. There was no attempt to engage with each other closely. Even with Bangladesh adopting parliamentary democracy in 1991, there was no ostensible change in India's foreign policy on Bangladesh. The return of democracy brought in Khaleda Zia, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and wife of the erstwhile military leader Zia-ur Rahman as the prime minister, but this phase did not see any major positive development between the two neighbours.

Clearly, India and Bangladesh failed to strike the right chords in the absence of an Awami government. India (irrespective of the government in Delhi), however, has not been able to find a workable solution with any political group other than the Awami League. Apart from the Awami League, the other prominent political parties—Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Jatiya Party or even Jamaat-i-Islami—were either closely linked to the military or rooted in religion. The historical fissures within the polity arose again when the Awami League initiated the war criminal trials in 2012. Thousands who had

suffered under the Pakistan Army and its collaborators had for long been denied justice. But this move to address the unfinished agenda of the liberation war only led to a sharper polarisation of the society. The High Court judgement, acquitting a known offender, brought forth an impromptu gathering of pro-liberation forces, specially the young generation, at the Shahbag, challenging the court order. While the order was revoked subsequently, awarding the accused the death penalty, a strong counter-movement initiated by the religious political groups that perceived themselves as victims of the court trials soon dominated the situation.² Once again, the wounds of the liberation war were laid bare, exposing the basic contradictions. Thus, India's close association with the liberation war has often led to anti-India sentiments gaining currency. Moreover, popular discontent with the Awami League invariably spills over to India. For a number of reasons, India is unable to break free of the popular perception that it is more comfortable with an Awami League government in Dhaka.

INDIAN INDIFFERENCE AND BANGLADESHI INTRANSIGENCE

Some of the outstanding bilateral issues that continued to affect the neighbours revolved around the undemarcated border, common water sharing, trade imbalance, illegal migration and insurgency. While bilateral discussions continued and governmental mechanisms got initiated, the progress continued to be incremental. Before the breakthrough in 2010, a brief period of cordial and stable ties during 1996-2001 during the Sheikh Hasina-led government resulted in two landmark agreements, namely, sharing of the Ganga waters in 1996 and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) accord, resulting in the repatriation of 65,000 Chakmas from India, thereby, removing the two main irritants that had plagued Indo-Bangladeshi relations for years. The expectations of continued warm bilateral ties under a different government quickly dissipated. Indeed, during the Khaleda Zia-led BNP government, which assumed office in October 2001, the bilateral relations on

2. Tahmima Anam, "Shahbag Protestors Versus the Butchers of Mirpur", *The Guardian*, February 13, 2013, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/13/shahbag-protest-bangladesh-quader-mollah>. Accessed on August 1, 2017.

the contrary, plummeted to one of the worst phases. Without much exaggeration, the bilateral relationship reached its lowest point between 2001 and 2006. The downslide began with the large scale violence against the Hindu minority and their immediate influx into India in the aftermath of the BNP's victory. For long, India had accused Bangladesh of ignoring, if not fuelling, anti-India activities from within its territory. This intensified during this period. And India voiced concerns that Bangladesh's growing extremism posed a potential threat to India.³ Bangladesh's main grouse has been against India, which, as a larger neighbour, did not adequately address its economic interests apart from being parsimonious in sharing the common water resources. One can identify eight broad areas of contention which dominated the Indo-Bangladeshi relations during this period, namely, trade disputes, border disputes, river water sharing, migration, insurgency, anti-Hindu violence, controversies surrounding gas exports, and security concerns over the presence of Al Qaeda in Bangladesh.

In view of the limited progress with its neighbours, India preferred to invest larger interest and attention in seeking convergence with powers outside the region. This partly contributed to Dhaka's grouse over Indian indifference and neglect, and the Bangladeshi ability to create trouble rather than offer incentives continued to make headlines in India. It was only during the interregnum period when Bangladesh was under a caretaker government (2006-08) that it became possible to pave the way for better bilateral stability and shortly, a vision for a journey together was to emerge.

The Awami League-led coalition's win, with over three-fourths majority in the 9th Jatiya Sangsad elections in December 2008, soon altered the bilateral atmospherics. Sheikh Hasina initiated steps to address India's security related grievances, with the most important breakthrough, from the Indian point of view, coming with the capture of Arabinda Rajkhowa a United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) leader in December 2009 and the opening up of the Chittagong arms haul case. Both New Delhi and Dhaka signalled a keenness to maximise on convergences and resolve the divergences.

3. Hiranmay Karlekar, "The Terrorism that Stalks Bangladesh", *Global Asia*, vol 3 (8) Spring 2008.

The visit of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India in January 2010, opened up the panorama of cooperation.⁴ Both sides signalled keenness to grasp the window of limitless opportunity that was waiting. The two neighbours took a leap of faith with the joint communiqué that was signed during the visit. The promise of shared prosperity would become the cornerstone of Indo-Bangladeshi ties from then onwards. India was keen to offer its vast and easily available market by seeking better economic ties with Bangladesh and its other neighbours, and developing strong integrated economies. This was soon followed up by the Indian prime minister's visit to Dhaka in 2011 that resulted, amongst others, in the Protocol to the Agreement Concerning the Demarcation of the Land Boundary, though the actual land boundary agreement came about in 2015 and was realised in the subsequent years. While the maritime boundary was resolved through a UN arbitration council in 2014, India and Bangladesh signed the land boundary agreement, facilitating the handing over by India of 111 enclaves (17,160.63 acres) to Bangladesh and, in turn, receiving 51 enclaves (7,110.02 acres) from Bangladesh. A long pending Bangladeshi demand was finally addressed after nearly four decades.

It was hoped that the full implementation of the joint communiqué would address the trust deficit that existed between the neighbours. They began to view each other through the larger lenses of partnership, growth, progress and development. Thus, the journey over the last seven years has been able to sketch out an increasingly deepening engagement trajectory. The governments on both sides want to showcase their bilateral partnership in the region. The political leaders on both sides appear invested with each other and gradually have been able to widen the bilateral scope to even include defence ties in recent times. The development of large and small infrastructure projects, trade facilitation, cross-border linkages and security cooperation are some the salient features of this evolving relationship.

4. Joint communiqué issued on the occasion of the visit to India of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, prime minister of Bangladesh January 10, 2010, at the Ministry of External Affairs, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/3452/Joint+Communique+is+sued+on+the+occasion+of+the+visit+to+India+of+Her+Excellency+Sheikh+Hasina+Prime+Minister+of+Bangladesh>. Accessed on August 1, 2017.

The latest visit by Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Delhi this April, witnessed the signing of 22 agreements covering defence, nuclear energy, cyber security and the media, and including a 500 US\$ million line of credit towards defence purchases. The inclusion of the defence sector has generated some doubts and uneasiness, and in the words of a Bangladeshi commentator "... Dhaka see India's insistence on this deal as a move to counter the Bangladesh Armed Forces' growing dependence on China. They recognise that China has emerged as a major supplier of arms to the Bangladesh Army and that makes India uncomfortable."⁵ India and Bangladesh have seen huge progress in connectivity, power, trade and commerce, health, education and cultural exchanges, but there is scepticism about the latest defence agreement. A defence cooperation agreement with an important neighbour would be a useful component but given the past lack of trust adversely affecting the bilateral relations, rushing into a new area of cooperation which had been off limits for long, will have its limitations. While much of the bilateral differences have been ironed out in the past three years, with the exception of the sharing of the water of the river Teesta, Bangladesh's impatience over the lack of resolution is apparent. The other issue of distress is the Indian decision to embargo the cattle trade across the border. For many years, there has existed a well organised cattle corridor from different parts of India into Bangladesh, augmenting both its food and leather industries. This restriction not only has a direct adverse impact on the local Bangladeshi population but has also taken away the livelihoods of a large number of farmers. In the absence of any alternative measures, the decision appears harsh.

LOOKING AHEAD

The two neighbours have been able to consolidate their relationship considerably but as we have seen in the past, the presence of a non-Awami League government in Dhaka has inhibited the bilateral relations. For the bilateral ties to become irreversible, the tangible benefits of engaging with India have to percolate to the ground. The

5. Rezaul Karim, "India's Proposed Defence Pact: Dhaka Uneasy," *The Daily Star* March 15, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/indias-proposed-defence-pact-dhaka-uneasy-1376179>. Accessed on August 1, 2017.

benefits of trade, including energy, and the massive connectivity projects which are underway will enable Bangladesh to have greater access to India and the region beyond. Indeed, the full implementation of the agreements will enable people across the borders to have greater engagement with each other. The growing bilateral relations will be an impetus for greater regional cooperation and given India's location in the region and its connectivity plans with Southeast Asia Bangladesh will be able to piggyback on many of the projects. Apart from the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) and India Motor Vehicle Agreement, the India, Myanmar, Thailand (IMT) trilateral project will be of great interest to Bangladesh. This 1,400-km highway from Meghalaya will link India directly through the land border to Southeast Asia. Given the opening up of Indo-Bangladesh land, rail, river and sea corridors, Bangladeshi access to the IMT is a possibility. The 15-km railway line connecting Agartala with Akhaura in Bangladesh will be connected to the multi-nation Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) project, of which both India and Bangladesh are members. The highway project that will link Manipur from Jiribam to Moreh on the Myanmar border via Imphal, is underway. The Guwahati-Dhaka road connection is functional too.⁶ Thus, Bangladesh will be able to access Southeast Asia through seamless passenger and cargo movement with the implementation of the infrastructural projects underway in India. IMT will enable India to link itself and the entire sub-region of BBIN to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). The BIMSTEC connectivity initiative will indeed be the bridge between South and Southeast Asia. Thus, the bilateral relations in India's neighbourhood have progressed to a large sub-regional and regional engagement. Once all the planned cross-border connectivity projects are implemented, the possibility of policy reversal will be difficult. But for that to be effective, timely execution of the projects is most critical. The Indian track record on this count is dismal and only urgent remedial measures can ensure execution of fully functional connectivity projects and India becoming the bridge between South and Southeast Asia.

6. Sharmistha Mukherjee, "Sub-regional Road Connectivity Pacts: From 'Looking East' to Linking East," *Indian Express*, July 1, 2015, at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/sub-regional-road-connectivity-pacts-from-looking-east-to-linking-east/>. Accessed on August 1, 2017.

INDIA-SRI LANKA BILATERAL RELATIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA: CHALLENGES AND FUTURE SCENARIO

SAMATHA MALLEMPATI

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental principle of India's foreign policy has been to promote its national interests. This was done through bilateral, trilateral and multilateral engagements. In recent years, through the "neighbourhood first policy", the government has been trying to engage with the neighbouring countries at the political, economic, security, developmental and cultural levels. In the past two years, the developments which took place between India and its neighbours, particularly with Sri Lanka, indicate that domestic political and economic scenarios, external factors and issues of common concern are some of the factors that are influencing cooperation between the two countries. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyse India's engagement with Sri Lanka under the National Unity Government (NUG) of Sri Lanka led by President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe, the implications for India-Sri Lanka relations, and the challenges that exist in the present and future scenarios.

Dr. Samatha Mallempati is a Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi.

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent the views of ICWA.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

As in the past, India's relations with Sri Lanka have continued at the political level with the number of high profile visits of heads of state/ministers. For example, "the Indian Prime Minister visited Sri Lanka in March 2015 and in May 2017 and the Sri Lanka President chose India as his first official foreign trip destination in February 2015, followed by his working visit in May 2016".¹ The Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe's visits to India in September 2015, October 2016, and April 2017, were used to discuss issues of common concern. External Affairs Minister of India Ms. Sushma Swaraj also visited Sri Lanka in February 2016. These visits helped in continuation of India's bilateral engagement at various levels, despite the turbulent internal politics.

The main challenge with regard to India-Sri Lanka relations is dealing with the fragile political system that prevails in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's nearly three decades of ethnic conflict had weakened the state institutions as the state laws were used to discriminate on the basis of religion and ethnicity. This led to 30 years of war between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which claimed to represent the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamil minority. The war ended with the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009.

The formation of the NUG in Sri Lanka in 2015, led by President Maithripala Sirisena, was a positive development. The government was formed by the two rival Sinhala political parties, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and United National Party (UNP) following a bipartisan approach. Another positive development was that the minority party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), extended its support to the government. Good governance, restoration of democracy and reconciliation were the promises made during the formation of the NUG. After coming to power, the GOSL had taken a few initiatives based on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Resolution in 2015, titled "Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka".²

1. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Working Visit of President of Sri Lanka to India (May 13-14, 2016)", *Press Information Bureau*, May 12, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145306>. Accessed on July 12, 2017.
2. Human Rights Council, Thirteenth Session, Agenda 2, "30/... Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka", Lanka <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G15/220/93/PDF/G1522093.pdf?OpenElement>. Accessed on July 1, 2017.

The UNHRC Resolution was significant as it asked the GOSL to introduce transparent institutional reforms in the security and legal sectors; measures for demilitarisation; repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA); legislation to criminalise war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity without statute of limitation; develop a national reparation policy in consultation with the victims and their families; and, most importantly, the GOSL to institute an international investigation into the human rights violations that had occurred before and during the Eelam War IV in 2009, along with accountability mechanisms.³ In line with the election promises and based on the UNHRC recommendations, the NUG initiated various national reconciliation measures such as amendments to the Constitution, drafting of the new Constitution and various institutional changes. Some of these initiatives were;

- Introduction of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution that restored independent commissions such as the Human Rights Commission.⁴
- For the first time, public views were elicited on issues related to Constitution drafting through the Public Representation Committee.⁵
- The government appointed a Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM). The four reconciliation mechanisms that came under the purview of the secretariat were: Office of Missing Persons; Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence Commission; Judicial Mechanism; and Office of Reparations.
- A Consultation Task Force (CTF) on Reconciliation Mechanisms was appointed⁶ and six sub-committees on constitutional

3. "Comprehensive Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Sri Lanka", September 28, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/LKIndex.aspx>. Accessed on July 2, 2017.

4. Parliament of Sri Lanka, "19th Amendment to the Constitution" Passed in Parliament", 28 April 2015, <https://www.parliament.lk/en/news-en/view/1045?category=6>. Accessed on July 17, 2017.

5. See "Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms", <http://www.yourconstitution.lk/>

6. Government of Sri Lanka "Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms", Press Statement on February 16, 2016.

reforms submitted their reports to the Constituent Assembly (CA) (Parliament) in November 2016.⁷

The reports submitted by the above mechanisms after public consultations indicate that a number of differences still exist on important political as well as constitutional issues among the political parties, including the Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil parties. For example, the Joint Opposition (JO) led by Rajapaksa opposed the sub-committee's report recommendations that were made after consulting the public in all the 25 districts of Sri Lanka. He particularly opposed the proposals pertaining to "devolution of powers and the granting of greater political autonomy to the provinces".⁸

The recommendations of the CTF were significant as these proposed changes to the present constitutional structure such as on the nature of the state, land rights to PCs, and proposed Tamil as an official language. The report also asked the government to develop a policy to reduce regional disparities, and stressed on the need to have international and national personnel on the reconciliation mechanisms. Here again, there is no consensus as the government and Tamil parties differ on the involvement of foreign personnel in the justice mechanisms. This may delay justice to the victims of the war. According to the UN, nearly 40,000 Sri Lankan Tamils lost their lives during the war in 2009.

The question is whether the GOSL is willing to implement the recommendations of the various commissions it has constituted as well as the UN's, and whether, it will be able to take all the parties along with it in the national rebuilding process. The procedure proposed to adopt a new Constitution will take time as it has to be passed through a national referendum. Given the ethnic composition of Sri Lanka, it is going to be a complicated exercise.

7. Government of Sri Lanka, "Final Report of the Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms", <http://www.scrm.gov.lk/documents-reports>. Accessed on July 10, 2017.

8. "Mahinda Slams Sub-committee Proposals for new Constitution", *DailyFT*, December 5, 2016, <http://www.ft.lk/article/584024/Mahinda-slams-sub-committee-proposals-for-new-constitution>. Accessed on July 18, 2017.

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION OF SRI LANKA

India's response to the internal political situation in Sri Lanka has been cautious. India's role was an election issue in 2015 and the political parties had mobilised, and continue to mobilise, people, on pro-India and anti-India platforms. For example, "former President Rajapaksa accused India for his defeat in the 2015 presidential elections".⁹ In response to the domestic situation in recent years, India took a stand that "the solution to the ethnic issue should be a negotiated political settlement, acceptable to all the communities of Sri Lanka, including the Tamil community".¹⁰ This approach may be based on the premise that consensus on domestic solutions achieved through negotiations between rival parties will stabilise the political and economic conditions in the neighbourhood. This approach is in contrast to the approach India has followed in Sri Lanka in the past, when it was involved directly, resulting in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987. Therefore, in the post war scenario, attempts were made to improve bilateral ties through continuous economic and developmental assistance.

ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The absence of war has improved India's economic ties with Sri Lanka. For instance, according to the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of India, India's exports to Sri Lanka increased from US \$ 4,534 million during 2013-14 to US \$ 6,704 million during 2014-15. However, the trade imbalance has been an issue of concern. As far as investment is concerned, India is "one of the major investors in Sri Lanka, with cumulative investments of nearly US \$ 1 billion since 2003".¹¹ Various Indian companies have investments in Sri Lanka such as Tata, ITC and Dabur.¹² Sri Lanka's investment in India has

9. "Rajapaksa Blames India for his Election Defeat", *The Times of India*, March 13, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/Rajapaksa-blames-India-for-his-election-defeat/articleshow/46556878.cms>. Accessed on July 11, 2017.

10. Q.No.1298, Killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka, December 11, 2015, Raja Sabha, Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Gen.(Dr). V.K. Singh (Retd).

11. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Sri Lanka, Bilateral Brief", December 2016, https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Sri_Lanka_December_2016.pdf. Accessed on June 27, 2017.

12. Ibid.

also increased in recent years and one example is the “setting up of the US\$ 1 billion garment city in Vishakhapatnam by the Sri Lankan company Brandix.”¹³

India is providing development assistance to Sri Lanka, taking into account the needs of the conflict affected regions. Relief, rehabilitation, health, education and capacity building are some of the priority areas. Sri Lanka is one of the “major recipients of development credit given by the Government of India, with a total commitment of US\$2.6 billion, including US\$ 436 million as grants.”¹⁴ India is involved in building infrastructure in the northeastern and central parts of Sri Lanka and India’s housing project is one such example. India is constructing 50, 000 houses and the Indian prime minister in his May 2017 visit, announced the construction of an additional 10,000 houses in the central province.¹⁵ In the education sector, India offers scholarships for students under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Scheme (ITEC).

The convergence of interests on the need for enhanced economic cooperation had brought positive results, but various challenges remain in the bilateral relations.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

There are a few issues of concern in the bilateral relations and both countries are trying to find amicable solutions for them. Recent domestic reactions and responses on issues such as the implementation of UN recommendations, the fishermen’s issue, on the signing of the Economic Technical Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) and on implementing and expanding India’s investments in Sri Lanka indicate the same.

Implementation of UN Recommendations

The main challenge in bilateral relations would be regarding the extent to which the GOSL is going to implement the UN recommendations.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Address by Prime Minister to the Indian Origin Tamil Community in Dickoya”, May 12, 2017, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28458/Address+by+Prime+Minister+to+the+India+n+Origin+Tamil+Community+in>. Accessed on July 9, 2017.

The UN had given two more years to Sri Lanka in March 2017 to implement the recommendations despite the appeal by the Sri Lankan Tamil parties not to do the same.¹⁶ Recent statements by the Sri Lankan president suggest that “the government will go ahead with the Constitution drafting which will grant extensive autonomy to Tamils concentrated in the island’s northern and eastern regions to prevent a repeat of a bloody separatist conflict that claimed 100,000 lives between 1972 and 2009.”¹⁷ The statement was a positive move to appease the fears of the Tamil minority. Meanwhile, the position taken by the government was opposed by the Buddhist clergy, who have significant influence on the majority Sinhala population. The signing of the Gazette on the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) by the president in July 2017 was another positive move.¹⁸ However, there are reports which suggest that the torture and illegal detention of Tamils continue as also militarisation in the conflict affected north and east of the country.¹⁹ Differences over how much power should be dissolved to the provinces and the merger of the northern and eastern provinces will also act as impediments in the adoption of a new Constitution. Some of the “Sri Lankan Tamil parties are expecting India’s help to resolve the issue of devolution and may influence the parties in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu to put pressure on the Indian government to intervene in the matter.”²⁰ The presence of large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the state is also acting as a pressure point, along with the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), mostly Tamils, in Sri Lanka.

16. “Do Not Give Sri Lanka More Time –Tna MPs Tell UN”, *Colombo Telegraph*, March 6, 2017, <https://www.colombo-telegraph.com/index.php/do-not-give-sri-lanka-more-time-tna-tells-un/>. Accessed on June 26, 2017.

17. “Sri Lanka Vows Tamil Autonomy Despite Buddhist Resistance” *The Hindu*, 5 July 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-vows-tamil-autonomy-despite-buddhist-resistance/article19216725.ece>. Accessed on July 13, 2017.

18. “OMP Gazette Signed, UN, US, Canada Hail Move”, *Colombo Gazette*, July 20, 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/07/20/omp-gazette-signed-un-us-canada-hail-move/>. Accessed on July 22, 2017.

19. “Abduction, Torture of Tamils Remain Systematic: Sooka”, *The Island*, July 16, 2017, http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=168413. Accessed on July 20, 2017.

20. Balachandran.P.K, “EPRLF Tells Jai Shanker Political Solution is a Sine Qua Non for Economic Development”, *The Indian Express*, January 20, 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2017/feb/20/EPRLF-tells-Jai-Shanker-Political-Solution-is-a-sine-qua-non-for-Economic-Development.html>. Accessed on July 11, 2017.

Fishermen's Issue

The Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) is trying to find a permanent solution to the fishermen's issue, and India and Sri Lanka held ministerial level talks in January 2017. Both sides agreed on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) such as the release of the arrested fishermen; ensuring no loss of life or physical harm while apprehending the fishermen; and periodic interaction between the coast guards of the two countries.²¹ Since it is a livelihood issue, these measures have not stopped the crossing of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), particularly by Indian fishermen, and subsequent arrests and confiscation of boats by the Sri Lankan Navy. For example, "in 2016 alone, 222 Indian fishermen were arrested by Sri Lanka."²² Even though the Sri Lankan government had released all the fishermen in the same year due to the already agreed CBMs, the continuation of arrests is leading the Indian state of Tamil Nadu to repeatedly request the Indian government to solve the issue and "ensure the immediate release of fishermen, including 141 boats in Sri Lankan custody."²³

As far as the Sri Lankan side is concerned, the war has deprived many Sri Lankan Tamils of their livelihood—fishing is a basic livelihood activity for many. Sri Lanka, in the past, had urged India to "expeditiously" end unsustainable industrial-scale fishing in the coastal waters between the two countries."²⁴ The Indian side has assured Sri Lanka that "the bottom trawling would be phased out gradually keeping in mind the capacity building of the fishermen and diversification of fishing activities."²⁵ These measures will have to be implemented to avoid confrontations at sea.

21. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Sri Lanka Joint Press Communiqué on Ministerial Level Talks on Fishermen Issues", January 2, 2017, http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27888/IndiaSri_Lanka_Joint_Press_Communique_on_Ministerial_level_talks_on_fishermen_issues. Accessed on July 3, 2017.

22. "Sri Lanka Wants an End to Bottom Trawling", *The Hindu*, November 7, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Sri-Lanka-wants-an-end-to-bottom-trawling/article16438517.ece>. Accessed on July 10, 2017.

23. Vankipuram Meera, "Arrest of Fishermen: Tamil Nadu CM Says Sri Lanka has Scant Respect for Diplomatic Efforts", *The Times of India*, June 26, 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/arrest-of-fishermen-tamil-nadu-cm-says-sri-lanka-has-scant-respect-for-diplomatic-efforts/articleshow/59322543.cms>. Accessed on July 19, 2017.

24. n. 22.

25. n. 21.

The ETCA

Another issue is the signing of the ETCA and both governments are trying to finalise an agreement by the end of this year. The ETCA replaced the earlier Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and proposed to “include trade in services.”²⁶ However, there are sections in Sri Lanka opposed to the agreement such as the business community, the Joint Opposition (JO) and the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP), on the ground that the government does not have a mandate from the public to sign the agreement.²⁷ In this context, how the Sri Lankan government is going to convince various sections regarding the ETCA is a moot question.

Opposition to India’s Investments in Strategic Sectors

In recent months, Sri Lanka witnessed protests over Indian investments in the country. India’s interests in developing Trincomalee as a petroleum hub may be delayed due to apprehensions expressed by the opposition parties. The “Lanka Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC) acquired the China Bay Tankfarm of World War II vintage and obtained a 35-year lease to develop the 850-acre farm that has a total of 99 tanks, each with a capacity of 12,000 kiloliters.”²⁸ Currently, fifteen of these tanks are operational. According to reports, since 2003, LIOC has paid \$100,000 annually to the Sri Lankan government for the lease. India’s keen interest in developing the tankfarm in China Bay has geo-political and strategic significance as “it is the largest tankfarm located between the Middle East and Singapore.”²⁹ Therefore, the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement of 1987 clearly mentioned, “Trincomalee or any other port of Sri Lanka will not be made available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India’s interests and the work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee oil farm will

26. Ramakrishnan T, “Indian Envoy Takes on Sri Lankan Opposition over Economy Pact”, *The Hindu*, March 6, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/indian-envoy-takes-on-sri-lankan-opposition-over-economy-pact/article8319042.ece>. Accessed on June 29, 2017.

27. “JVP Insists Government has no Mandate to Sign CEPA”, *Colombo Gazette*, 24th January 2016, <http://colombogazette.com/2016/01/24/jvp-insists-government-has-no-mandate-to-sign-cepta>. Accessed on July 1, 2017.

28. “Lanka IOC PLC”, [https://www.iocl.com/AboutUs/GroupCompanies\(LIOC\).aspx](https://www.iocl.com/AboutUs/GroupCompanies(LIOC).aspx)

29. *Ibid.*

be undertaken as a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka.”³⁰ The recent strike by all the trade unions of the Sri Lanka Petroleum Corporation against India’s involvement brought to the surface the apprehensions in Sri Lankan society that still exist on India’s political and economic role in Sri Lanka. As far as the Sampur coal power project is concerned, the GOSL has faced opposition ever since it was originally proposed in 2006 due to issues about land clearance and pollution. The Sri Lankan government cancelled the proposal and instead offered to put up a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant in the area.³¹

Security Concerns

Maritime security and safety, as both countries realise, would pave the way for increased trade and tourism. Convergence of interests on various non-traditional security matters such as terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking has also increased the maritime cooperation in recent years. At the same time, India’s keen interest in expanding bilateral relations covering defence and security is based on geographical proximity and the strategic location of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Protecting the sea lanes of communication is another objective. In this context, a Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation Agreement was signed in 2011 among India, Sri Lanka and Maldives and maritime exercises named DOSTI are conducted on a regular basis. India and Sri Lanka are member states of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Priority areas of IORA such as tourism, trade, blue economy, fisheries management and gender empowerment are in line with the national policies of the two governments.

The increasing roles and interests of external actors in the IOR comprise a concern for India due to the direct security threat these pose to India’s security. The convergence of the interests of both countries in this domain is a challenging task, given the divergent strategic and economic interests in the IOR. Here, the role of extra-

30 “Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka”, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/indo_srilanks_agreement.htm

31. “Sri Lanka Cancels India-Built 500 MW Coal Power Plant Deal, Pitches LNG Plant Instead”, *Economic Times*, May 18, 2016, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/52323705.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst. Accessed on July 9, 2017.

regional players comes into focus due to the opportunities the island state gets by cooperating with other maritime powers. Sri Lanka is also “keen to emerge as an economic and strategic hub in the IOR.”³² The import-based economy of Sri Lanka will always look for external sources, which may or may not affect the security of India.

For instance, the apprehensions expressed by the present Sri Lankan leadership over China’s role during the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015 withered away gradually and the GOSL renegotiated a deal with China—the Colombo Port City Project (worth US \$ 1.4 billion). Sri Lanka’s support to China’s Belt and Road initiative and its interest in implementing the Strategic Cooperative Partnership are other examples. China is also investing heavily in constructing the Hambantota port (US \$ 5 billion with 80 per cent ownership, 99 years lease), conducting joint naval exercises and providing military assistance as also coastal patrol vessels. There is also another angle to the China-Sri Lanka maritime cooperation. Thirty years of ethnic war had drained the Sri Lankan economy and the country is increasingly looking for avenues for economic cooperation and investments. For instance, “Sri Lanka’s external debt is US\$ 44,797 million and a major part of it is taken from China.”³³

Apart from China, the US is also keen on expanding its relations with Sri Lanka which is evident in the high profile visits as well as in partnering with Sri Lanka in the IOR. For instance, in March 2017, “the US-Pacific Partnership exercises were held in Hambantota, the first in South Asian Indian waters.”³⁴ Sri Lanka is part of the Pacific Partnership Mission along with Japan, Australia and US. The US interest in improving its political relations with Sri Lanka was also evident when it co-sponsored the resolution on Sri Lanka in 2015 at the UN. Nevertheless, the US has the strongest military presence in the IOR, which cannot be ignored. Its presence in Diego Garcia

32. “Sri Lankan PM Ranil Wickramasinghe Sees Huge Potential in Cooperation with China”, *Economic Times*, April 10, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sri-lankan-pm-ranil-wickramasinghe-sees-huge-potential-in-cooperation-with-china/articleshow/51764287.cms>. Accessed on July 9, 2017.

33. Central Bank of Sri Lanka data.

34. “Pacific Partnership 2017 will Build Trust Between US and Sri Lanka”, *Daily News*, March 9, 2017, <http://dailynews.lk/2017/03/09/local/109815/%E2%80%98pacific-partnership-2017-will-build-trust-between-us-and-sri-lanka%E2%80%99>. Accessed on July 12, 2017.

and the presence of the US 7th Fleet in the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War are examples of its strategic interests. In this context, Sri Lanka has assured India that cooperation and investments in the maritime field with other countries will not be used against India's security interests.

CONCLUSION

The continuous development and economic cooperation will enhance the bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka. Convergence of interests on policy matters, particularly on security related issues, is driving the present relationship. However, given the above challenges, the future cooperation will depend on the policy decisions both countries are willing to make in dealing with domestic problems as well as in dealing with external relations. The bilateral issues discussed and the responses to these issues within Sri Lanka and India point out that the trust deficit that exists in India- Sri Lanka relations, particularly in Sri Lankan society, is likely to act as a bottleneck. Most importantly, the current state of peace and stability will depend on the progress the Sri Lankan government is willing to show in implementing the UN recommendations as well as the recommendations of reports constituted by the GOSL itself. A stable Sri Lanka is in India's interest, as it would also positively impact the Centre's relations with the state of Tamil Nadu.

INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST PAKISTAN SPONSORED TERROR: CASE STUDY LASHKAR-E-TAYYEBA (LET)

RADHIKA HALDER

India has been facing cross-border terrorism for decades now, and as a nation, it has faced a looming threat from its neighbour, Pakistan. One of the most significant perpetrators behind the terror acts India has been facing is the militant organisation Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) that enjoys unconditional support from the state of Pakistan. LeT operatives have been instrumental in infiltrating the borders of India and have brought along with them, the most lethal weapon – an ideology. This very ideology is the basis of its anti-India activities, as well as the reason behind its support in Pakistan, from the state and the society at large. The activities carried out by the terror outfit in India started with a focus on Kashmir and targeted security personnel and establishments in the Valley. However, with the attack on the Parliament in 2001, it was realised that the LeT had a much larger plan for India in mind. It only went on to confirm the same when it carried out an attack in Mumbai (2008) which lasted for three days and was widely condemned internationally.

The attacks carried out by the LeT have been distinctly unique in the sense that operatives take part in high risk missions with a slim chance of escape. This is because the individuals who participate in the terror attacks outlined by the LeT seldom have any chance of survival and further look forward to death or 'martyrdom'. This

Ms Radhika Halder is a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

makes it difficult to carry out negotiations or engage the group in any interaction to seek a solution to the issues they are fighting for. India's vulnerabilities are used to create certain narratives that make it difficult to fight a terrorist with an influenced mindset.

The objective of this paper is to trace the historical evolution and growth of the LeT in order to understand its anti-India activities. The paper also attempts to assess the organisation's employment of *fidayeen* attacks to grasp the gravity of the threat, especially at a time when suicide terrorism is on the rise in the rest of the world.

LASHKAR-E-TAYYEBA: BIRTH AND EVOLUTION

The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) or Army of the Pure/Righteous is one of the longest surviving anti-India terror outfits. It is part of a much broader organisational structure headed by the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) which was formed in 1985 and was formerly known as Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI). The MDI was formed in Lahore by a group of scholars and clerics of the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought within Sunni Islam. This sect emphasises on purifying Islam by adherence to the *Sharia* law. It seeks to revive Islam solely based on the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. Ahl-e-Hadith followers are known to strictly abide by the sayings of the Prophet. The MDI comprised Ahl-e-Hadith clergy looking to unite the community by bringing together smaller Ahl-e-Hadith groups.¹ In trying to achieve this, members of the group would deliver lectures and preach Ahl-e-Hadith ideology, along with physical training, in various mosques and prayer halls. In such lectures, the ills of democracy were explained and the need to wage *jihad* justified.

The MDI was formed by a group of people who had a significant role in the Afghan War post the Soviet invasion in 1979. After the *Mujahideen* were successful in ousting the Soviets, most felt that the same should be done in other lands where Muslims were being treated unjustly. The victory in Afghanistan was seen as a boost that motivated the fighters and leader such as Osama bin Laden who went on to create Al Qaeda and took on the ultimate rival, the United States

1. D. Suba Chandran and Rekha Chakravarthi, "Lashkar-e-Toiba", in Arpita Anant, ed., *Non-State Armed Groups in South Asia: A Preliminary Structured Focused Comparison* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press: 2012), pp. 245-262.

of America. Similarly, the founder members of the MDI established their headquarters at Muridke, a town north of Lahore, and shifted its focus to the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Further, they set up several training camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and launched their activities in Indian administered Kashmir in the early 1990s.²

Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI): The Parent Organisation

The MDI performs three main functions which work towards achieving its main agenda of waging *jihad* or holy war in Kashmir and the rest of India. The first objective is *dawa* which translates into “preaching” and comprises the missionary work. The next is *khidmat* or provision of social services. And, lastly, *jihad*, meaning holy war. These are the three categories of activities that are funded by the MDI. Thus, the group categorises itself into three parts, corresponding to each objective of the organisation. *Dawa* includes the goal of coming together of the Ahl-e-Hadith community and conversion from other sects of Islam to the former. These duties are carried out by a network of religious institutions such as mosques and *madrassas*; various publications and manuals; along with annual congregations. The second aspect is *khidmat* or social welfare, which is undertaken with the help of trusts, donations, charities, disaster relief work, emergency support, etc. The third part is *jihad* which uses extreme violent means to achieve strategic objectives. These include recruitment, training and procurement of equipment.³

As a result of this categorisation of activities, the JuD behaves like an umbrella organisation consisting of various departments under it. Each department then corresponds to either one of the activities charted out by the MDI – *dawa*, *khidmat* or *jihad*. Some of these are the Departments of Education, Health, Women, Martyrs’ and the LeT, which is the militant wing of the organisation. In this manner, there are two kinds of members within the MDI who worked mutually to shape the cadres’ training in accordance with their agenda. One

-
2. Arif Jamal, *Call for Transnational Jihad: Lashkar-e-Taiba 1985-2014*, (AvantGarde Books, 2014).
 3. C. Christine Fair, “Lashkar’s Empire of Jihad”, *India Today*, September 11, 2015. Available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/the-lashkars-empire-of-jihad/1/470905.html>. Last Accessed on July 24, 2017.

is that of the *ulema*, consisting of learned and scholarly people who are known to have in-depth and specialised knowledge of Islamic law and theology. The second unit is that of the *jihadist* agenda. They focus primarily on physical training and consist of people like Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal who are better equipped for guiding recruits on how to wage *jihad*.⁴

As happens with most groups consisting of two clearly defined units, there was an immense power struggle between the two. The *jihadist* unit had started growing stronger between 1987 and 1992. It won critical support from the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency to advance their *jihadist* agenda in return for taking part in *jihad* in what they saw as Indian Administered Kashmir. Eventually, the members of the *ulema* group slowly left, making space for Hafiz Saeed to rise as the head of the organisation. It was this militant unit of the MDI which became its military offshoot, forming the LeT, headquartered in the Kunar province of Afghanistan. The ideology and objectives of both remained the same, so much so that the line of distinction between the MDI and LeT became blurred under Saeed's leadership, beginning from 1993. He also renamed the organisation Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) in the wake of sanctions imposed by President Bush against the LeT, designating it as a terrorist organisation.

Lashkar-e-Tayyeba: The Militant Wing

The Lashkar is arguably more dedicated to *dawa* than any other Pakistani *jihadi* outfit, in line with Saeed's commitment to non-violent reformism in Pakistan. *Dawa* includes the construction of *madrassas* or religious schools and mosques in line with the JuD's vision and worldview. The *madrassas* in Pakistan have been deeply influenced by *Wahabism* and have succeeded in filling the vacuum in Pakistan's educational system. In the 1970s, different Islamic schools of thought started introducing their *madrassas*, most of which were funded by the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *Wahabism* propounds strict abidance to the medieval religious code and advocates forceful conversion as well as elimination of all varieties of religious syncretism. Thus, it rejects all forms of Western liberal influence and is also opposed to Shia Muslims. Saudi Arabia

4. Fair, n.3.

is known to have backed radical *Wahabism* in Pakistan and Central Asia, and devoted resources to religious propagation.⁵

As a result of this, there was hardly any scope for critical thinking and learning, making the children studying in such *madrassas* highly susceptible to propaganda and militant sectarianism. These were the breeding grounds of young fanatics who were easily convinced to participate in suicide missions. The *madrassas* run by the JuD were no different. They exploited the impressionable minds of young children to make them believe in their ideology in the name of welfare and education or *khidmat*. It led to the creation of generations of potential militants blinded by their cause to wage *jihād* against India.

With respect to Kashmir, Saeed's thoughts were clear and he was quite vocal about them. He did not believe in politics and only regarded *jihād* as the basis of Islamic politics. The group's stance on Kashmir was publicised through publications, website bulletins and CDs. The stance was four-pronged: first, India had illegally occupied Kashmir during Partition; second, Kashmiri Muslims had the right to decide their political future; third, the fight for freedom was their legitimate right as they were denied their right to self-determination; and fourth, Pakistan must support the freedom struggle in Kashmir.⁶ In this sense, Saeed was an influential leader whose opinions and thoughts resonated with each of the JuD members.

It is often believed that the ISI created the MDI in order to advance its own agenda with respect to India and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. However, this would be a wrong conclusion. The MDI was formed in 1985 and launched its first mission in Kashmir in 1990 when a jeep was ambushed by its operatives targeting Indian Air Force personnel who were travelling to Srinagar airport.⁷ In the Kashmir Valley, the LeT carried out activities such as attacks and raids on army camps, beheading and ambushing Indian soldiers, and launching

5. TV Paul, *The Warrior State* (London: Oxford University Press: 2014), pp.143-144; and Yoginder Sikand, "Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of the Lashkar-i Tayyeba", *South Asia Citizens Web*, November 20, 2003. Available at <http://www.sacw.net/DC/CommunalismCollection/ArticlesArchive/sikand20Nov2003.html>. Accessed on June 20, 2017.

6. Wilson John, *The Caliphate's Soldiers: The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba's Long War* (New Delhi, Amaryllis: 2011), pp. 67-93 and Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (New Delhi: Hachette India: 2011), pp. 33-44.

7. Jamal, n. 2.

attacks against Indian security personnel, a common phenomenon in the 1990s. This did not go unnoticed by the Pakistani authorities, especially the Pakistan Army and the ISI. The Pakistani state, from its inception in 1947, has followed a military strategy of covert warfare against India. This includes the infiltration of locals, mixed with regular troops, against the Indian regime and its stance on Kashmir. Pakistan feels that the state of Jammu and Kashmir should have been acceded to it in view of the Muslim majority in Kashmir, the basis on which the state of Pakistan was created. Thus, Pakistan's systematic strategy against the Valley has been guided by the pursuit of accession. The subsequent wars it fought with India have been over Kashmir and have witnessed the involvement of non-state proxies.⁸

Pakistan has had a spate of military coups and witnessed various forms of government since 1947. With the coming of each government, a steady process of Islamisation has taken place in its political domain. While religion was the very basis for the founding of the state of Pakistan, its military also used religion as a driving force to unite the army. The concept of *jihad* as religiously sanctioned war to protect the Muslim Brotherhood or *umma* has traditionally persisted in South Asia. The Pakistan Army followed the same principle in effect, supporting non-state proxies and militants, reinforcing the interpretation of Pakistan as an Islamic vanguard responsible for protecting Muslims beyond its borders. This was accompanied by an anti-Hindu discourse predominant in Pakistan, making India an immediate target. Thus, the LeT fitted into the broader strategic agenda of the Pakistan Army as it was always motivated by a pan-Islamist rationale for *jihad* and was focussed on India.⁹

The LeT was able to carry out terrorist attacks in India with the help of the training camps and safe houses that it had managed to establish, supported by the ISI and local groups. This support not only helped it in infrastructure development but further equipped it with advanced weapons and ammunition. This encouraged the LeT to devise plans that spanned the rest of India as well. The first strike on the capital of the country by the LeT was at the Red Fort in December 2000, when

8. Shalini Chawla, *Pakistan's Military and its Strategy* (New Delhi: Knowledge World: 2009), pp. 155-205.

9. Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba* (New Delhi: Hachette India, 2011), p. 37.

two people were killed and one was seriously wounded.

The LeT is credited for having initiated the strategy of *fidayeen* (suicide squad) attacks in J&K.¹⁰ Among some of the major attacks that the LeT has been charged with are the Parliament attack in 2001, car bombings, pressure cooker bombs placed in buses, trains, and market areas of Mumbai and New Delhi in 2002-03 and the most devastating attack which lasted for three days in the city of Mumbai on November 26, 2008. Apart from these attacks, it has orchestrated several incidents of ambush targeting the security establishments and personnel in various towns of J&K.

The *fidayeen* attacks that the LeT was instrumental in bringing to India comprise a unique form of terrorist attacks. The nature of these attacks is very different from the suicide attacks perpetrated by most terror outfits. This can be illustrated with the help of the LeT's Mumbai attacks wherein the group coordinated bombing and shooting attacks against multiple targets across Mumbai which included the Taj Hotel, a restaurant frequented by foreigners, a hospital and a Jewish Centre.¹¹ The Mumbai attacks were among the most well orchestrated and lethal attacks organised by the LeT. Since its inception, it had not carried out attacks on such a large scale. The manner in which the attacks were carried out and the spirit of the operatives during the mission posed a pressing challenge for India. The terrorists carrying out the attacks were armed with sophisticated weaponry including AK 47S and were blatantly firing at innocent civilians with brutality in Mumbai's most frequently visited and iconic spots. Given these circumstances, it was clear that the terrorists had very little hope of survival. For them, survival was an afterthought and no escape plan had been put in place. Thus, *fidayeen* attacks can be termed as 'suicidal' attacks in which the terrorists prefer death to being captured.¹²

10. "Lashkar-e-Taiba", South Asia Terrorism Portal, Available at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist_outfits/lashkar_e_toiba.htm Last Accessed on June 27, 2017.

11. "Lashkar-e-Taiba, Mapping Militant Organisations", Stanford University. Available at <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/79#attacks>. Last accessed on June 27, 2017.

12. Suba Chandran, "Profiling the Fidayeen Attacks: Suicide and Suicidal Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir", *IPCS*. Available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/suicide-terrorism-in-jammu-kashmir/profiling-the-fidayeen-attacks-suicide-and-suicidal-terrorism-in-jammu-1713.html>. Accessed on June 25, 2017.

A *fidayeen* attack is known to be a form of suicide attack wherein the perpetrator fights until his/her death and aims to cause the maximum amount of damage to the target before such death.¹³ The state of J&K and the Kashmir Valley in particular, has seen a huge number of *fidayeen* attacks in the last three years. Further, the year 2016 seems to have witnessed the highest number of casualties within the security forces in the region.¹⁴ The ultimate goal of LeT cadres is to achieve *shahadat* or what can be termed as martyrdom. Thus, while on their missions, they attempt to escape if they have not been overpowered in order to return home and prepare for more such missions. Escape is not attempted out of cowardice, because their ultimate and eventual goal is death.

Fidayeen attacks proved to be instrumental in serving two main purposes: strategic motives and ideological objectives. The main reasons behind the employment of such attacks are as given below:

Strategic Motives

- *Assured Destruction*: It is a known fact that a *fidayeen* attack is bound to cause greater damage when compared to a hit and run or stand-off fire assault. This is primarily due to the assured destruction that such an attack will cause, with the *fidayees* expecting to die and having “nothing to lose” during the attack.
- *Attention*: Such attacks are extensively covered by the media, enabling the terror outfits to effectively spread fear and terror in the public psyche, both in the affected regions and in other parts of the world.
- *Penetration of Secure Areas*: What must also be realised is that the targets that groups such as the LeT aim to strike against are extremely well guarded. *Fidayeen* attacks are known to be more effective in such areas as they can penetrate those areas and cause maximum damage before eventually being overpowered.

13. Ayush Puthran, “Gurdaspur Terror Attack: All you Need to Know About Fidayeen Attack”, India.com, July 27, 2015. Available at <http://www.india.com/news/india/gurdaspur-terror-attack-all-you-need-to-know-about-fidayeen-attack-478371/>. Accessed on June 23, 2017.

14. Vivek Chadha, “Countering Fidayeen Attacks”, *Policy Brief*, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, December 15, 2016. Available at: http://www.idsa.in/policybrief/countering-fidayeen-attacks_vchadha_151216. Accessed on June 21, 2017.

Ideological Objectives

While the strategic motives behind *fidayeen* attacks can be gauged through their effectiveness, it becomes vital to understand the nature of recruitment for such attacks. The principle binding factor at the bottom of it all remains the ideology. Both organisations were involved in preaching and *jihad* and while suicide terrorism comes under the category of *jihad*, it cannot be understood in isolation. Preaching has an equal, if not greater, role to play in *fidayeen* attacks. Most *fidayees* are young boys like Ajmal Kasab who belong to either Pakistan or PoK and have gone through intense training and educational programmes, facilitating their belief in the “cause” for which they willingly carry out such attacks. Setting up of mosques, *madrassas* and schools in order to preach an extreme and aggressive form of *Wahabism* makes *jihad* more than just an ideology. It becomes a general preconceived notion within the community that surrounds such establishments. Thus, *jihad* became an inescapable route for young boys to take up due to heavy concentration of such infrastructure in these regions. What added to this was the fact that the handlers and recruiters were always on the lookout for potentially vulnerable boys for indoctrination. Most of them were promised money, women, and paradise in the afterlife as well as the honour of martyrdom after their death. These boys would succumb to the temptation of having better prospects in an afterlife, especially when their present life did not seem to be very hopeful. Needless to say, the regions from which *fidayees* are recruited have been facing violence or some degree of tension for decades. Thus, the average life of the youth does not hold many promising prospects for the future. In such an atmosphere, the LeT and other *jihadi* groups, with their narrative, seem like the only ray of hope.

In addition to this, the philanthropic activities of these terror outfits, particularly LeT, help garner support by families that are willing to send their children or relatives for indoctrination and training. Most poor and needy families are known to fall prey to the narrative of such groups. The social work that the groups carry out not only legitimises the cause of such organisations but further, often generates indebtedness of the community towards the outfits.

Thus, *fidayeen* attacks are a result of vulnerable communities, massive state sponsoring of terrorism from Pakistan, and strategically motivated terror organisations all bound by a foundation that is based in aggressive and extreme religious ideologies. This complex web of factors makes it compelling for India to shape its counter-terror measures in order to accommodate each of these.

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE CHABAHAR DEAL FOR INDIA AND IRAN

ANU SHARMA

May 2017 marked the completion of one year of India signing the Chabahar (meaning the four seasons in Persian) deal with Iran – which is a deep sea port in Iran. The deal is of strategic importance to India as it would enhance connectivity not only between India and Iran but also between India and Afghanistan, and provide an outlet to Central Asia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed an agreement with Iran to develop two terminals of the Chabahar port. In addition, 11 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed, relating to culture, science and technology. The Chabahar deal enables the two countries to improve their economic ties after the lifting of sanctions on Iran, as part of the Iranian nuclear deal with the P5+1 countries.

India also opened a \$500 million credit line to Iran, in order to develop the port into a regional hub.¹ Iran is expected to benefit more

Ms. Anu Sharma is a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

1. “India-Iran Joint Statement: Civilisational Connect, Contemporary Context”, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), May 23, 2016, http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26843/India__Iran_Joint_Statement_quot_Civilisational_Connect_Contemporary_Contextquot_during_the_visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Iran. Accessed on May 24, 2017; “Modi’s Iran Visit: Key Takeaways”, *The Hindu*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Modis-Iran-visit-key-takeaways/article14335305.ece>. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

from this deal than India, since it will be able to re-join the global community and help the recovery of its crippled economy. Another important stakeholder in this deal is Afghanistan. Afghanistan seeks to renew its ties with India and become less dependent on Pakistan in terms of trade. One of the more important deals signed is the trilateral agreement among India, Iran and Afghanistan, which allows Indian goods to reach Afghanistan through Iran. It should be noted here that these three countries are the main stakeholders in the Chabahar project.² This paper looks into the importance of the Chabahar port for India and Iran, and India's attempts to address its enhanced economic, cultural and diplomatic relations with not only Iran but also with Central Asia in the vicinity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHABAHAR PORT

Chabahar port is an important transit point which, when fully developed, will act as a hub for regional trade, investment and transportation, with links from the Indian Ocean to Central Asia. At the same time, Afghanistan will get politically sustainable connectivity with India. With the removal of the sanctions imposed on Iran, there will be an increase in the Iran-bound trade. Therefore, this port deal can act as an important trade facilitator for India.

Iran invited India in the 1990s to develop the Chabahar port to obtain land access to Afghanistan. India agreed to expand the Chabahar port and to lay a railway track between Chabahar and Zaranj. In 2004, a conglomerate of Indian building companies that included Ashok Leyland Project services, gave shape to an agreement with Tehran to develop Chabahar. Whilst the Delaram-Zaranj road project was promptly completed, the port deal was stalled and ultimately shelved after sanctions were imposed on Iran, amidst the controversy over its nuclear programme.³

Despite the interruptions of the past, in 2016, an MoU regarding the development of Chabahar port was signed between the two

2. Shawn Amirthan, "What are India, Iran and Afghanistan's Benefits from the Chabahar Port Agreement?", *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2017, pp. 87-93.

3. Praveen Swami, "Why the Chabahar Deal is a Rebellion Against History?", *The Indian Express*, May 27, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/narendra-modi-iran-visit-chabahar-port-deal-india-iran-2819249/>. Accessed on June 29, 2017.

countries. The India Ports Global company⁴ has guaranteed handling of 30,000 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units)⁵ ships on completion of two years and eventually reaching a figure of 250,000 TEUs. The berths will be developed at a cost of \$85 million. A container handling facility of 640 m will be constructed and reconstruction of the existing 600 m container handling capability in the second berth will be taken up. All these will be fitted with modern port handling equipment. This would result in the port handling capability of Chabahar being enhanced from 2.5 million tonnes to 8 million tonnes.⁶

Geographically, Chabahar port is a deep sea water port located in the southeastern part of Iran, to the north of the Oman Sea. One of the important features that distinguishes it from other Iranian ports is the access it provides to the international seas. At the same time, Chabahar port provides geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic potential. The location of the port in the north-south and east-west transit corridors serves as a transit getaway as well as a central commercial connectivity point among India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Central Asian nations, Russia, and extending towards Europe (Fig 1).⁷

-
4. India Ports Global is a joint venture between the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Kandla Port Trust, in partnership with Iran's Aria Banader.
 5. The twenty-foot equivalent unit (often TEU or teu) is an inexact unit of cargo capacity often used to describe the capacity of container ships and container terminals.
 6. Bharat Shakti, "Chabahar Port: Strategic Necessity for India", *Iran Daily*, May 30, 2017, <http://www.iran-daily.com/News/193833.html>. Accessed on July 3, 2017.
 7. "Chabahar Port", http://pmo.ir/pso_content/media/files/2017/5/41636.pdf. Accessed on June 5, 2017.

Fig 1: Strategic Location of Chabahar Port for India



Source: Shishir Gupta, "India All Set to Ink Deal to Develop Chabahar Port in Iran," *Hindustan Times*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/india-all-set-to-ink-deal-to-develop-chabahar-port-in-iran/story-eU61l8Ysn7wN9wtkjwR2KP.html>. Accessed on May 22, 2016.

Currently, Chabahar port consists of two port complexes, namely, the Shahid Kalantri port and the Shahid Beheshti port. The Shahid Kalantri port is a traffic port and the vision of the Iranian government for the Shahid Beheshti port is to transform it into a multi-modal (sea, air and land) one, so that it can play the role of a regional port which becomes the hub for all cargo transit.⁸ Chabahar port covers up the inadequacies (discussed later in the paper) of the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas; and once in operation, it will provide competition to Gwadar port, located 72 km away to its east, in Pakistan.⁹

Why is Chabahar Important for India?

With the Chabahar deal, the geo-strategic competition between India and China in West Asia becomes a level playing field. The Chabahar

8. Ibid.

9. Sarah Watson, "Does India's Chabahar Deal Make Sense?", *The Diplomat*, May 24, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/does-indias-chabahar-deal-make-sense/>. Accessed on June 29, 2017.

deal is, therefore, an extremely important strategic step that can help India to get a transit route into Afghanistan and further into Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. India's trade and economic relations in the Central Asian region also depend a lot on Chabahar port because it provides a direct sea-land access for India to reach Central Asia via Iran. The signing of the MoU between India and Iran is expected to give a definitive push to the first phase of Indian investment which is to the tune of about US \$85.21 million for developing and maintaining the two berths of the port for 10 years.¹⁰

The plan to lay the foundation for a new trade route to Central Asia through the deep-water port at Chabahar has been frequently described as a *riposte* to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Chinese-sponsored port at Gwadar. However, for India, it is an opportunity to position itself as a player amidst the established entities in the mainland Asia region and would also provide the means for India to establish an effective economic partnership with Afghanistan. The Indian government went ahead with the port agreement not primarily as a strategic venture but as an economic one that will promote the "unhindered flow of commerce" throughout the region.¹¹ Under the agreement, India Ports Global will refurbish the 640 m container handling facility and reconstruct a 600-m-long container handling facility at the port.¹² As mentioned earlier in the paper, upon completion of the development and upgradation work, agreed to in the May 2016 agreements, Chabahar's capacity will be increased to 8 million tonnes from the current capacity of 2.5 million tonnes. In this respect, Indian commitments to the Iranian infrastructure are projected to be worth around \$635 million, in total,

10. Ashok K. Behuria and M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, "India's Renewed Interests in Chabahar: Need to Stay the Course", *IDS* Issue Brief, May 13, 2015, http://www.ids.in/issuebrief/IndiasRenewedInterestinChabahar_BehuriaRizvi_130515. Accessed on July 3, 2015.
11. n. 7; Question No.432 India-Iran Agreement on Chabahar Port, July 21, 2016, Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No.432, India-Iran Agreement on Chabahar Port, <http://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/27098/QUESTION+NO432+INDIAIRAN+AGREEMENT+ON+CHABAHAR+PORT>. Accessed on July 2, 2017; Question No.*192 Development Of Chabahar Port, March 15, 2017, Lok Sabha Starred Question No.192, Development Of Chabahar Port, <http://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/28138/QUESTION+NO192+DEVELOPMENT+OF+CHABAHAR+PORT>, July 2, 2017.
12. "Mega Investment in Chabahar Port Bolster India-Iran Strategic Partnership", *NDTV*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/mega-investment-in-chabahar-port-bolster-india-iran-strategic-partnership-1409107>. Accessed on July 2, 2017.

as per the agreement signed in May 2016.¹³ It is pertinent to note that the investment is supplemented with a \$150 million credit line to Iran through the EXIM (Export-Import) Bank of India. Along with that, in May 2016, an MoU was also signed regarding the financing of the planned Chabahar-Zahedan railway line as a part of the North-South Transport Corridor by IRCON International (an Indian Railways Construction unit) which will, in turn, help India to connect with Afghanistan and Russia through the rail link.¹⁴

Oil is one of India's main reasons for investing in Chabahar. Before the sanctions were imposed on Iran in 2006, Iran was India's second biggest oil supplier. After the sanctions were imposed, all the transactions were halted and India's relations with Iran suffered a setback. Still, India continued to buy crude oil from Iran throughout the sanctions period. In the absence of normal banking solutions, re-insurance and shipping services, alternative channels had to be worked out. However, as the sanctions have been lifted, India and Iran have reached an arrangement to process pending oil payments to Tehran, unlocking the \$6.4 billion in stalled payments.¹⁵ In the same context, it is hoped that with more banking channels opening up, the remaining balance would be cleared soon.¹⁶

In view of Chabahar as a strategic necessity for India, it can be said that the Indian connect with Iran is also related to neutralisation of the Chinese 'String of Pearls' strategy. In its current strategic move, China had dispatched troops before formally establishing the country's first military base overseas, in Djibouti. Besides this, China is also involved in the development of the ports of Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Sittwe (Myanmar), Feydhoo Finolhu Island (Maldives) and Sanya (China) in order to expand its presence in the Indian Ocean region as part of its 'String of Pearls' strategy (Fig 2).

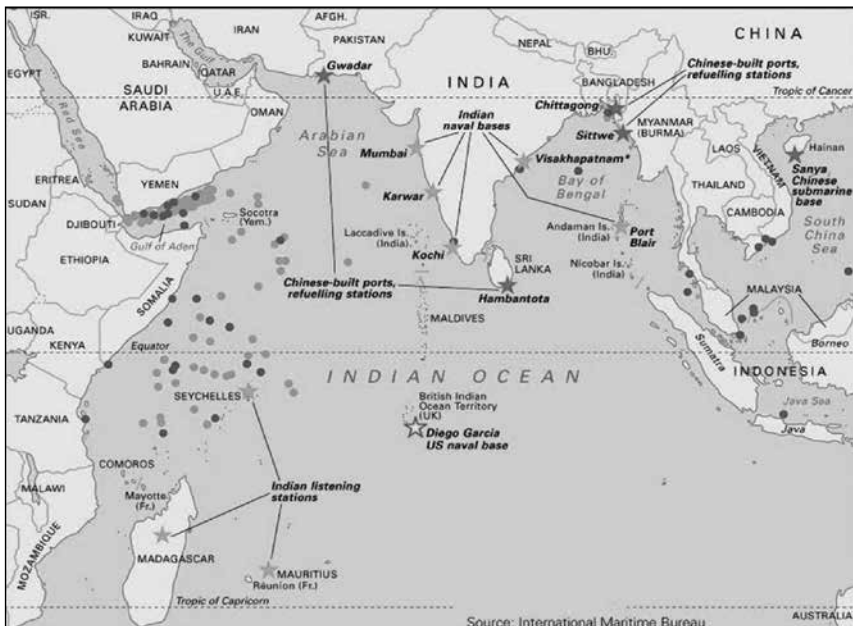
13. Ibid.

14. "Chabahar Port: Strategic Necessity for India", *Hellenic Shipping News*, May 30, 2017, <http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/chabahar-port-strategic-necessity-for-india/>. Accessed on July 6, 2017.

15. Nidhi Verma and Douglas Busvine, "India, Iran Agree to Clear \$6.4 Billion in Oil Payments via European Banks: Pradhan", *Reuters*, May 06, 2016, <http://in.reuters.com/article/india-iran-payment-idINKCN0XX0OU>. Accessed on July 6, 2017.

16. D.P. Srivastava, "India and Iran: Connectivity Matters. Trade and Investment Matters More", *The Wire*, June 2, 2016, <https://thewire.in/39583/india-and-iran-roads-matter-trade-matters-more/>. Accessed on June 30, 2017.

Fig 2: Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean



Source: <https://orientalreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/competition-in-the-Indian-ocean.jpg>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

At present, Pakistan does not allow Indian goods for Afghanistan to pass through its territory. Currently, both India and Iran are playing important strategic roles in Afghanistan. India is taking up capacity building in Afghanistan for which both civil and military efforts are needed. The development of Chabahar port by India provides it with the much needed connectivity and this, in turn, provides multiple strategic options to India in the region to counterweigh both China and Pakistan.¹⁷ This makes the development of Chabahar port a game changer for the region.

However, the delay in the realisation of the deal and the progress of the work has made difficult to complete the project. Many analysts have claimed that the project will most likely be stalled again due to the self-conflicting past of Iran. In the past also, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) had strongly opposed the Chabahar agreement in view of the fact that the IRGC uses this port

17. n. 14.

for shipping weapons to the Houthi rebels in Yemen.¹⁸ Also, India's detention in 2011 of the *Nafis 1*, a vessel that sailed from Chabahar, on the suspicion that it was carrying arms and ammunition for terrorist groups in Somalia, raised the hackles of the Revolutionary Guards.¹⁹

Why is Chabahar Important for Iran?

Chabahar is Iran's only oceanic port which provides it access to the international seas. It is situated in the Gulf of Oman, in close proximity to, but not on, the Strait of Hormuz. Chabahar port is near the Iranian-Pakistani border, referred to as the Sistan-Balochistan province. The Balochi (Sunni) population comprises the dominant group in this region, unlike the Shia majority in the rest of Iran. At present, most of Iran's seaborne trade is handled by Bandar Abbas port, located on the southern coast of Iran in the Persian Gulf. However, the lack of any deep sea water port has become a strategic weakness for Iran. Bandar Abbas, which is located in the congested waters of the Strait of Hormuz, is subjected to constant US naval patrols, adding to Iran's difficulties. However, Chabahar, being located further east, is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean. Once Chabahar becomes operational, it will reduce Iran's dependence on Bandar Abbas, which can benefit Iran in the case of any hostile situation it may face against the Arab countries, such as the initiation of a blockade. At the same time, Iran will get its first deep water port. This will allow the conduct of global trade with big cargo ships rather than the small ships currently being docked in its ports. Thus, Iran continues to rely on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a shipping intermediary, paying millions of dollars as a result; Chabahar will be able to remove this dependence.²⁰

Also, Chabahar port is located in the Sistan-Balochistan province which today accounts for the driest regions in Iran. This province is one of the most underdeveloped, desolate and poorest provinces of Iran. There is a dire need of developmental upliftment in this region.

18. W.P.S Sindhu, "India's Chabahar Conundrum", *Live Mint*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/NinFBJGnWjG7xmMfjBG5gM/indias-Chabahar-conundrum.html>. Accessed on July 2, 2017.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Michael Tanchum, "Iran's Chabahar Port Transforms Its Position", *The Jerusalem Post*, January 5, 2014, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/Irans-Chabahar-port-transforms-its-position-337167>. Accessed on July 6, 2017.

However, the Government of Iran is trying to reverse the drastic social and economic conditions of this region by implementing new plans such as the development of a Free Trade Zone (FTZ). Chabahar port, when operational, could be a major step in the development of this region. Further, Chabahar port can help connect and stimulate trade between the southeastern Iranian provinces and Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. Therefore, the development of Chabahar port and the FTZ will be a win-win situation for Iran.

Nearly 15 years ago, the idea of road connectivity i.e. the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was first conceived among India, Iran, and Russia. It was to be multi-modal transport corridor linking India to Iran and Central Asia through the ship-rail-road route. The proposed INSTC would link the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf and to the Caspian Sea, and move towards Northern Europe via Russia. This transport corridor will benefit India economically and strategically by providing access to Central Asia. Also, it will provide various economic opportunities for Iran as well. Through this corridor and the Chabahar port deal, Iran will be able to reintegrate itself into the global community, thus, Chabahar is essentially the gateway for Iran's entry into Afghanistan, the Central Asian countries, Russia, and Europe. It is intended that Chabahar shall be used for transshipment to Afghanistan and Central Asia, while keeping the port of Bandar Abbas as a major hub mainly for trade with parts of Russia and Europe.

Like India, Iran has also been an ally of Afghanistan due to its strategic importance. In addition to the benefits of bilateral trade, Iran is helping other regional powers develop Afghanistan, and the Chabahar deal fits into the jigsaw puzzle. Iran has worked hard to build its *soft power influence* with Afghanistan, which is, at times, a counter to the American interest. This has meant Iranian support not only for Afghanistan's economic and energy infrastructure but also for building and buttressing pro-Iranian schools, mosques, and media centres.²¹ In this context, Afghanistan becomes an important strategic link for Iran in the region. Both India and Iran want to establish their

21. Alireza Nader & et al, "Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the U.S. Drawdown", *RAND Report*, 2014, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR600/RR616/RAND_RR616.pdf. Accessed on December 12, 2016.

foothold in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US troops, and to counter-balance Pakistan's influence in the region.

CONCLUSION

While there certainly are benefits for all the parties (India, Iran and Afghanistan) involved in the agreement on Chabahar port, it is evident that Iran is bound to profit the most from the deal in the short-term. At the same time, analysts have also started questioning the slow pace of the Chabahar process, from both Indian and Iranian sides. While, with this agreement, India made a strategic move to turn the Iranian port into a hub of economic activity and transit, bypassing Pakistan, at the same time, the operationalisation on the ground is yet far from reality. India needs to realise the stakes involved in the Chabahar deal. At the same time, India should bear in mind that this route is strategically very important for it, in order to reinforce its presence in the geo-strategically significant regions of West Asia and Central Asia, before the Chinese take advantage of it. And in order to achieve this, India needs to gain the trust of another important player in the region i.e. Iran, by delivering on the ground. It should be borne in mind that India's failure to pursue the track will only hasten its isolation in the region, and, thereby, affects its trade and connectivity. At the same time, Indian policy-makers need to understand the importance of Chabahar project and that it could be a big step in India's regional role and alter the strategic dynamics of West and Central Asia.

INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF MYANMAR'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

PUYAM RAKESH SINGH

Under the new Constitution of Myanmar, approved in 2008, the first democratic election was held in November 2010 after more than two decades of military rule. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)—a political party floated by the junta—won the general elections, and a semi-civilian government led by President Thein Sein took office in March 2011. For Myanmar, it marked the end of an era of rule by the military junta which had come into being following the 1988 pro-democracy protests. The junta, called the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), was officially dissolved in 2011. However, 25 percent seat reservation for the Myanmar military in the Parliament continues to be a roadblock in the transition into a fully democratic system.

Though the Indian government started engagement with the military junta in Myanmar since the early 1990s, the political transition has created new opportunities and possibilities for deepening the partnership between India and Myanmar. The relationship began to deepen under the leadership of President Thein Sein following the November 2010 general elections. However, the landmark victory

Dr. **Puyam Rakesh Singh** is an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

of the National League for Democracy (NLD) under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi in the November 2015 general elections has changed the course of Myanmar's political history. Unlike in the case of the 1990 election, the NLD has now regained the lost political ground to a great extent.

In the present situation, the Government of India is working towards implementing the 'Act East' policy through strengthening cooperation with Myanmar. Political mutual trust and high-level exchanges between the two countries have increased over the years. In addition to various development projects, India and Myanmar are enhancing cooperation in the sectors of security and connectivity. Because of these developments, it is imperative to study the nature of the evolving relationship in view of India's economic, strategic and security interests in the eastern neighbourhood.

POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The political transition in Myanmar has played an important role in strengthening political and diplomatic relations between India and Myanmar at various levels. As a result of the political reform in Myanmar, exchanges of parliamentary delegations between the two countries are taking place. For the first time, in December 2011, a Myanmar parliamentary delegation consisting of 14 members visited India. Both sides agreed to cooperate in the field during President Thein Sein's visit to India in October 2011.¹ The Indian government expressed willingness to offer "all necessary assistance" to strengthen the democratic transition in Myanmar.² It includes sharing India's experiences with Myanmar in evolving parliamentary rules, procedures and practices.³

During the visit of India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Myanmar from May 27 to 29, 2012, the Indian side reiterated its readiness to extend assistance to Myanmar's democratic transition

-
1. "Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann Visits India," *New Light of Myanmar*, December 19, 2011, p. 16.
 2. Joint statement on the occasion of the state visit of the president of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to India, October 14, 2011, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5326/Joint+Statement+on+the+occasion+of+the+State+Visit+of+the+President+of+the+Republic+of+the+Union+of+Myanmar+to+India>. Accessed on June 26, 2017.
 3. *Ibid.*

and capacity development of democratic institutions.⁴ In addition, training provisions for Myanmar's parliamentarians and staff were extended.⁵ In line with this development, the first delegation of the Indian Parliament, led by Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar, visited Myanmar in February 2013.⁶

Interestingly, the joint statement issued at the first meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission in July 2015, states that the bilateral relations have entered a "new phase" following Myanmar's political and economic reforms. In addition, India has made an offer to enhance the capacity of Myanmar's election officials through the Election Commission of India before the general elections in November 2015.⁷ Furthermore, India has extended support to Myanmar's national reconciliation and peace process under the 21st Century Panglong Conference. National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval attended the ceremony of the signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement on October 15, 2015, representing India.⁸

Moreover, the two sides have agreed to cooperate in the United Nations and strengthen this multilateral forum to tackle various global challenges. Myanmar has also supported India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Furthermore, the two sides have been cooperating in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation initiative.

SECURITY COOPERATION

Myanmar's political transition has brought possibilities for strengthening security cooperation between the two countries. In

4. Joint statement on the occasion of the state visit of Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, *New Light of Myanmar*, May 29, 2012, p. 16.

5. Ibid.

6. "President U Thein Sein Receives Indian Lok Sabha Speaker and Party," *New Light of Myanmar*, February 14, 2013, p. 1.

7. Joint statement by India and Myanmar on First Meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission, July 16, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25485>, Accessed on June 24, 2017.

8. Embassy of India, Myanmar, India-Myanmar Relations, http://www.indiaembassyangon.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=137&lang=ENG.

August 2011, Chief of the Indian Navy, Adm Nirmal Verma visited Myanmar and discussed matters relating to security cooperation. The joint statement issued in October 2011 underscores the importance of the issue. It called for “effective cooperation and coordination” between the security forces of the two countries to counter the menace of insurgency and terrorism.⁹ The need for an institutional mechanism to enhance intelligence sharing was also stated, taking into account the illegal cross-border activities.

In January 2012, the chief of the army staff of the Indian Army visited Myanmar. In addition, the home secretary attended the 17th state-level meeting of the Myanmar-India Civil Authorities and discussed matters related to border areas stability. It was preceded by a goodwill visit to India by Lt Gen Yar Pyae from May 6 to 13, 2012. In August 2012, a high-level military delegation led by Vice-Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing visited India. Interestingly, the invitation from the then Chief of the Indian Navy, Adm Nirmal Verma, paid dividends in terms of bilateral exchanges on strengthening maritime security cooperation. It was followed by the visit of the flag officer commanding-in-chief of the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy to Myanmar in October. During the visit, Vice Admiral Satish Soni discussed the matter of security in the territorial waters of India and Myanmar. In November 2012, Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Mshl N.A.K Browne visited military colleges and the Heho Military Command in Myanmar. During his meeting with Myanmar’s President Thein Sein, the chief of the Indian Air Force exchanged views on peace and stability in the border region, investment, and sector-wise cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries.

In January 2013, Defence Minister of India AK Antony, visited Myanmar and discussed matters relating to military cooperation. The delegation accompanying him comprised the defence secretary, vice chief of the naval staff, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C), Eastern Command, and officials. In a follow-up, the commander-in-chief of the defence Services of Myanmar met the Indian ambassador to Myanmar in February 2013. During Vice-

9. Joint statement on the occasion of the state visit of the president of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to India, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, October 16, 2011, page 5.

Senior Gen Soe Win's visit to India in December 2013, the two sides discussed and exchanged views on the border areas' stability, training of Myanmar military personnel, India's security perspective, signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on border areas management, military cooperation and Myanmar's military relations with other countries.¹⁰ Also, the Myanmar delegation visited the Indian Army's HQ 3 Corps located in Dimapur, Nagaland, and the 57th Mountain Division at Leimakhong, Manipur, before visiting the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairangte in Mizoram.¹¹ In 2014, the two sides engaged in discussions over the issue of border areas stability. Also, three Indian naval ships visited Myanmar from April 27 to 30 in that year. This was followed by the organisation of a concert by the Indian Navy in Yangon in May.

In January 2015, marking further development in maritime cooperation, an Indian Coast Guard ship visited Yangon on a goodwill mission. In March, Indian Navy ships visited Thilawa port in Yangon. In June, the National Security Adviser (NSA) of India visited Myanmar. In July, a Myanmar military delegation led by Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing visited India and the two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the defence and security sectors.¹² Again, in order to secure the border areas, the two sides have been working towards the early conclusion of an MoU on "Movement of People across the Land Border."¹³ In the defence sector, the Indian side has expressed commitment to support the modernisation of Myanmar's armed forces through training and use of Information Technology (IT) for security and maritime security in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁴ During Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing's visit to India in July 2015, the Myanmar delegation visited the Indian Army Base Workshop of Delhi Cantonment and the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC)

10. "Vice-Senior General Soe Win Meets Indian President," *New Light of Myanmar*, December 18, 2013, National, p. 8.

11. "Vice-Senior General Soe Win Observes Training Schools in Manipur and Mizoram States in India," *New Light of Myanmar*, December 22, 2013, p. 3.

12. "Myanmar, India Pledge Greater Cooperation in Defence, Security," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, July 31, 2015.

13. Joint statement by India and Myanmar on First Meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission, July 16, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25485>.

14. *Ibid.*

in Gurugram (earlier Gurgaon) and attended a presentation on biometric systems. He also observed the manufacturing of light combat helicopters, vehicles and electronic parts at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

An Indian delegation led by NSA Ajit Doval visited Myanmar in June 2016 following the Chandel ambush on June 4, 2015. During his visit, the two sides discussed border affairs, defence, transport, trade, and cooperation in the agriculture and construction sectors.¹⁵ Again, security and border management were deliberated on during the 15th round of Foreign Office Consultations held in August 2016.

The two countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral security and defence cooperation for maintaining peace and stability along the Indo-Myanmar border.¹⁶ Most importantly, the commitment to fight against terrorism and insurgency and not allowing any insurgent group to use their soil for hostile activities against the other side was reiterated. To enhance security along the border, border management remains an issue of national priority. Also, the two sides emphasised the significance of maritime security cooperation in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁷

In 2016, the joint statement issued on the occasion of the visit of state counsellor of Myanmar to India re-emphasised the need for coordination and exchange of information between the armed forces of the two countries to maintain peace, development and stability along the border. The document underscores the importance of maritime cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and the development of the Blue Economy. Interestingly, an Indian Coast Guard ship visited Yangon in January 2016 reflecting cooperation in the maritime

15. "Commander-in-Chief Receives Courtesy Call by Indian National Security Adviser," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, June 17, 2016, National, p. 9; "Union Foreign Affairs Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Indian National Security Adviser Mr Ajit Doval," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, June 17, 2016, National, p. 3; "Cooperation on Border Security-President U Htin Kyaw Meets Indian National Security Adviser," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, June 17, 2016, p. 1.

16. Joint statement during the visit of the president of Myanmar to India, August 29, 2016, August 29, 2016, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27343/India+Myanmar+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+the+President+of+Myanmar+to+India+29+August+2016>, Accessed on June 24, 2017.

17. Ibid.

sector.¹⁸ In February that year, the Indian Navy and Myanmar Navy signed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) after the fourth edition of the India-Myanmar Coordinated Patrol conducted along the International Maritime Boundary Line in the Andaman Sea.¹⁹

In November 2016, during the meeting with Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, Vikram Misri, discussed matters relating to stability, peace and development of border areas, exchange of information between the two armed forces, and military cooperation including training courses.²⁰ In the same month, Chief of Staff of the Indian Navy Adm Sunil Lanba visited Myanmar and discussed matters relating to the exchange of naval ships and military cooperation in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (*Panchsheel*). During the visit, the two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in maritime security, training of the Myanmar Police Force and technological and agricultural cooperation between the two countries.²¹ In December, the vice president of Myanmar and commander-in-chief of the defence services visited India.

In February 2017, the NSA of Myanmar Thauang Tun visited India and the two sides deliberated on security issues and border management.²² The 16th round of India-Myanmar Foreign Office consultations took place on May 25, 2017. Again, border security, border management and boundary demarcation were on the agenda. The issue of insurgents from India seeking shelter and sanctuary Myanmar was also highlighted in the *Global New Light of Myanmar's* interview with the Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, Vikram Misri.²³

18. "Indian Coast Guard Chief on Visit to Myanmar to Boost Maritime Ties," *Economic Times*, January 7, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-coast-guard-chief-on-visit-to-myanmar-to-boost-maritime-ties/articleshow/50487354.cms>.

19. "India-Myanmar Sign SOP on Joint Patrol," *The Hindu*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Visakhapatnam/indiamyanmar-sign-sop-on-joint-patrol/article8256109.ece>. Accessed on June 24, 2017.

20. "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Receives Ambassador of India and FSMTC director," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, November 26, 2016, National, page 9.

21. "V U Myint Swe Receives Indian Navy Chief," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, November 2, 2016, National, page 3.

22. "Myanmar NSA in India, to Meet Ajit Doval, Jaishankar," *The Times of India*, February 2, 2017, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/myanmar-nsa-in-india-to-meet-ajit-doval-jaishankar/articleshow/56940430.cms>. Accessed on June 26, 2017.

23. Interview with Ambassador of India to Myanmar Mr Vikram Misri, *Global New Light of Myanmar*, May 30, 2017, <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/interview-with-ambassador-of-india-to-myanmar-mr-vikram-misri/>. Accessed on June 26, 2017.

Moreover, Chief of the Indian Army, Gen Bipin Rawat, paid a four-day visit to Myanmar in May 2017. The visit was significant in view of the holding of the Union Peace Conference of Myanmar and military cooperation for security along the 1,640-km-long border. The visit by Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar to India in July 2017 is expected to strengthen cooperation between the armed forces of the two neighbouring countries.²⁴

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

During Myanmar's President Thein Sein's visit to India in October 2011, the two sides had signed an MoU for the upgradation of the Yangon Children's Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital and the programme of cooperation in science and technology for the period 2012-15. The Indian side extended a line of credit amounting to nearly \$300 million for transport, railways, oil refinery and power transmission lines, etc. Moreover, India extended another \$500 million line of credit for specific projects, including irrigation projects.

A contract was signed for the supply of agricultural machinery under the \$10 million grant assistance from India. Besides, India would provide technical and financial support for setting up the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) in Yezin and the Rice Bio Park and Integrated Demonstration Farm at Nay Pyi Taw. In addition to the Industrial Training Centre built in Pakokku, India is constructing another training centre in Myingyan. The two sides have reached an agreement on setting up an Information Technology Institute in Mandalay.

Interestingly, during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Myanmar in May 2012, the two sides concluded a total of 11 deals, including an MoU regarding a \$500 million line of credit. The deals include MoUs on Establishment of Joint Trade and Investment Forum, ACARE, Rice Bio Park, Myanmar Institute of Information Technology and development of border markets (*haats*). Again, four MoUs were signed during the visit of Myanmar's President Htin Kyaw in August 2016. They included one MoU on traditional medicine and

24. "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Meets Post-Graduate Trainees in India," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, July 13, 2017, National, p. 6.

another on cooperation in the field of renewable energy. The two other deals were on the construction of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project.

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is another key area of cooperation between India and Myanmar. In this regard, Myanmar has the potential to serve as land bridge for India to provide overland connectivity with East and Southeast Asia. Interestingly, the joint statement issued on October 14, 2011, on the occasion of the state visit of Myanmar's President Thein Sein to India mentions the Reed-Tiddim Road project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project.²⁵ Moreover, the two sides agreed to examine the feasibility of establishing railway links, and ferry and bus services.

The joint statement issued on the occasion of the state visit of the Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh to Myanmar in May 2012 stated the importance of enhancing connectivity. In order to realise the Trilateral Highway project connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand, the Indian side pledged to undertake the work of repairing/upgrading 71 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa Indo-Myanmar Friendship Road.²⁶ Also, India agreed to undertake the upgradation of the Kalewa-Yargyi road segment to highway standards, with Myanmar undertaking the upgradation of the Yargyi-Monywa stretch of the road by 2016. Moreover, signing of the MoU on the Air Services agreement, the proposal for the Imphal-Mandalay bus service and the constitution of a Joint Working Group to study the technical and commercial feasibility of cross-border rail links and direct shipping underscored the deepening exchanges in the field of connectivity. Mention can also be made of the India-ASEAN Car Rally of 2012, the commemorative year of India-ASEAN relations.

One of the most important connectivity projects is the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport project. A Framework Agreement

25. "Joint Statement on the Occasion of the State Visit of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to India," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, October 16, 2011, p. 5.

26. "Joint Statement by India and Myanmar on the State Visit of Prime Minister of India to Myanmar," May 28, 2012, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/19893/Joint+Statement+by+India+and+Myanmar+on+the+State+visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+India+to+Myanmar>.

on the project was signed with Myanmar in April 2008. Another major connectivity project is the trilateral highway project, under construction, that will connect India, Myanmar and Thailand. During the visit of India's Minister of External Affairs Salman Khurshid to Myanmar in December 2012, the two sides agreed to cooperate on the highway project.²⁷

In 2013, the two neighbouring countries worked towards building connectivity. The Government of India pledged \$245 million for upgrading the Tamu-Kalewa road in Myanmar. At the same time, the first phase of the Kaladan project was reported to be making fast progress. In fact, the proposed bus service connecting Imphal and Mandalay and the trilateral highway project were on the agenda during exchanges between the two sides. India's commitment to enhance connectivity with Myanmar was reaffirmed by former Indian Ambassador Gautam Mukhopadhyaya's interview with the *Global New Light of Myanmar*.²⁸ Another development in the maritime connectivity was the beginning of the direct container shipping service between India and Myanmar in October 2014.²⁹

In March 2015, following the Delhi Dialogue VII, the Trilateral Highway was extended to link up with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam under the India-ASEAN connectivity initiative. Undoubtedly, Myanmar is becoming ASEAN's gateway to South Asia and also India's gateway to ASEAN.³⁰ The Kaladan project has been delayed³¹ further though it was supposed to be operationalised

27. "Myanmar, India to Promote Sector-wise Development, Bilateral Relations," *New Light of Myanmar*, December 15, 2012, page 1.

28. "India is Happy to see Myanmar Opening up to the World and the World Opening up to Myanmar: Indian Ambassador to Myanmar," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, October 18, 2014, p. 1.

29. "V Rishikumar, Direct Container Shipping Service to Myanmar Flagged off," *The Hindu*, October 4, 2014, *Business Line*, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/logistics/krishnapatnam-port-flags-off-direct-container-service-to-myanmar/article6470740.ece>. Accessed on June 27.

30. "Myanmar Welcomes Extension of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway to Link up with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam," March 13, 2015, <http://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/?q=news/14/03/2015/id-1973>, Accessed on June 28, 2017.

31. Ritu Sharma, "Parliamentary Panel on External Affairs Irked at Delays in Kaladan Project in Myanmar," *The Indian Express*, February 13, 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/feb/13/parliamentary-panel-on-external-affairs-irked-at-delays-in-kaladan-project-in-myanmar-1570266.html>. Accessed on June 28, 2017.

by December 2016. In fact, the two sides agreed to operationalise the completed facilities at Sittwe and Paletwa by December 2016 and also finalise the modalities of operation and maintenance at the earliest.³² India will hand over six vessels worth \$81 million to Myanmar for the Kaladan project.³³ Regarding the trilateral highway project, the two sides had signed two MoUs pertaining to implementation of the project.³⁴ Furthermore, connectivity was on the agenda of the 15th round of the Foreign Office consultations held in New Delhi in August 2016.

CONCLUSION

The relationship is gradually deepening following the November 2010 general elections held in Myanmar. The two sides can further strengthen bilateral relations through promotion of cooperation in the fields of tourism, education, environmental conservation, agriculture, rural development, science and technology and Buddhist culture. Moreover, institutionalisation of cooperation can enhance mutual trust in the long run. Under its economic reform programme, Myanmar has established several Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and the Indian investors can explore the opportunities to take part in the economic construction of Myanmar through mutually beneficial cooperation projects. Another key area is the technology transfer centre to strengthen cooperation in the field of science and technology for agricultural and industrial development in Myanmar. At present, India and Myanmar have been working towards strengthening relations in energy, connectivity, agriculture, IT and security. However, enhancing mutual trust and cooperation also requires security cooperation to maintain peace and stability along the Indo-Myanmar border as well as regional stability.

As Myanmar is strategically located and shares a long border with India, India's Act East policy requires support and cooperation

32. "Joint Statement During the Visit of the President of Myanmar to India," August 29, 2016, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27343/India+Myanmar+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+the+President+of+Myanmar+to+India+29+August+2016>. Accessed on June 24, 2017.

33. "India to Hand Over Six Vessels Worth \$81 Million to Myanmar," *Myanmar Times*, June 26, 2017, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/26541-india-to-hand-over-six-vessels-worth-81-million-to-myanmar.html>. Accessed on June 28, 2017.

34. n. 32.

with it. Thus, security of the border areas and maritime security are becoming important issues in the bilateral relations. The high-level exchanges between the armed forces of the two countries will pave the way for deepening security cooperation. Also, the national reconciliation and peace process in Myanmar will be vital to enhancing India's strategic and economic influence in the eastern neighbourhood. As Myanmar is engaged in political and economic reforms, India should enhance mutual trust and military cooperation to deepen the partnership for peace, stability and development in the region and the world. Furthermore, being a democratic country, with a shared history and civilisational links for centuries, India's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions in Myanmar will pay dividends in all sectors. More importantly, the political reform in Myanmar has provided opportunities and possibilities for India to deepen strategic relations to develop connectivity with the neighbouring Southeast Asian nations. In fact, Myanmar is working on lessening its dependence on China, and gaining legitimacy and support for playing a larger role in Asia. Undoubtedly, regional and sub-regional groupings such as the ASEAN, BIMSTEC and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation could build synergy with the Act East policy for enhancing India's strategic influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

INDIA'S 'ACT EAST' POLICY: A MEANS TO ENSURE STALEMATE AND GROWTH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

TEMJENMEREN AO

The year 2017 not only marks the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) but also from India's point of view, completes 25 years of India's relations with ASEAN. Further, this year also completes 15 years of India becoming a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and five years of India elevating the status of its ASEAN relationship to that of a strategic partnership in 2012. It must be realised that historically India always had linkages with the nations of Southeast Asia, mainly in the realms of culture, religion, and trade. However, the end of the Cold War made the Indian policy-makers realise the economic and strategic significance of the region. China, over the years, has been able to increase its sphere of influence in the region of Southeast Asia, economically as well as strategically. This, along with the military presence of the Western allies, led by the United States, and the new security challenges in the region, makes India a balancer in the eyes of the ASEAN nations. The paper is an attempt towards understanding the importance being given to Southeast Asia since

Dr Temjenmeren Ao is a Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi.

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the author and do not represent the views of ICWA.

the initiation of the Indian economic liberalisation in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. It explores how India, with the position it enjoys in the region, could help facilitate the next phase of its policy with ASEAN through the 'Act East' policy, which could help limit the new challenging realities, while, at the same time, ensure mutual growth and stability.

INDIA'S REKINDLING RELATIONS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

Historically, India has long exerted considerable cultural influence over East and Southeast Asia, being the birthplace of Buddhism. Thus, the historical relations between India and Southeast Asia date way back on account of religion and cultural exchanges. After India's independence, Prime Minister Nehru viewed India's size and cultural influence over Asia as a platform to create a pan-Asia and felt obligated to assist in the liberalisation of other Asian nations from the clutches of colonialism. The deepening of the Cold War made India's foreign policy base itself in the principle of non-alignment. This ensured that India remained neutral and, thereby, restrained from joining any security forum such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), founded in 1954, while remaining aloof from ASEAN, which was founded in 1967. This also resulted in India's economy remaining closed, unable to reap the boom in trade and investment being witnessed among the nations of East and Southeast Asia. In terms of trade and investment, India did have a strong economic relationship with the former Soviet Union. The aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, with the US emerging as the sole superpower, created the impetus for a dramatic change of approach, strategically and economically, towards the world, including Asia.¹

The break-up of the Soviet Union deprived India of its main trading partner and source of cheap imported oil. India was, thus, forced to purchase oil at market prices which were at that time inflated because of the First Gulf War in 1990. The Indian government under

1. Lavin Lee, "India as a Nation of Consequence in Asia: The Potential and Limitations of India's 'Act East' Policy", *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, vol 29, no 2, Fall/Winter 2015, pp. 69-72.

P V Narasimha Rao, faced with a massively inflated oil bill, along with a serious balance of payment crisis, realised the need to expand India's relations beyond South Asia into Southeast Asia and beyond. India had to realign its foreign policies and implement what it referred to as a move "towards big power strategy", with the characteristics of a multi-directional foreign policy, thereby, announcing one of its most ambitious diplomatic initiatives known as the 'Look East' policy—a developmental strategy to help smoothen the strategic antagonism between India and ASEAN and enhance ties with the Southeast Asian region.²

In the early 1990s when this policy was first enunciated, the justification given was that India's foreign policy needed to move from being ideological towards ensuring and safeguarding the nation's interests. The economic challenge that India was facing at the end of the Cold War strengthened the case for reviving the stagnated relations with the nations of Southeast Asia. The main aim of the 'Look East' policy was connecting India's economy through trade with ASEAN and the so-called 'tiger' economies of East Asia. The first focus of this was ASEAN and its member-countries, particularly Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and Myanmar (Burma). It can be said that the new foreign policy in itself marked the new economic reforms and liberalisation which had been initiated at that very same time. Thus, India, in the last decade of the 20th century, witnessed an alteration in its foreign policy as well, wherein it became closely aligned with the interests of business groups and large corporates. This could also have been a consequence of the rise of India's middle classes which the economic reforms brought about. It caused a shift in India's foreign policy from being ideological and idealistic to becoming more realistic, based on the existing necessity and the place India sought for itself in the new and evolving world order.³

Regardless of what both supporters and critics of the 'Look East' policy may state, one cannot deny the fact that this foreign policy has been one of India's most successful policy initiatives. It may be

2. Zhao Hong, "India and China: Rivals or Partners in Southeast Asia?", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 29, no. 1, April 2007, p. 122.

3. "India's Look East Policy", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XLV, no 48, 2010, p. 8.

claimed that all the aims of the policy, as defined, have not been realised, and it has been a mere fulfilling of the economic agendas. But economically, India's effort to increase trade with ASEAN has succeeded in absolute terms and today India is a major trading partner in Southeast Asia. Total trade with ASEAN plus Korea and Japan accounted for approximately 1/6th of India's total exports in 2014-15. Taking only the ten ASEAN countries, India's exports in its total trade, stood at 10.25 percent and imports at 9.98 percent in 2014-15. In 2015-16, the percentage of exports to ASEAN stood at 9.61 percent and imports at 10.45 percent, with the total value of trade at US \$588,045.4 million.⁴ However, in comparison to China's trade relations, India is way behind—currently placed in the ninth position compared to China being the number one trading partner in Southeast Asia, followed by Japan, the EU 28, and the US, according to the 2015 data. In terms of value, China's total trade stood at US \$345,764 million, comprising 15.2 percent of the total share of ASEAN's trade. In comparison, India's trade with ASEAN in 2015 was valued at US \$58,554 million, with an overall share of 2.6 percent. Apart from this, India also faces a trade deficit with the ASEAN nations.⁵

However, despite these shortcomings, the policy as a whole has borne impressive fruit. Through this policy, India has been able to establish and revive its relations with the ASEAN nations, including East Asian nations such as South Korea and Japan. These relations today are not only in the form of economics but military interactions as well. Thus, it can be said that the 'Look East' policy has been a very decisive foreign policy move undertaken by India in the midst of the compulsions faced in the post Cold War uncertainties. Thus, India's improved relations with ASEAN have helped it to gain access to countries in East Asia such as South Korea and Japan. The success of which has led to the next phase of India's diplomatic engagement with Southeast and East Asia.

4. "Foreign Trade (ASEAN)", Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, <http://commerce.gov.in/InnerContent.aspx?Id=74>. Accessed on June 14, 2017.

5. "External Trade Statistics: ASEAN Trade by Selected Partner", Association of Southeast Asian Nations, http://asean.org/storage/2016/11/Table19_as-of-6-dec-2016.pdf. Accessed on May 12, 2017.

FROM 'LOOK EAST' TO 'ACT EAST' POLICY

At the 12th India-ASEAN Summit in 2014, Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, for the very first time, enunciated that India's 'Look East Policy' had become the 'Act East Policy'. This meant that India's economy had been able to overcome the uncertainties of the post-Cold War period and had achieved the growth necessary for India to expand beyond South Asia and Southeast Asia into East Asia. The intent of this policy is to strengthen the existing investments as well as undertake new ones, to create efficiency in the movement of trade and commerce. While the 'Look East' policy was primarily focussed on economic and institutional relations with the countries of ASEAN, the 'Act East' policy has an expanded definition of East to include Japan, South Korea and Australia. This adds to the already existing strategic interest while further enhancing economic engagements. One of the major emphases of the 'Act East' policy is to overcome the current dismal state of physical infrastructure connections between India and the ASEAN markets. These initiatives, apart from establishing various economic corridors, would also lay out highways in order to connect the northeastern Indian states to markets in Myanmar and then onwards to Thailand.⁶

It is a well-known fact that in the current state of affairs, India faces a challenge to compete with the economic influence that China has in Southeast Asia. Also, India has limited military engagement compared to the well established US military presence, along with the growing Chinese military assertiveness in the region. India is also aware of the presence of the other big powers in the ASEAN market, namely, the original five members which are Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines. However, there are the CLMV nations namely; Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam, which represent some of the fastest growing economies in the region. India, through its economic and technical assistance to the CLMV nations, along with further economic engagement with the other ASEAN nations can avail of great opportunities.⁷ India is aware of its economic limitations and, thus, continues to select projects and make investments that are feasible, given its interest and expertise. The continued investments

6. Lee, n. 1, pp. 67-68 and 74-75.

7. Hong, n. 2, p. 124.

by Indian companies such as Tatas in Information Technology (IT) and agriculture-based exchanges would be of a significant interest for the Southeast Asian nations. Such selective investments by India in areas of not only economic but also social importance will give it a positive image amongst the ASEAN countries. Unlike China that seeks their natural resources through its investments, India's investments in Southeast Asia should aim at more than the attainment of economic benefits; rather it should aim to provide opportunities for assistance in capacity building amongst the locals. Thus, the need for India is the development of mutual trust with the ASEAN nations through partnerships in terms of the social, economic and science and technology realms, where resources from the region and the India's knowhow could be pooled in together. The 'Make in India' initiative is an important means to not only enhance India's indigenous capabilities, but, through this initiative, to filter down the acquired capabilities to its partners in Southeast Asia through the means of co-production or even co-development. This kind of partnership would initiate greater people-to-people contacts which would not only help sustain, but, more importantly, enhance the relationships between India and the nations in Southeast Asia. In this respect, the 'Act East' policy initiated by the current government in New Delhi, is a good step forward. However, it is also essential to realise that there should be emphasis on actively re-orientating India's policy on Southeast Asia. This should be based on the current and evolving global and regional scenarios in order to not only ensure continuity but also enhancement of the relationship. Thus, India has to find the correct balance between the US which is the traditional security provider in the region and China which has great economic clout in the region and is a possible challenger to the existing regional security architecture. The presence of these two dominant forces in the region somehow limits India's expansion in this highly contested strategic space.

THE TWO COMPETING ENTITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

China's Growing Assertiveness

China's grand strategy, which is based on the narrative termed as the 'China Dream' is being aggressively floated today. The intent

of this grand strategy is to develop China into a nation which is economically prosperous while, at the same time, establishing a military that is capable of safeguarding the sovereignty, along with the interest, of Beijing, far beyond the mainland. Militarily, China is already asserting itself with its military modernisation and its ongoing military reforms. Further, China's transgressions into the disputed waters with its military deployments through increasing landfills around the disputed islands in the South China Sea, have become a major security issue for the ASEAN states. The Belt Road Initiative (BRI) also known as the One Belt One Road initiative (OBOR), is another means by which China is pushing aggressively today. It sees this multilateral initiative with a unilateral agenda as a means towards achieving its 'China Dream' narrative.

This is not a completely new strategy being adopted by China, since, through this initiative, it seeks to reform the existing multilateral regimes while also establish new multilateral institutions. China's intent may well be to replace the existing multilateral regimes from which China has benefitted economically over the years. Today, as China has established its economic might, it has begun to term the existing institutions as being unfair and dominated by the West, and the main reason for the persisting North-South divide. This has been evident since the start of the new millennium; China's foreign policy has evolved into taking a more assertive stance at various multilateral institutions. Further, the Chinese government today is becoming more vocal in criticising certain aspects of the existing international systems. It is suggesting various reforms and providing an alternative vision of the world order called, 'harmonious world'. The phrase 'harmonious world' first officially appeared in a joint declaration issued by China and Russia in October 2004. During his speech at the United Nations' sixtieth anniversary celebrated in September 2005, the then President of China, Hu Jintao emphasised that China would "strive to establish a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity". This was later reiterated and elaborated in a Chinese government White Paper on "China's Passage of Peaceful Development", issued in December 2005.⁸

8. Hongying Wang, "China's Image Projection and its Impact", in Jian Wang, ed., *Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 41.

Thus, the BRI, part of China's grand strategy, could be linked to this 2005 concept of a harmonious world which talked about the common prosperity of all nations. This was considered the best policy option for Beijing, given its global ambition and also a means to soften the perception of nations around its vicinity vis-à-vis China's increasing hard power which was causing them to question Beijing's intentions. India has the opportunity today to increase its foothold in the region as a net security provider. The nations of Southeast Asia, despite their economic engagement with China, are, no doubt, worried about the increasing assertiveness of China – particularly in the South China Sea. Thus, there is a growing rethink now about the expanding Chinese power and the realisation amongst the nations of Southeast Asia, on the need of containing this growth. However, many of the ASEAN nations are not vocal about this because of the possible hostility which could emerge from Beijing. Thus, nations in Southeast Asia are today attempting to find the right balance between engagement with, and containment of, China – which, no doubt, is a huge challenge even to conceptualise.⁹

Persisting US Military Presence?

It must be put into context that the withdrawal of the US forces in the aftermath of the Vietnam War provided China the strategic space to grow and assert itself in the region. From 1977-2000, the US Administration's policies towards Southeast Asia were usually limited to reactions to specific and often unanticipated events. Thus, the power vacuum created, as a result of limited US engagement in Southeast Asia, enabled Beijing to enhance its influence in the region. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, the arrest of members of the Jemmah Islamiyah in Singapore, revealed the presence of an Al-Qaeda linked terrorist network in maritime Southeast Asia, targeting the Western interests. This was a wake-up call for Washington and the beginning of the re-establishment of limited military engagement in Southeast Asia – defining the entire region as the 'second front' in its 'War on Terror'. Southeast Asia's role in the US' 'War on Terror'

9. C. Raja Mohan, "India's Role in South-East Asia", in Michael W. Everett and Mary A. Somerville, eds., *Multilateral Activities in South-East Asia* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1995), p. 90.

gained further strength after the discovery in several countries such as Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines of internationally and regionally linked terrorist cells, plotting against the US and its regional assets. The tragic events such as the attacks in Bali in 2002 and Jakarta in 2003 and 2004, as well as the arrest of key international terrorists, and the evidence of the links between Al-Qaeda and the militant Southeast Asian organisation Jemmah Islamiyah and the Philippines Islamic group Abu Sayyaf have all served to confirm this assessment. These revelations got the US attention under the Bush Jr Administration that began re-engaging with the maritime countries' governments – Islam is a major religious entity in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand – in intelligence collaboration, bilateral military-to-military ties, and targeted economic and military assistance.¹⁰

Thus, there has been the resurfacing of US military presence in Southeast Asia. There was also the 'Pivot to Asia' policy by the Obama Administration which was welcomed by some of the ASEAN nations. This policy, however, resulted in the further escalation of tension between the US and China. This US policy, deemed by China as a 'containment policy', led to massive Chinese military build-up in the disputed waters of the South China Sea. One may expect further escalation in the deployment of Western forces into the Pacific as an assurance of the US' continued commitment to its Asian alliance. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis, in a meeting on the sidelines of the 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue, with defence ministers from the ASEAN nations, provided assurance on the continuation of the US presence in the region. The US and ASEAN would further enhance their strategic cooperation, particularly in the area of the anti-terrorism campaign that includes intelligence exchanges and surveillance.¹¹ With the growth in the activities of Islamic extremist groups in Southeast Asia, namely the Philippines and Indonesia, the US military has warned of the presence of members of the Islamic State of Iraq and

10. Diane K. Mauzy and Brian L. Job, "US Policy in South-East Asia: Limited Re-engagement after Years of Benign Neglect", https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Burma_Mauzy_Job.pdf. Accessed on May 11, 2017.

11. "US to ASEAN: We're Here For You", *Bangkok Post*, June 5, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1262523/us-to-asean-were-here-for-you>. Accessed on June 7, 2017.

Syria (ISIS) sleeper cells which are inactive but may resort to action when triggered.¹² The series of terror attacks being witnessed in the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations in recent times, has further reinforced US commitment to the region. The fear is that the ISIS intends to create strongholds starting in the southern Philippines and then expanding to the surrounding regions.¹³ The United States is still the predominant power in the region but it has become reluctant to use its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region over the years. The ASEAN states are fearful of abandonment by the US, given the fact that the new US Administration seeks further curtailment of American military action abroad. This concern is also felt by Japan and South Korea, that question the rise of China: whether it would be peaceful within the existing order or seek to challenge it. Should the US' commitment to Asia weaken, India is looked at as a benign rising power in the region, with shared apprehensions on the rise of China, and with the capacity to play a significant part in protecting the existing basis of the regional order.¹⁴

INDIA AS A NET SECURITY PROVIDER IN THE REGION

Southeast Asia's vulnerability to major power influence has somehow compelled it to engage with multilateral organisations that deal with peace and security in the region. However, the ASEAN nations have not had a good track record with multilateralism. SEATO, which was created in 1954, was subsequently dissolved in 1977, mainly because it was found to be ineffective. One reason may be that unlike the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), it never had standing forces that could be committed in the event of war.¹⁵ In 1994, under the ASEAN, the requirement towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region resulted in the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum

12. Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja, "Terror Cells in Most Indonesia Provinces Now: Military", *The Straits Times*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/terror-cells-in-most-indonesian-provinces-now-military>

13. "ASEAN, US Pledge to Fight IS Extremists", *The Myanmar Times*, <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/asean-focus/26281-asean-us-pledge-to-fight-is-extremists.html>. Accessed on June 9, 2017.

14. Lee, n. 1, p. 80.

15. Paul Dibb, "Indonesia: The Key to South-East Asia's Security", *International Affairs*, vol. 77, no 4, October 2001, p. 834.

(ARF). The forum enabled constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues.¹⁶ The issues addressed in the ARF are of common interest and concern amongst the ASEAN nations and the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. Thus, there is participation of not only the Southeast Asian nations but other countries as well. India has been attending the annual meetings of this forum since 1996 and has actively participated in its various activities. The ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) is the highest defence consultative and cooperative mechanism in ASEAN, which brings together defence ministers from the ten ASEAN nations plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, and the United States of America on a biannual bases.¹⁷

However, despite the growing participation from all major powers in the ARF, according to many, the ARF seems to be losing its way. For instance, during the conflict in East Timor in 1999, the ARF prove to be totally incapable of making a contribution towards a resolution. Thus, the ARF is being seen as an irrelevant regional security organisation, as distinct from a diplomatic talking shop. The only strong multilateral security organisation in Southeast Asia is the Five-Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) among Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Britain, formed in 1971. The main value of FPDA is its contribution to military cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore, but it remains to be seen whether this security arrangement would be viable in the future. Many also argue that the ARF is still in its infancy; as even the European nations took a long time to develop arms control agreements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. So far, the persisting deep-seated historical suspicions and many outstanding territorial disputes amongst the ASEAN nations, in a way, continue to restrain the development of any formidable security grouping.¹⁸

In recent times, however, the growing threat from extremist groups, including the attacks with the help of foreign fighters – who

16. "ASEAN Regional Forum", Association of Southeast Asian Nations, <http://asean.org/asean-political-security-community/asean-regional-forum-arf/>. Accessed on June 19, 2017.

17. "ASEAN-India Relations", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, <http://www.mea.gov.in/aseanindia/20-years.htm>. Accessed on June 12, 2017.

18. Dobb, n. 15, p. 835.

owe allegiance to the ISIS – in Southeast Asia, has become a matter of grave concern. Countries of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines have started collaborating with each other—they conducted a joint maritime patrol in June 2017. This was undertaken in order to undermine the operations being carried out by Islamic radical groups which owe allegiance to the ISIS. It is presumed that these groups aim to promote an independent Islamic State comprising part of Mindanao Island and the Sulu archipelago in the Philippines, and from there, expand its outreach around the vicinity.¹⁹ Thus, concerns about the growing assertiveness of the Chinese, along with the rise of radical extremists, make India a worthwhile partner for the ASEAN nations.

It is important to realise that the major reason for the great acceptability which has India received from the nations of Southeast Asia and other East Asian nations, emanates from three innate characteristics of India. First, India's multi-ethnicity – which is the largest in the world – has helped create acceptability in the ethnic and religiously diverse Southeast Asia. Second is India's principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other states, to which it remains committed. And third, India has no direct conflict, pertaining to a territorial dispute with any of the Southeast Asian states. This is in view of the fact that six governments – in Brunei Darussalam, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam – have overlapping claims to hundreds of islands and scattered reefs and rocks in the disputed South China Sea. This, along with the growing assertiveness of China, especially in its claims to the South China Sea, accompanied by the rapid modernisation and deployment of its military, has caused unease amongst most of the ASEAN nations. These characteristics and new realities have worked in India's favour, as the nations in Southeast Asia see India as a benign power that could be a counter balance to both China and the US in the region.²⁰

There is also another element which has played in India's favour, which is the difficult relationship that it shares with China. India is also concerned about the increasing Chinese transgressions,

19. "Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines to Begin Joint Patrol", *Bangkok Post*, June 13, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1267706/indonesia-malaysia-philippines-to-begin-joint-patrol>. Accessed on June 13, 2017.

20. Lee, n. 1, p. 68 and 84.

especially pertaining to its conduct close to India's borders, in recent times. To curb China's growing military influence, India and selected ASEAN and East Asian countries have begun holding joint military exercises. The India Navy has conducted joint exercises with the navies of Singapore, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea, in order to ensure the safety of the strategic waterways in the region, such as the Strait of Malacca.²¹ India's presence in the form of its engagement in the region is seen by the ASEAN nations as a means to ensure that stalemate persists in the region. Through this, India intends to ensure cooperation rather than competition between the major powers, and curb conflicts, so that mutual growth and security may be ensured. As stated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his SAGAR speech on February 7, 2016, "We are not just a bright spot in the global economy. Regionally and internationally, we are a pillar of stability and an important growth centre."²²

CONCLUSION

India should take note of these developments and rather than taking sides with either of the two entities in Southeast Asia namely; China and the US-led allies, India should display the qualities of an independently motivated nation. Being a regional power in Southeast Asia, India should seek the larger interest of the nations in Southeast Asia and step up its aid, economically or militarily or diplomatically, to counter any kind of Chinese grand strategy or military disposition of the West that may be counter-productive for the nations in the region. Further, India has for a long time dealt with the menace of terrorism and its experience in fighting radical extremism is something that India could provide to the nations of Southeast Asia, which are attempting to cope with this new security threat. India could also provide a security collaborative architecture which till date has not been present in the region. This was also emphasised by the Indian prime minister during his SAGAR speech wherein he stated that the seas should be used to build peace, friendship, and trust,

21. Hong, n. 2, p. 132.

22. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "SAGAR Stands for Security and Growth for all in the Region: PM Modi at International fleet Review in Vishakhapatnam", February 7, 2017, <http://www.narendramodi.in/pm-modi-at-the-international-fleet-review-2016-in-visakhapatnam-andhra-pradesh-413019>. Accessed on June 20, 2017.

and, thus, nations should seek to cooperate rather than compete in responding to the challenges of the seas. It is the consequence of this lack of an established collaborative security architecture which has led to competition and coercive actions by nation-states in the region. Thus, India's 'Look East' policy, initiated in the aftermath of the Indian economic crisis of 1990, may have well been with the intent of stabilising as well as enhancing its economic growth. However, as India's engagement with Southeast Asia began to expand with a new perspective, given the geo-political, geo-strategic, and geo-economic reality, it led to the addition of the security dimension in India's Southeast Asia policy. Defined as the 'Act East' policy, it could ensure a reduction in the competitive militarily build-up and hopefully provide mutual security assurances as well as economic growth amongst the nations in the region.

BOOK REVIEWS

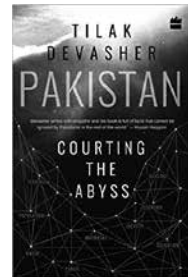
Pakistan: Courting The Abyss

Author: Tilak Devasher

Publisher: Harper Collins

Year: 2016

Price: Rs. 599



SHREYA TALWAR

The present day situation in Pakistan is not what Mohammad Ali Jinnah had envisioned at the time it was created. While it may boast of being a nuclear weapon state with the eighth largest army in the world, it has done so at great cost. It has diverted more attention and resources to narrowly defined security threats than to the development of its economy and society, which are significant pillars of a nation's comprehensive national power. This has resulted in a debt ridden economy, dependent on foreign aid, rampant illiteracy and unemployment. The use of religious overtones to achieve strategic objectives as a deliberate state policy has led to Pakistan becoming a 'safe haven for terrorists'. The growing sectarian and ethnic divisions in the country, combined with the aforementioned

Ms Shreya Talwar is a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

factors, are leading Pakistan towards an uncertain and unstable future.

Pakistan, the colonial legacy of the British rule over the Indian subcontinent, is now approaching its 70th year of independence since its formation in 1947. Tilak Devasher's *Pakistan: Courting the Abyss* is a perfectly timed book which takes stock of the evolution of the state into its current form and how it has developed in such stark contrast to its neighbour, India. Pakistan's tumultuous history has been riddled with a poor democratic record, the ongoing dalliance with terrorism and a record of nuclear proliferation. Such immediate threats and concerns tend to overshadow other issues such as the economy, population, environment management and education system. However, in the case of Pakistan, the domestic factors which have been ignored by the leadership due to attention being concentrated on external geo-political concerns, are now actively contributing to the instability in the country. Additionally, many of the problems that plague Pakistan have remained burning issues for the last 70 years.

The book traces back many of the current issues within Pakistan to events that took place prior to the partition and the structural weaknesses in the foundation that have ensued since then. The issues of identity and ideology form the backbone of the problems plaguing Pakistan. The questions 'what it means to be a Pakistani' and 'why Pakistan was created' have remained critical concerns for the last 70 years. The author echoes scholars such as Ayesha Jalal, Christophe Jaffrelot and Hussain Haqqani, emphasising on the point that the issue of 'identity' and what it means to be a Pakistani stems from the country's origin. The Muslim League was not a movement of the masses like the Congress. It was, in fact, a movement of the Muslim elite, belonging to certain minority Muslim provinces who feared the loss of power, and domination by a Hindu majority, under a system of representative government. The lack of popular support for the party was countered by the use of Islam and the logic of the two-nation theory. The use of Islamic rhetoric in the last stages of the movement tilted the political discourse towards Islamisation.

Pakistan was created in the name of Islam, thus, the use of religion to create a national identity was a natural progression.

However, its quest for a national identity was thwarted by the strong ethno-linguistic identities of the provinces that Pakistan inherited. The author notes, "They shared a common religion but they did not have any common history, culture, language or ethnicity." They all had strong attachments to their traditions and were resentful of any central control. The situation worsened due to the skewed policies implemented by the successive leaderships in favour of Punjab. The resentment in the people from the other three provinces, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was greatly exacerbated by the domination of the Punjabis in all spheres. There is massive economic disparity and a gross difference in the status of development between Punjab and the other three provinces. The Constitution of Pakistan was greatly distorted over the years in order to give little or no provincial autonomy. In an attempt to improve Centre-provincial relations, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution was passed in 2010. In theory, powers have been relinquished by the central government to the provincial governments, however, in practice, this is not fully implemented. The distrust remains as the federal government is still dominated by the Punjabi elite and the rest continue to fear a rollback of this arrangement.

Other than religion and strong centralised control, the author explains various strategies that have been used to overpower the multiple identities that existed within Pakistan with one overriding national identity. These include declaring Urdu as the national language even though it is spoken by only 3.7 percent of the population, and a strong anti-India posture.

The ideology of Pakistan, or the *Nazaria-e-Pakistan* is rooted in Islam and the anti-India stance. In order to rationalise its existence, the threat from 'Hindu' India is played up, reinforcing the Islamicness of Pakistan. The author explains how this ideological threat from India to Pakistan's existence has been used by the military to dominate all spheres of foreign, defence and nuclear related policies. The military not only considers itself the physical protector of Pakistan, but also the defender of Pakistan's ideology. The army functions on the core belief that India will take over Pakistan or destroy it. This belief was further strengthened when East Pakistan broke away and formed Bangladesh with India's assistance in 1971.

The army has a general distrust for the civilian politicians and believes that they would compromise on Pakistan's security. This fundamental belief is the basis for the poor civil-military relations in the country. The army's quest for parity with India, militarily and otherwise, stems from the demand by Jinnah and the Muslim League to achieve parity between Hindus and Muslims, and its by-product, parity with the Congress. The desire for parity did not end with the formation of Pakistan, and became part of the ideology of the new state which is perhaps the incumbent and most troublesome trend in the India-Pakistan relationship. The book seeks to answer the question that if Pakistan's *raison d'être* of fighting Hindu India is to rationalise its existence and sustenance, then, can there ever be peace between the two countries?

The army's desire to bleed India, using non-state actors, due to its conventional inferiority, is an attempt to weaken India and then negotiate to change the status quo of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). However, the book details on how this strategy of using non-state actors as tools of foreign policy vis-à-vis India and Afghanistan has created a fertile ground for militancy to raise its flags. The distinction between good and bad terrorists and the continuous attempt to negotiate with, and accommodate, *jihadi* groups for strategic objectives has greatly affected the political, social and economic landscape of Pakistan. The rise of groups such as the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its vast network shows that militants are no longer loyal to the hands that once fed them. The rise in violence and sectarian strife is essentially due to the overplaying of Islam as a tool of unity. Islam itself is not a uniform, homogenous religion. The author quotes Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, who in an interview, had said, "Muslims in India are not one community; they are divided among many well entrenched sects. You can unite them by arousing their anti-India sentiment but you cannot unite them in the name of Islam." The overwhelming demand for different versions of the *Sharia* by terrorist groups, religious groups, political parties and sections of the society leads to the question: whose *Sharia* should be implemented?

The author has dedicated a major part of the book to examining the issues related to water, education, economy and population.

Poor water-management policies and an obsession with the Indus Water Treaty due to the perception that it has received the short end of the stick, compared to India, is leading Pakistan towards becoming a water-scarce country by 2035. Its economic growth has been slow and does not generate enough employment for the fast increasing population. The mushrooming of *madrassas* across the spectrum has not only become a security threat, due to their links with *jihadi* groups and providing ideological and logistical support, most of the youths with a *madrassa* education are not equipped to match those who have studied in government/private schools. Moreover, their unemployability, combined with an education given to create an ideological divide and instigate against the minorities, makes them vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist groups.

The final section of the book looks at Pakistan's relations with India, the United States, Afghanistan and China individually. These four countries are actively engaged with Pakistan and the latter has mostly formulated its policies in response to these countries. The ideological and strategic threat from India resulted in the concept of strategic depth in Afghanistan. Thus, the policies of Pakistan vis-à-vis Afghanistan have been evolved to ensure that there is a weak government at the centre which can be controlled by the former, in order to reduce the space for the Indian footprint in the latter. China's engagement with Pakistan is bolstered by the common objective of keeping India boxed in, in South Asia, and countering its slow but steady rise. The United States and Pakistan have shared a hot and cold relationship but, over the years, Pakistan has become dependent on the US for foreign aid. The book looks into whether the new engagement with China in the form of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would reduce or replace its dependence on the United States.

The author, in his book, has looked beyond what meets the eye in order to seek answers on how Pakistan was created and the impact of those developments on the trajectory Pakistan has adopted. With a keen interest in Pakistan, the author has presented a holistic yet extensive body of work on not only the geo-political realities of the country, but the internal dynamics as well; tracing the roots of

Pakistan's persistent troubled state of affairs. The book steers away from the regular course of rhetoric and provides detailed facts and statistics which objectively explain the challenges that Pakistan faces. Not necessarily written in a chronological manner, the author has used his experience and expertise in the field to chart out a framework of certain themes that actively contribute to Pakistan's instability. The clarity of the subject and objectives makes this book readable not only by a layman but positively contributes to the scholarship on Pakistan.

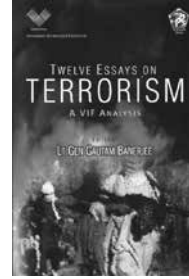
Twelve Essays on Terrorism: A VIF Analysis

Editor: Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee

Publisher: Pentagon Press

Year: 2017

Price: Rs 795



AERSH DANISH

India's tryst with cross-border militancy is as old as its independence. Rooted in a distinct blend of regional history and geo-politics, the country has been a victim of terrorist activities since Pakistan resorted to using tribal militias to invade the then princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, in 1948. The chain of events that followed has since peppered the already vitriolic relationship between India and Pakistan. Embittered by the partition of British India, the loss of Kashmir to India, and the Indian support to the Bangladeshi freedom cause, Pakistan continues to look at India with hostility. The strategic thinking in Pakistan is deeply India-centric. The states have fought four wars which has pushed Pakistan to match up to India's military strength. Unable to come at par with the conventional Indian military capabilities, Pakistan has resorted to using non-state actors to balance the asymmetry that favours India. It has, since the 1980s, actively supported terrorists group that have wished to attack India.

The support has been both active and passive. Some of the terrorist outfits were created out of deliberate Pakistani involvement, while the rest were allowed to thrive in Pakistan, with the state turning a blind eye to their presence, or sometimes providing them with them with covert help in terms of information and resources. The outcome has

Mr Aersh Danish was formerly a Research Associate at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi.

been sustained terrorist activity against India, with the country being a victim of some of the most gruesome terrorist attacks in the world.

What is surprising though is that there has been very little academic venturing into understanding the problem of terrorism. In a country that has experienced this phenomenon in its 70 years of existence, militancy against the state has taken many forms. From domestic insurgencies, to separatist movements to the much-discussed Kashmiri militancy, a complex mixture of social, political and economic factors has intersected with international and regional politics to make India vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Still, the vast majority of the literature restricts the understanding of terrorism to just India-Pakistan inter-state politics and animosity.

The book, *Twelve Essays on Terrorism: A VIF Analysis*, can be seen as an attempt to broaden the understanding of the subject. The book is published by the Vivekanda International Foundation (VIF), one of India's pioneering defence and strategic think-tanks. The volume has been edited by Lt. Gen. Gautam Banerjee (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow, VIF, and comprises twelve essays that look at terrorism from multiple vantage points. The contributors are primarily researchers in VIF, with some contributions from outsiders. The contributors reflect a balance of academics, professionals of the field like former diplomats and military officers, and expert consultants. Brig Sushil Kumar Sharma is the only serving Army officer to write in the volume.

The book begins with an essay on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its South Asian ambitions. This, by far, is the most contemporary issue plaguing India and its neighbour. The recent developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the growing footprints of the ISIS in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan are gaining prominence in the strategic thinking of Indian policy-makers. This study is complemented with essays on the domestic situation in India, with three chapters – two on the Maoist insurgency, and one on the militant economy of the northeast insurgency. Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee, in his two papers, looks at the state's armed response to the Maoists, and the ground realities of the Maoist challenge in India. In his prognosis of the situation, the general highlights the need for the state to act in a manner that weans away the support that these groups enjoy among the populace.

The general's arguments on how finance is the backbone for sustaining an insurgent movement is further emphasised when Brig Sushil Kumar Sharma explains how extortion and taxation comprise the major source of funds for the northeast insurgents. On similar lines, Abhinav Pandya and CS Sahay, in one paper, look at the global counter-terror finance regime. Bringing the discourse to an Indian level, the authors applaud the impact of demonetisation on the terror finance. Further, they strongly highlight the need to break out of the generalist approach to study terror finance, and look at each group – domestic or otherwise—individually to understand its means of generating funds.

On a more strategic note, Navroz Singh, in her chapter, compares the anti-terror laws in India and Pakistan. Her study reflects on the difference in the nature of the politics in the two states and how that impacts the anti-terror laws. Pakistan's regular encounters with military dictatorship enable it to enact and enforce laws faster than India, which gets tangled in the web of democratic institutions and bureaucratic structures. Despite this, Pakistan has often enacted laws to preserve the rule of the military rather than address the real issue of tackling terrorism. The author concludes by saying that a comparison between laws the two states is akin to comparing apples with oranges.

Gen NC Vij, in his rather short opinion piece, appreciates India's strategic restraint with the use of the military to respond to terror attacks of the likes of 26/11. By resorting to political and diplomatic channels, balanced with the calculated use of the military, to address the issue of terrorism, Gen Vij argues that India has shown maturity in its approach. Asish Sirsikar, in another short essay, looks into, what he calls, India's new preemptive action and equivalent strategy. He argues that India should not make surgical strikes a one-off event, and should use these regularly and wisely to send a consistent message of resolve and capabilities.

Moving beyond the regular India-Pakistan discourse, the book has two essays looking at the growing religious radicalisation in Bangladesh and the increasing imprint of the ISIS in Central Asia. Bangladesh and India have a symbiotic relationship towards eradicating terrorism from the region. With porous borders

facilitating quick movement of people and ideology, the two neighbouring states have to work in tandem to combat the issue. Coming to the contemporary threat of the ISIS in Central Asia, the author throws light on two major impacts of the rise of the ISIS, namely, the threatening mass appeal of the group's ideology that has attracted men and women from across different nationalities to fight for it. The author says that one cannot have an ostrich-like approach to this phenomenon and pretend that all will be fine. Further, one cannot even adopt a witchhunt approach towards dealing with it either, whereby states go on a widespread culling exercise hoping that it will kill the ideology along with killing the ideologues.

The remaining two essays help to place the rest of the contributions in perspective by, first, tracing the trends in international terrorism post 9/11; and second, by addressing the real issue of "terror", breaking out of an actor-centric approach. The end of the ISIS is not the end of terrorism and states should look at the tools of terrorism that are gaining legitimacy day by day among the disenfranchised and the disgruntled, warns Alvitte Singh Ningthoujam. The issue of foreign fighters returning home once the ISIS is cleared from Iraq and Syria rings loudly in his work, conveying a strong word of caution to everyone involved.

While the contribution of the book to developing a discourse on terrorism in India cannot be doubted, some drawbacks still stand out. First, the book appears to be a mere compilation of essays put together without much thought on a theme or approach. Though, it addresses the various issues of terrorism comprehensively and from multiple perspectives, it still comes out as unstructured, and is not cohesive. Some of the contributions are more like opinion pieces than works of academic rigour. Some authors have relied heavily on newspaper sources to draw conclusions. Terrorism research still faces the problem of unavailability of literature, and not all scholars can gather their data from ground zero. However, over-reliance on newspapers to source information can be misleading.

The book is remarkable in the manner in which it has touched upon so many relevant themes concerning terrorism in India and its neighbourhood, but it could have done more by pushing for a more rigorous Indian approach to understand terrorism and counter it.

Instead of relying on studies conducted and concluded in the West, Indian institutions should push for developing an Indian perspective that goes beyond bringing together serving and retired military officials, diplomats, professors and researchers of international politics. It is time that the problem is understood at the individual, social, national and regional levels, which involves bringing in Indian psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, and lacing their understanding with the ribbon of the practice of diplomacy and military tactics.

It is important that more works that push for a disciplinary study of terrorism and political violence shape the discourse in India.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Articles submitted to *Defence and Diplomacy* should be original contributions and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time. If another version of the article is under consideration by another publication, or has been, or will be published elsewhere, authors should clearly indicate this at the time of submission.

Each typescript should be submitted in duplicate. Articles should be typewritten on A4/ Letter paper, on one side only, **double-spaced (including the notes)** and with ample margins. All pages (including those containing only diagrams and tables) should be numbered consecutively.

There is no standard length for articles, but 3,000 to 3,500 words (including notes and references) is a useful target. The article should begin with an indented summary of around 100 words, which should describe the main arguments and conclusions of the article.

Details of the author's institutional affiliations, full address and other contact information should be included on a separate cover sheet. Any acknowledgements should be included on the cover sheet as should a note of the exact length of the article.

All diagrams, charts and graphs should be referred to as figure and consecutively numbered. Tables should be kept to a minimum and contain only essential data. Each figure and table must be given an Arabic numeral, followed by a heading, and be referred to in the text.

Articles should be submitted on high-density 3½ inch virus free disks (IBM PC) in rich text format (RTF) together with an **exactly matching double-spaced hard copy** to facilitate typesetting; notes should be placed at the end of each page. Any diagrams or maps should be copied to a separate disk separately in uncompressed TIF or JPG formats in individual files. These should be prepared in black and white. Tints should be avoided, use open patterns instead. If maps and diagrams cannot be prepared electronically, they should be presented on good quality white paper.

Each disk should be labelled with the journal's name, article title, author's name and software used. It is the author's responsibility to ensure that where copyright materials are included within an article, the permission of the copyright holder has been obtained. Confirmation of this should be included on a separate sheet included with the disk.

Copyright in articles published in *Defence and Diplomacy* rests with the publisher.

STYLE

Authors are responsible for ensuring that their manuscripts conform to the journal style. The Editors will not undertake retyping of manuscripts before publication. A guide to style and presentation is obtainable from the publisher.

The style should be followed closely. Dates in the form January 1, 2000. Use figures for 11 and above. British spellings are to be used. Authors should provide brief biographical details to include institutional affiliation and recent publications for inclusion in About the Contributors. Sub-headings and sub-sub-headings should be unambiguously marked on the copy.

NOTES

Notes should be **double spaced** and numbered consecutively through the article. **The first line of a note must align with subsequent lines. Each note number should be standard size and have a full point.**

- a) References to books should give author's name: title of the book (*italics*); and the place, publisher and date of publication in brackets.
e.g. 1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Common Defense* (NY: Columbia UP, 1961), Ch. 2, pp. 14-18.
- b) References to articles in periodicals should give the author's initials and surname, the title of the article in quotation marks, title of the periodical (*italics*), the number of the volume/issue in Arabic numerals, the date of publication, and the page numbers:
e.g., Douglas M. Fox, "Congress and the US Military Service Budgets in the Post War Period," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, vol. 16, no. 2, May 1971, pp. 382-393.