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# EDITOR'S NOTE

The quarter just gone by has seen some earth-shaking events on the global front, not the least of which has been the rise of the 'minions' in the ongoing FIFA World Cup. The world is witnessing the battle of two economic giants – the US and China – as trade wars appear to enmesh the two nations in a slug fest that will see some tough stands being taken by both in the days ahead. President Trump pulls out of the Iranian nuclear deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – calling it the “worst deal ever”. A month later, he refuses to sign the Joint Communiqué at the G-7 Summit over differences with the other partners on trade issues. On June 12, 2018, he meets his North Korean counterpart in a historic meeting in Singapore; the US and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) agree to work for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula which President Kim Jong-un promises to denuclearise. President Trump directs the Department of Defence (DoD) in the US to begin the process to establish a Space Force as the sixth branch of the armed forces. And at home, Governor's Rule is imposed in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

This quarterly issue covers, *inter alia*, the developments in India's neighbourhood that are likely to have an impact on the security environment in the days ahead. The first article **JuD's Social Outreach: Understanding Digital Terrorism** by **Shalini Chawla** and **E Dilipraj** exposes the diametrically opposite stands that the political set-up and the army in Pakistan have on the future of Hafiz Saeed – the chief of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) – who is also a UN and US designated terrorist and who was released from house arrest in November 2017. While the Pakistan Army hails him as “active” to “resolve” the Kashmir issue, the Pakistan government says that it has taken steps to discourage Hafiz Saeed's Milli Muslim League (MML) from contesting the upcoming elections in Pakistan – an obvious move to placate the US. The article discusses the increasing cyber footprint of the JuD and its active use of social media to garner support for its activities.

The world was surprised when the much anticipated meeting between President Trump and his North Korean counterpart, Kim Jong-un finally took place on June 12, 2018 in Singapore. Was the world becoming a dangerous place to live in, given the sabre rattling and shadow boxing between the two leaders after the nuclear tests by Pyongyang in September 2017? **Hina Pandey** examines this in greater detail in her article, **Revisiting US-North Korea Stand-off in the Current Uncertain Times: Any Lessons Learnt?**

The Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) was signed into law by President Trump on August 2, 2017, imposing new sanctions on Iran, North Korea and Russia. This has also been termed the "New Cold War" as it imposes sanctions on entities belonging to these countries that are involved in major financial dealings with other nations. With Russia's Military Industrial Complex (MIC) being one of the most important sources of revenue for the country, this economic 'embargo' imposed on Russian entities to trade with other countries could see a dip in Russian revenues. India's dependence on imports from Russia has only recently been eclipsed by the US. With major deals like the S-400 Air Defence (AD) system from Russia in the pipeline, will the US show special consideration towards India and relax the CAATSA to 'accommodate' India's genuine security needs? **Chandra Rekha** explores this further in her article **The Defence Industrial Complex: US' Next Target to Contain Russia's Military Resurgence.**

The geopolitics of the West Asian region is growing ever more complex with each passing day, not the least because of the turmoil in Syria due to the presence of the Islamic State (IS). With countries like Iran aiming to play a predominant role in the affairs of the region, traditional rivalries among some of the other players have seen a change (i.e. Israel and Saudi Arabia). India enjoys good bilateral relations with almost all nations in the West Asian region. The recent efforts by Prime Minister Modi to play the role of peace broker between Israel and the Palestinian Authority has the potential to strengthen India's acceptance in the region, giving China another chance to play 'catch up'. **Anu Sharma** discusses this in greater detail in her article on **India's Balancing Act with West Asia.**

The flip-flop in relations between the Philippines and China over the disputes arising out of the latter's (wrongful) claims over island territories in the South China Sea appear to have been settled, much to China's delight – the contrary verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration notwithstanding. Tracing the historical background of the differences between the two nations over sovereignty of the islands, **Sana Hashmi** puts the entire matter in clear perspective in her article **China-Philippines Contention in the South China Sea**.

Reducing import dependency on sources of energy would be the dream for any developing nation. India is no exception. This can, however, not be achieved overnight and requires a sustained campaign, with all the ministries putting their shoulders to the wheel in conserving energy in the true spirit envisaged under the Energy Conservation Act 2001. **Managing Crude: A Challenge for India's Energy Basket** is an honest attempt by **Asheesh Shrivastava** that spells out the steps taken, as well as those that are required to be taken by all the stakeholders in India to reduce India's dependency on import of oil for its energy needs.

The northeastern states of India account for some of the thickest density of forest cover found anywhere on the Earth and which boast of an extremely rich bio-diversity. Yet, these forests have been subjected to systematic denudation over the years; this could have a serious impact on the flora and fauna in the years ahead. India's Act East Policy offers the necessary connect to the Southeast Asian region through its northeastern states that share cultural linkages with some of these nations. However, in an effort to develop the northeast region, the irreversible damage to the ecology of the region needs to be avoided at all costs. **Temjenmeren Ao** argues in favour of sustainable development of the region in his article **Securing the Ecological Balance in Northeast India Under the 'Act East' Policy**.

Going by recent events, when one talks of refugees, one envisions hordes of people flocking to European shores from the strife torn areas of West Asia or from Sub Saharan Africa. Closer home, however, internal displacement of people in the form of the Rohingyas – who have been forced to flee their homes (where they had lived for over two millennia) because of the 'clearing-out' operations being conducted by the Myanmar military in the Rakhine province of

Myanmar – is attracting world attention, with the UN terming this as ‘ethnic cleansing’ by the Myanmar government. **Sripathi Narayanan** addresses the issue – and the concomitant larger issue of the likely influx of militant organisations like the Islamic State into the region – in the last article **South Asia’s Refugee Experience: What about the Rohingyas?**

There are two Book Reviews that are carried in this issue of the journal. The first is by **Manpreet Sethi** who reviews Hassan Abbas’ *Pakistan’s Nuclear Bomb: A Story of Defiance, Deterrence and Deviance* which answers the question as to whether the proliferation (of nuclear technology) from Pakistan was a rogue operation carried out by AQ Khan or a state-sponsored enterprise. **Nishant Gupta** carries out the second Book Review of Ashok Chordia’s *Operation Cactus: Anatomy of one of India’s Most Daring Military Operations*.

Happy reading



# JuD'S SOCIAL OUTREACH: UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL TERRORISM

SHALINI CHAWLA AND E. DILIPRAJ

Hafiz Saeed, chief of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), and a UN, US and India designated terrorist, was released from house arrest, in November 2017, after a three-member judicial review board in Punjab turned down the Pakistan government's request for the extension of the duration of his detention. Soon after his release, the Mumbai terror attack mastermind and founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was welcomed by showers of rose petals and a freedom cake. Although Saeed is staunchly anti-West, he had no hesitation in following the Western tradition of cake cutting to celebrate his freedom. In a sermon, soon after his release, Hafiz vowed to continue his struggle to "free" Kashmir from India. His threat to India issued in mid-December in Lahore is that he will *avenge the creation of Bangladesh by liberating Kashmir*. According to Saeed, "The road leading to revenge is in progress in Kashmir and this movement would intensify in the near future as it has to go a long way".<sup>1</sup>

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Dr **Shalini Chawla** is a Senior Fellow and Mr **E. Dilipraj** is an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

1. Supriya Krishnamurthy, "Will Avenge Creation of Bangladesh by Liberating Kashmir", says Global Terrorist Hafiz Saeed", December 16, 2017, <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/pakistan-news/will-avenge-creation-of-bangladesh-by-liberating-kashmirsays-global-terrorist-hafiz-saeed>. Accessed on January 1, 2018.



Saeed has been one of the most acknowledged terrorist and his release clearly added to the stress in US-Pakistan relations. New Delhi has been outraged, expressed deep disappointment and sees Saeed's release as "an attempt by the Pakistani system to mainstream proscribed terrorists". Saeed has serious plans to enter mainstream politics and launched his political party, the Milli Muslim League (MML) while he was under house arrest. He is ready to contest in the upcoming elections on July 25, 2018, indicating a dangerous trend in a struggling democracy.

Pakistan has adopted a rather contradictory and inconsistent approach with Saeed which invariably shapes up owing to the intensity of the international pressure, especially US pressure. On the one hand, in November 2017, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, claimed that there was no case against Hafiz Saeed and he challenged India to prosecute him internationally if New Delhi could find the proof to do so. Earlier, former President Pervez Musharraf had termed himself a big supporter of Hafiz Saeed. According to the former army chief, the LeT is a "trusted support" in Kashmir. Saeed has the open support of the serving Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, who has hailed Saeed as "active" to "resolve" the Kashmir issue. On the other hand, the Pakistan government says that it will push ahead with its plans to seize control of charities run by Hafiz Saeed and has taken steps to discourage the MML from contesting the elections.

The MML, the political front of the JuD was designated as a foreign terrorist organisation by the US. In April this year, the US identified the MML and Tehreek-i-Azadi-i-Kashmir (TAK) as LeT affiliates, making it impossible for these parties to contest elections.<sup>2</sup> Also, seven members of the MML central leadership, who have been acting on behalf of the LeT, have been designated as foreign terrorists.<sup>3</sup> This makes it extremely difficult for the MML to contest elections as the Pakistan government cannot ignore the US designation and register the MML as a political party for the July elections. The MML was denied registration by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP),

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2. Anwar Iqbal, "US Undermines MML Effort to Register as Political Party", *Dawn*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1399259>. Accessed on May 21, 2018.

3. *Ibid*.

but this has not deterred Hafiz Saeed's JuD from contesting elections. The group has decided to contest the elections on the platform of a dormant political entity – Allah-u-Akbar Tehreek (AAT)—registered with the ECP. According to a member of the JuD, the AAT “was kind of dormant party registered by a citizen, Ehsan. There are several such parties registered with the ECP and such an arrangement is made ahead of the general elections if any mainstream party or organization faces any issues or complications.”<sup>4</sup>

At the time of writing this paper, the MML appears to be all set to contest the elections on the AAT platform. Although Hafiz Saeed himself would not be contesting, media reports in Pakistan suggest that the MML will field more than 200 educated candidates.

The US and India have been consistently putting pressure on Pakistan to act against Saeed. China (till now!) has opposed any Indian move that demands action against Pakistan on account of terrorism. Saeed has enjoyed the indirect support of Beijing in countering Indian moves against him at the international level. However, recently, there have been reports suggesting Chinese discomfort with Saeed. According to media reports, on the sidelines of the Baa Forum in China this year, Beijing asked Islamabad to explore ways to relocate Hafiz Saeed to a West Asian country, in the wake of rising international pressure.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Pakistan government has taken a few (cosmetic) actions, Saeed is undoubtedly seen by Pakistan as a vital strategic asset and enjoys a heroic status in the society. Even though he has been designated as a terrorist and his political party, the MML, was not allowed to register, he is free to hold rallies and gatherings in Pakistan. His sermons during the rallies invariably carry anti-India messages and urge support for Kashmir.

The important question is: how does Saeed manage to garner this popular support within Pakistan? Charitable services offered by the JuD do have a major role in his image building but it is also extensive use of social media which has given this larger than life image to

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4. “Mumbai Attack Mastermind Hafiz Saeed's JuD to Contest Pakistan General Elections”, *The Economic Times*, June 2, 2018.
  5. Mubashir Zaidi, “China Wants Pakistan to Relocate to a West Asian Country”, *The Hindu*, May 24, 2018, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-wants-pakistan-to-relocate-hafiz-saeed-to-a-west-asian-country/article23972788.ece>.

the JuD and its leader. The organisation enjoys support from both urban and rural sections in Pakistan. It is noteworthy that the JuD claims that it will have about 200 'educated elites' as candidates in the July elections. It is important to look into JuD's extensive activities in the cyber domain to be able to understand Hafiz Saeed's projected heroism in the Pakistani society.

### **DIGITALISATION OF TERRORISM: JUD'S CYBER FOOTPRINT**

The internet, and especially the social media platforms, have become a force to reckon with in making as well as breaking things in global affairs. Though the benefits of the cyber world need no explanation, as is evident from the everyday dependence the real-world has on this virtual space, its downside cannot be ignored. One such downside is the exploitation of these virtual platforms of communications and operations by terrorists and other anti-social elements to carry out their evil missions and cyber-enabled terrorism.

The Jamaat-ud-Dawa has exploited the cyber realm to garner mass support for its ideological propaganda and anti-India sentiments. Its cyber activities are mainly focussed on the aspects of publicity, propaganda, fund-raising and psychological manipulation. In this direction, the organisation operates websites, blogs, and has a heavy presence in social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, etc which are created, operated and maintained by its *exclusive cyber team*. The websites run by the organisation generally contain all the information from its history, leaders, ideology, agenda, publications, speeches of its leaders and popular statements made by its leaders, apart from photo and video galleries. In fact, Hafiz Saeed launched the official website "<http://jamatdawa.net/>" on May 31, 2012 with the agenda to reach a wider audience (refer Fig 1).

Fig 1: Screenshot of www.jamatdawa.net (Old Website of JuD - 2012)



The JuD’s cyber team complements its cyber presence along with its website in terms of blogs as well. For instance, “<https://judofficial.wordpress.com/>” is a blogsite which had active posts till mid-2013 and “<http://cyberteamjud.blogspot.in/>” is also a blogsite claimed to have been operated by the JuD’s cyber team with active posts till mid-2016. Both these blog sites seem dormant for now. However, one of the organisation’s wings operating from the district of Mirpurkhas, in the province of Sindh, manages an active bilingual website “<http://jdpmps.weebly.com/>”, with a host of content, including videos, live video streaming, e-books, pamphlets, posters and photo gallery. The website also has a link to download a computer game called ‘Age of Jihad’ which promotes the organisation’s agenda besides *violence against non-Muslims*.

Additionally, another website that was found during this research, supposedly operated by the JuD is “<http://jamatdawa.webs.com/#>” which is like an information database of the organisation filled with e-library resources as well as videos, audios and articles of the organisation’s leaders like Hafiz Saeed, Abdur Rehman Makki, etc. Besides serving as an information database, the website provides links to the organisation’s various social media pages which are mostly active and thriving. There is also a clone of the same website found in another URL: “<http://jamatdawa.blogspot.in/>”.

Apart from all these websites, the current active official website of the JuD Karachi is "http://markaztaqwa.com/" (refer Fig 2). The image reflects violent sentiments and the JuD's appeal for Kashmir in one of the pictures. Apart from providing a host of information and news related to the JuD, the website boasts about the numbers of its followers on its social media platform and provides a Whatsapp number.

Fig 2: Screenshot of JuD's Active Website



The JuD's social media presence is strong and, in fact, the organisation puts more effort in its social media platforms in order to easily reach the vulnerable minds of the masses. The JuD maintains its presence on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Google+, YouTube and WhatsApp. Although, Facebook and Twitter have suspended a few accounts of the JuD and Hafiz Saeed in the past,<sup>6</sup> there are many active social media accounts associated with the JuD. Table 1 provides ample information about the active social media accounts associated with the JuD.

6. Rahul Tripathi, "The Official Twitter Account of Hafiz Saeed Suspended", *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2016, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/the-official-twitter-account-of-hafiz-saeed-suspended/articleshow/53207063.cms>. Accessed on November, 16, 2017.

**Table 1: Information on the Active Social Media Accounts of JuD  
(As on January 25, 2018)**

Social Media Platform	Account Name	Status	Likes/ Followers
Facebook	Taqwa Islamic Centre	Active	32,250 likes and followers.
	Khyber Centre Faisalabad	Active	3,830 likes and followers.
	Qadsia Islamic Centre	Active	73,892 followers and 71,297 likes.
	Taiba Islamic Centre	Dormant	700 plus followers. Last post on August 14, 2017.
	Jamaat-ud-Dawah	Dormant	Last post on March 8, 2017.
	JuD Ct Lhr	Dormant	Last post July 19, 2017.
Google+	Cyber Team Jamaat-ud-Dawah	Dormant	Last post October 31, 2016.
Flickr	Qadsia Islamic Centre	Active	Operated with the mail id: cyberteamlhr@yahoo.com

Hafiz Saeed's political party, the MML, uses its own cyber presence to propagate itself. Despite the fact that the party's registration has been denied by the country's election commission, the party maintains an official website: "<http://millimuslimleague.org/>", which is a bilingual platform. It is noteworthy that this nascent party has more than 3,158 followers to its official twitter page: @MMLOfficial1. Also, the Lahore wing of the party maintains a Facebook page with approximately 7,804 followers.

The overt support of, and nurturing by, the Pakistani government to Saeed and his organisation, the JuD, has allowed it to thrive in the cyber domain despite mounting international pressure. No sincere

efforts have been made to curb the organisation's activities, especially in the cyber domain, which is evident from the thriving use of the social media by the JuD.

The social media usage by the JuD and its elements is on an upward trend and it is expected to grow more due to the organisation's efforts to nurture further cyber warriors. In this direction, the JuD organises workshops and training programmes for its followers on the use and exploitation of the internet and social media from time to time (Fig 3).

**Fig 3: Social Media Workshops and Training of JuD**



Despite a few instances where the JuD's social media accounts had been taken down by the authorities of the respective social media platforms, based on complaints, the JuD is able to bring back its presence mainly due to the inert nature of social media platforms which do not require verification and authorisation of actual identity.

Moreover, since the JuD does not operate just one website or social media page, rather has multiple platforms supposedly operated and maintained by the respective regional cyber teams, it becomes difficult to track and take down all of them at the same time. Therefore, even if one account is suspended by the authorities, other accounts become active, and in no time, they come back with several new accounts. Also, if one observes the active social media accounts of the JuD, it becomes evident that many Facebook pages are active and thriving, however, the Twitter pages of these same accounts have already been taken down.

**Table 2: Examples of Links to Hate Speeches and JuD Supportive Videos on Youtube**

Video/Channel in YouTube	Link
Hafiz Saeed Amer Jamaat-ud-Dawa Speech	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pda4fWHDiU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pda4fWHDiU</a>
Hafiz Saeed Speech In Kashmir Rally, Rawalpindi July 20, 2016	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_exH4CMG0KY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_exH4CMG0KY</a>
Milli Muslim League - Youtube Channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9yixcpv6t3DM5Mg_VMP3Mw">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9yixcpv6t3DM5Mg_VMP3Mw</a>
Qadsia Islamic Centre – Youtube Channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA Ae3Lib35B0Vy8J3wA4sAg/videos">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA Ae3Lib35B0Vy8J3wA4sAg/videos</a>
Qadsia Islamic Centre Okara – Youtube Channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4HjppmlqJfs9fw-8yHwe5w/videos">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4HjppmlqJfs9fw-8yHwe5w/videos</a>

The JuD has been actively pursuing extremist objectives and anti-India propaganda through hate speeches and videos on Youtube (Table 2.). Interestingly, YouTube has very disturbed relations with Pakistan. Pakistan blocked access to YouTube, first, on February 22, 2008, because of the number of “non-Islamic objectionable videos.” On February 26, 2008, the ban was lifted after the website had removed the objectionable content from its servers at the request of the government.

Again, on May 20, 2010, the government blocked Youtube and several other websites due to the response to a competition entitled “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day” on Facebook, in a bid to contain “blasphemous” material. The ban was lifted on May 27, 2010, after the website removed the objectionable content from its servers at the request of the government. However, individual videos deemed offensive to Muslims that are posted on YouTube continued to be blocked.

Once again, in September 2012, YouTube was blocked by Pakistan for not removing an anti-Islamic film made in the United States, *Innocence of Muslims*, which mocks Mohammed. This time, the blockage extended for almost three years and, finally, it was only in September 2016 that the ban was lifted, after YouTube started a local version for the country.



### **CAN THE INTERNET COMPANIES COOPERATE?**

In this background, owing to the overwhelming utility of the internet based social media platforms, there is some sort of responsibility that emerges for the internet companies towards 'peace' worldwide. On some cases related to national security, these companies are also expected to be liable for the damage caused through their platforms. In this case, it will be useful to look into the questions that emerge about the internet giants who eventually serve as support mechanisms for these terror outfits:

- How much liability are these internet giants willing to acknowledge on issues concerning a country's national security?
- To what extent are the internet giants ready to cooperate with individual countries in safeguarding national interests?
- Though the internet giants respond to complaints regarding objectionable content, will there be any nation-wise screening for content in the future according to the respective national interest?
- Will these internet giants be ready to cooperate at the policy level with a country such as India and allow India to use their platforms for the counter-narrative against terrorist organisations like the JuD operating from Pakistan?

### **CONCLUSION**

The JuD has managed to use the social media quite successfully to garner popular support. The Pakistani leadership needs to understand that these hate speeches and anti-India propaganda are strengthening extremism in its society which will be impossible to counter through military means. Growth of radical extremism in the society would invariably deter the overall development of the nation. The Pakistan military has been very proud of its anti-terror operations (especially Zarb-i-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad) and claims to have successfully defeated the Taliban on the frontier borders. But, giving leverage and support to Saeed, and allowing the growth of his cyber footprint has serious repercussions for the Pakistani society. Pakistan needs to understand that a reduction in the number of terrorists will not eradicate terrorism from Pakistan—it is the wave of extremism that needs to be countered. There have been surprising examples of

the Islamic State's (IS') successful attempts of convincing educated Pakistani youth to join the outfit. The IS has been making inroads into Pakistan mainly through the cyber domain. The prevailing extremism and hatred in the society allows easy access to the militant outfits, which see a potential recruitment pool in Pakistan.

Sincere efforts by Pakistan are required to address terrorism, and the leadership needs to take steps to counter Saeed's cyber presence which is propagating hatred and extremism. With an expanded cyber footprint, the appeal for Saeed's extremist ideas would continue to grow and impact the young minds in Pakistan. Saeed 'consistently' claims that the JuD is a charitable organisation, but the organisation claims to *intensify its activities* for the so-called "Kashmir cause", as pronounced by the Pakistani leadership.

Since social media is here to stay and its utility and use is only going to increase in the future, it is time for India to think about the aspect of institutionalising the counter narratives and feeding these across the border through posts using the same social media platforms and other sources of the internet – in short, a social media strike force for the nation.

# REVISITING US-NORTH KOREA STANDOFF IN THE CURRENT UNCERTAIN TIMES: ANY LESSONS LEARNT?

HINA PANDEY

## PRESIDENT TRUMP'S U-TURN ON SINGAPORE TALKS

Are the peace talks between President Trump and the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, finally going to take place? Nothing can be said with certainty at the time of writing this article. They were on track until May 24, 2018, when President Trump decided to cancel<sup>1</sup> the talks. In his letter to the North Korean leader, he expressed regret for cancelling the talks and, at the same time, justified its rationale as based on the "tremendous anger and open hostility displayed"<sup>2</sup> by Kim Jong Un in his recent statement. But three days later, he was again expressing the possibility of holding them as scheduled.

It is also important to note that prior to President Trump's cancellation, on May 15, 2018, North Korea too, had threatened to cut off talks with South Korea as well as the planned US-North Korea Summit, citing military exercises between the United States and

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1. "President Donald Trump's Letter to Kim Jong Un Canceling the Summit", May 24, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/24/politics/donald-trump-letter-kim-jong-un/index.html>. Accessed on May 24, 2018.
2. Ibid.

South Korea as a reason. Interestingly, a day after this threat, the US-South Korea military exercise “Max Thunder” took place<sup>3</sup> involving some 100 warplanes, and a number of B-52 bombers and F-15K jets.<sup>4</sup>

It is confusing that within hours of North Korea destroying its Punggye-ri nuclear test site,<sup>5</sup> President Trump decided to cancel the upcoming summit that could have promised not just stability amidst the nuclear tensions, but, at the same time, provided an opportunity for President Trump to leave behind a successful legacy by creating some understanding on the Korean peninsula’s nuclear stalemate. If the meeting does take place, this would be the first time a sitting American president would have a face-to-face meeting with any North Korean leader.

Is there still hope? Is there any possibility that these talks will be rescheduled? Nothing can be said with certainty at this point as back and forth cancellation of nuclear talks is a rather recognised pattern in the US-DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) interactions. This is not the first time that an abrupt cancellation of talks has occurred. Historically, the attempts to resolve the nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula have been marked by extreme possibilities of achieving a breakthrough in the stalemate, on the one hand, and a complete halt to negotiations, on the other. What is imperative in this context is to raise the important questions of whether any lessons have been learnt from all the past experiences, and what they imply in the current nuclear imbroglio. It is for this purpose that the US-North Korea nuclear interactions need to be revisited.

### **SEPTEMBER NUCLEAR CRISIS (2017)**

In September 2017, North Korea *crossed an important nuclear threshold in its nuclear weapons programme*.<sup>6</sup> On September 3, 2017, Pyongyang conducted its sixth nuclear test which was claimed to be a hydrogen bomb test. While experts differ on whether this

3. “South Korea, US to Work Closely on Summit After Pyongyang’s About-Face,” <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/20/south-korea-us-to-work-closely-on-summit-after-pyongyangs-about-face.html>. Accessed on May 22, 2018.

4. “N Korea Cancels Talks With South Korea and Warns US”, May 15, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44133308>. Accessed on May 18, 2018.

5. Choe Sang-Hun, “North Korea Said It Destroyed Nuclear Site, Hours Before Trump Canceled Meeting”, May 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/asia/north-korea-shuts-nuclear-test-site.html>. Accessed on May 24, 2018.

6. David Santoro, “Three Futures for the Korean Peninsula”, *Japan Review*, vol.1, no.3, spring 2018, pp.73-78.

test makes the North Korean nuclear threat potent and whether North Korea actually possesses the capability to build a hydrogen bomb, this, however, was reported as one of the most powerful nuclear tests by the country with a possible 100-kiloton yield. Interestingly, early in January 2017 itself, during his New Year's Day speech, Kim Jong Un had announced that his country was in the last stage of preparations to test an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). In May 2017, he also hinted at strong resolve to go ahead with the weapons programme, even at the cost of risking friendship with the country's closest ally – China – if it tried to limit the North Korean tests. It is to be reckoned that by this time, the country had already tested its 12th Pukguksong-II Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM), conducted its largest military drill ever in order to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Korean People's Army (KPA), and also conducted the flight test of its ICBM Hwasong-14 that coincided with the Americans' celebration of their independence.<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that in 2017 alone, North Korea conducted approximately 15 nuclear and missile tests in total, the latest one allegedly being of a hydrogen bomb.

While views differ on whether the DPRK has demonstrated a capability of reaching the continental United States post the September 2017 nuclear test, tensions certainly escalated between the US and North Korea with a war of words. Some nuclear experts even viewed the nuclear crisis as transcending from a *proliferation problem to a deterrent problem*. Scott Sagan, in his recent article published in *Foreign Affairs* viewed the overall play of these factors as posing immediate dangers, wherein the possibility of *accidental war due to miscalculation, a misperceived military action or a false warning was alarmingly high*. The situation, according to him, was compounded because of the presence of *unpredictable and impulsive leadership on both sides*.<sup>8</sup> Others viewed the Korean peninsula crisis as appearing to be "*the Cuban missile crisis in slow motion*"<sup>9</sup> as there

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7. Ashutosh Kumar, *North Korea Crisis and International Security Problem* (New Delhi: Aarti Prakashan, 2017), pp.94-107.

8. Scott Sagan, "The Korean Missile Crisis: Why Deterrence Is Still the Best Option", *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2017.

9. David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "The Cuban Missile Crisis in Slow Motion", *The New York Times*, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/16/us/politics/north-korea-missile-crisis-slow-motion.html>. Accessed on January 9, 2018.

was a relentless drive to assemble the nuclear arsenal, propaganda and uncertainty surrounding the North Korean leadership and hints of military action by the United States.

If one contextualises these observations with North Korean Minister Ri Su Yung's response to President Trump's United Nations General Assembly speech,<sup>10</sup> one may find the possibility of a crisis escalating into a larger military action even more palpable. The North Korean Foreign Minister clearly viewed President Trump's speech as a "declaration of war on North Korea."<sup>11</sup> The possibility of conflict on the Korean peninsula became very real, and it was perceived that it was US aggression that would bring about that conflict. Many in Seoul viewed this as being thrust directly into the line of fire by an ally.<sup>12</sup>

It is, indeed, true that tensions on the Korean peninsula last September (2017) had escalated to levels not anticipated, yet after almost six months of sabre rattling, peace talks in April 2018 between the DPRK and ROK (Republic of Korea) were held in order to resolve the crisis. Kim Jong Un became the first North Korean leader to visit South Korea. This summit generated a lot of hope as it put the agenda of denuclearisation back onto the negotiation table. Experts viewed it as the "start of a period of better relations between the two Koreas".<sup>13</sup> What was truly historic was the establishment of a direct phone line<sup>14</sup> between Moon and Kim. Other than that, Pyongyang also offered to have direct talks with the US, as well as halt its nuclear and missile tests as a part of the understanding between Kim and Moon.

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10. Kelly Swanson, "Trump's Full Speech to the UN General Assembly," September 19, 2017, at <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/19/16333290/trump-full-speech-transcript-un-general-assembly>. Accessed on May 25, 2018.
  11. Hina Pandey, "Implications of North Korean Nuclear Exchange for South Asia: Hypothetical, Reality and Possible Options", *South Asian Voices*, November 27, 2017, Available at <https://southasianvoices.org/implications-north-korean-nuclear-exchange-south-asia-hypothetical-reality-india-options/>. Accessed on April 28, 2018.
  12. Karl Friedhoff, "Why Trump's Cancellation of the North Korea Summit May Undermine the US-South Korea Alliance", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, May 24, 2018, at <https://thebulletin.org/why-trumps-cancellation-north-korea-summit-may-undermine-us-south-korea-alliance11847>. Accessed on May 26, 2018.
  13. Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The Inter-Korean Summit: When Moon Met Kim", *ISDP*, <http://isdpeu/expert-interview-the-inter-korean-summit-when-moon-met-kim/>. Accessed on May 17, 2018.
  14. Yi Whan-woo, "Moon, Kim Connected With Direct Hotline", *The Korea Times*, April 20, 2018, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/04/103\\_247603.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/04/103_247603.html). Accessed on May 20, 2018.

However, many differences between North Korea and the US persist.

While the US strategy had been focussed on (a) preventing North Korea from acquiring nuclear capability; (b) preventing the spread of nuclear weapons technology to other nations; and (c) getting the country to remain within the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, it is the exact opposite which has manifested in the North Korean case.

### **CRISIS ROOTED IN THE US-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS**

Broadly, the United States had two significant opportunities to accomplish these goals. The first was during the period of the 1990s when the US and DPRK had interacted to conclude the Agreed Framework (AF) in 1994. However, the succeeding Bush Administration rejected the accord in totality. A second opportunity came in the 2000s, when China was able to initiate the Six-Party Talks (6-PT). But these talks collapsed partially due to the severity of US sanctions that aimed at targeting the DPRK's financial assets, mainly the Banco Delta Asia Bank and the delay in providing the Light Water Reactors (LWRs) by the US-ROK consortium. It was rather unfortunate that it was during the Clinton and Bush Administrations that most of the US-DPRK interactions had occurred and yet it was in these Administrations that the deterioration of the relations too occurred. The US had missed opportunities to reverse North Korea's nuclear pursuit.

It is true that during the years 1993-98, which were the years of US-North Korean interactions on the nuclear issues, several times the negotiation process went from almost reaching a breakthrough to near collapse of the talks. Misperceptions on both sides bedevilled the negotiation process: for instance, the DPRK viewed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections as US motivated, with an agenda to get North Korea's past history of its n-programme especially the amount of weapons grade plutonium produced. The IAEA wanted to inspect the sites of waste storage that were undeclared by the DPRK. The refusal by the DPRK further invited tough action from the US in terms of newer sanctions. This was inevitably viewed by North Korea as an act of war, as severe economic

sanctions would ultimately bring about an economic collapse of the country. Other issues that prevented the talks from going any further were the prospects of the DPRK replacing its graphite moderated nuclear reactor with the LWR – the delay in which resulted in the North Korean perception that the US was not keeping its part of the agreement under the Agreed Framework.<sup>15</sup>

When the talks reached a stalemate, the US responded with the deployment of Patriot missiles in Korea which further raised the threat perception of the DPRK. It is noteworthy that the AF was reached only when the US had agreed to suspend Exercise “Team Spirit,” as asked by Pyongyang. However, the situation became worse when the US reversed its position on opening the high level talks and made them conditional on actual exchange of nuclear envoys between the two Koreas. Each time one of the negotiation parties took a step forward, the other would respond with further non-cooperation. For instance, after the US’ insistence of preconditions for the talks, the DPRK responded by interfering with the IAEA inspections and even prevented the IAEA inspectors from carrying out tests.<sup>16</sup> All this was followed by the cancellation of the talks and the US’ resumption of the “Team Spirit” Exercise. The crisis began to unfold for the fourth time in the period from April-June 1994 when the DPRK expressed its intent to refuel its research reactor at Yongbyon. Finally, a breakthrough was reached when, in its inspection results, the IAEA had concluded that no evidence had been found that suggested that the DPRK had reprocessed plutonium in the period after 1993.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, after many rounds of pushback on both sides, the ‘Geneva Agreed Framework’ was reached between the US and North Korea. It committed the US to arrange for the LWRs and also compelled the US to provide for alternative energy supplies of oil to end the country’s diplomatic and economic isolation. The Agreed Framework was to be implemented over 10 years in three phases. On North Korea’s part, it agreed to remain an NPT member, implement the IAEA inspections,

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15. James A. Bayer, “The North Korean Nuclear Crisis And The Agreed Framework: How Not To Negotiate With North Koreans”, *Asian Perspective*, vol. 19, no. 2, Special Issue on Northeast Asia, Fall-Winter 1995, pp. 191-222.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.



freeze its nuclear programme and eventually dismantle its existing nuclear facilities.<sup>18</sup>

### *Bush Administration's Flip on Agreed Framework*

While everything seemed to be in place with the Agreed Framework (AF), the succeeding Bush Administration took a more hardline approach to North Korea and even suspended the fuel oil shipments agreed under the AF during the Clinton Presidency. By the end of 2002, North Korea ordered the IAEA inspectors out of the country. The Agreed Framework had collapsed. The relationship hit a new low in 2003 when the DPRK officially withdrew from the NPT, and within months it became evident that the DPRK had at least one nuclear weapon.<sup>19</sup>

The Bush Administration's re-engagement with North Korea occurred in the form of the Six-Party Talks, which manifested in a joint statement in 2005 that committed North Korea to once again give up its nuclear weapons programme, accede to the NPT, allow IAEA inspections, while retaining its right to peaceful nuclear energy. Yet, in 2006, provoked by the US' targeting of its financial assets and the pace of the LWR project, the DPRK broke its moratorium on testing medium- and long-range missiles. Since then, the country has consistently conducted its nuclear and missile tests to acquire a nuclear deterrent against the US. It is, indeed, true that the American approach to prevent North Korea from going nuclear has failed, the reason for which lies partially in a lack of understanding of North Korea during the missed opportunities.

### **ANY LESSONS LEARNT?**

Almost a month after North Korea tested in September 2017, the official US assessments indicated that Washington had an 18-month window to resolve the issue.<sup>20</sup> The cancellation of talks after 10 months of slow progress, thus, may be bad news. However, there may still be

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18. Bayer, n.15.

19. Priyanka Boghani, "The US and North Korea On The Brink: A Timeline", *Frontline*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-u-s-and-north-korea-on-the-brink-a-timeline/>. Accessed on May 22, 2018. And George Moore, "America's Failed North Korea Nuclear Policy: A New Approach", *Asian Perspective*, vol. 32, no.4, 2008, pp-09-27.

20. "Preparing for What Comes Next in North Korea", *Stratfor*, October 31, 2017.

a possibility that the talks will be resumed as President Trump seems personally invested in making a deal to secure a foreign policy win for the White House. On the other hand, Kim too has responded to the letter in an unusually restrained and diplomatic manner, that he is still willing to sit for talks with the United States “at any time, (in) any format.”<sup>21</sup> If the talks do take place on June 12, 2018, in Singapore and if both parties desire that a stalemate be avoided, both sides have to unlearn their perceived notions and undo the mistakes of the past that have overshadowed their interactions. Two of these are particularly worthy of mention.

*The American Pressure Tactics Might be Perceived as Threatening the Regime*

The US-RoK military exercises such as ‘Team Spirit’ during the negotiation period have acted as a spoiler to the peace process. This year too, after the Kim-Moon talks, the US-RoK had conducted the military exercise “Max Thunder” with B-52 bombers and F-22 stealth fighters symbolising nuclear capability combined with the US’ ability to decapitate North Korea. This must have given an impression to North Korea that Max Thunder was no routine exercise but a demonstration of President Trump’s “fire and fury”. So, clearly, with President Trump signalling diplomacy and weapons capability at the same time, North Korea gets mixed signals. Fitzpatrick has argued that may be “Max Thunder” was a way of showing that maximum pressure was still in play. The purpose could be to pressure North Korea to make concrete concessions in meeting what remains the American goal: “Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement” (CVID) of the nuclear programme.<sup>22</sup> The point is that North Korea sees these pressure tactics as threatening the regime and it becomes a deal breaker.

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21. “South Korea Relieved About Trump-Kim Summit Revival Efforts,” *CNBC*, May 26, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/26/south-korea-relieved-about-trump-kim-summit-revival-efforts.html>. Accessed on May 27, 2018.

22. Mark Fitzpatrick, “On Again-Off Again: Korean Summit”, *IJSS*, <https://www.ijss.org/en/politics%20and%20strategy/blogsections/2018-4cda/may-ba86/on-again-off-again-korean-summit-3d0c>. Accessed on May 25, 2018.

***Mismatch between the Definition and Approach of Denuclearisation***

It is clear that President Trump's overarching goal has always been the denuclearisation<sup>23</sup> of the Korean peninsula. The Panmunjon Summit too had indicated that for the US, denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula tops the agenda. This issue, however, is highly complex and contentious as the key actors have varying perceptions of denuclearisation. According to President Trump, "it implies the DPRK get rid of its nuclear arsenal". However, for North Korea, it may not mean the same, especially when it has not made any explicit pledge towards it. Additionally, it is suspected that for the DPRK, a denuclearisation process would mean some kind of *quid-pro-quo* arrangement.<sup>24</sup> It is to be noted here that Kim Jong Un has declared his country's nuclear deterrent complete and he is not likely to give up what he has achieved after years of effort. While it seems Kim Jong Un prefers a phased approach, including reciprocal steps from the US and South Korea on the sanctions as well as the easing of US military presence in South Korea, it is still unclear whether President Trump is supportive of that approach.<sup>25</sup>

**RIGHT NOW IS THE TIME TO SEIZE THE DAY AND DEAL!**

Finally, both sides must realise that they both have the opportunity to create a historic pathway towards the generation of peace by reducing the threat of nuclear weapons' presence in the Korean peninsula. In the context of rescheduling of talks, it must be acknowledged that going forward in future would be difficult for both countries, especially for the US, as it is likely to experience less support for its pressure campaigns from its allies. North Korea, too, might find it useful to refrain from its habit of issuing threats of cancelling the talks, etc. This time also, North Korea has indicated that it will cut off all communications with

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23. David Nakamura, Anna Fifield and John Wagner, "Trump's Cancellation of Summit With Kim Raises Fears of Renewed Tensions, Destabilization," *The Washington Post*, May 24, 2018.

24. Maj. Gen. G. G. Dwivedia, "Historic Summit at Panmunjom", May 4, 2018, *IDSA*, <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/historic-summit-at-panmunjom-ggdwivedi-040518>. Accessed on May 28, 2018.

25. "US and North Korea Preparing Trump-Kim Summit," *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44274514>. Accessed on May 28, 2018.

the RoK – further jeopardising the talks.<sup>26</sup> The US, on the other hand, could have refrained from mentioning the Libya model for denuclearisation. It is to be noted here that Libya’s Mohammad Qaddafi had given up the country’s nuclear programme in 2003 and was subsequently killed by the US in 2011. Suggesting that the Libya model could be applicable to North Korea may be a bad example if the US is looking at reaching a comprehensive solution to the nuclear threat emanating from Pyongyang.

**Postscript**

The Singapore Summit was concluded on 12 June 2018. It resulted in a joint statement by North Korea and the United States, in which both the sides have agreed as follows:

1. The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new US-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity. (DPRK stands for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the formal name of North Korea.)
2. The US and the DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.
3. Reaffirming the **April 27, 2018, Panmunjom Declaration**, the DPRK commits to work toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
4. The US and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

Complete text of the agreement can be accessed at - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-president-donald-j-trump-united-states-america-chairman-kim-jong-un-democratic-peoples-republic-korea-singapore-summit/>

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26. Gee Wook Shin, “Trump Needs Leadership and Allies to Salvage the North Korea Summit,” <https://www.axios.com/trump-needs-leadership-and-allies-to-salvage-the-north-korea-summit-a9efff0a-3cd6-43f4-a3c7-f9dcaae8f20.html>. Accessed on May 28, 2018.

# THE DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: US' NEXT TARGET TO CONTAIN RUSSIA'S MILITARY RESURGENCE

**CHANDRA REKHA**

As influential global players, Russia and the United States share a huge responsibility alongside other global actors to maintain peace and global security. Ironically, the existence of great power rivalry, hostility and tension between the two has become a growing global security concern today. The strain in the bilateral relations is argued to have led to the emergence of a 'new Cold War'. Interestingly, the main focus of the conflict seems to be restricted to the military sphere including a defence trade war. Rightly so, as, for the US, the real competition from Russia's reassertiveness in international relations today mainly comes from its military resurgence in recent years. President Vladimir Putin, in his address on March 1, 2018, was proud to highlight how Russia has 'recovered' from the debacle of the Soviet collapse. Some of the key aspects of Russia's revival include cyber tactics, military capabilities, agricultural production, economic space and other capabilities to overcome strategic uncertainty. A key inference drawn

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from the presidential address was Russia's revamped military capabilities and preparedness – a warning that the West cannot afford to ignore.

### **RUSSIA'S MILITARY RESURGENCE**

Today, Russia's economy, infrastructural development, including the Defence Industrial Complex (DIC) and armed forces have risen to the level of supporting the necessary strategic potential to defend Russia from the 'provocateur' – the US. To counter the military expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), President Putin stated that a great deal has been done to improve the Russian Army and Navy. "The Armed Forces now have 3.7 times more modern weapons. Over 300 new units of equipment were put into service. The strategic missile troops received 80 new intercontinental ballistic missiles, 102 submarine-launched ballistic missiles and three Borei nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. Twelve missile regiments have received the new Yars intercontinental ballistic missile. The number of long-range high-precision weapons carriers has increased by 12 times, while the number of guided cruise missiles increased by over 30 times. The Army, the Aerospace Forces and the Navy have grown significantly stronger as well with newest planes, submarines, anti-aircraft weapons, as well as land-based, airborne and sea-based guided missile systems equipped with cutting-edge and high-tech weapons. A solid radar field to warn of a missile attack has been created along Russia's perimeter."<sup>1</sup>

Russia also claimed to have developed a highly effective system to overcome missile defences that are installed in NATO member states in Western Europe – Romania and Poland – which are in close proximity to the Russian borders. In the words of Putin, to "*American and European partners who are NATO members: we will make the necessary efforts to neutralise the threats posed by the deployment of the US global missile defence system,*" thus, sending a note of caution to the US and its allies. President Putin, in this context, stated that Russia is set to replace the Voevoda system made in the USSR and

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1. Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, President of Russia, March 1, 2018. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>. Accessed on March 2, 2018.

is working on an active phase of testing a new missile system with a heavy intercontinental missile called Sarmat.<sup>2</sup>

President Putin did not hold back in highlighting Russia's nuclear capabilities as it successfully launched its latest nuclear-powered missile in 2017. Russia is also confident about building new types of weapons, which are said to have almost unlimited range, unpredictable trajectory and the ability to bypass interception boundaries. It is claimed that these new types of weapons would be invincible against all existing and prospective missile defence and counter-air defence systems. In December 2017, an innovative nuclear power unit for the unmanned underwater vehicle completed a test cycle that lasted many years.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, it was an attempt to get the world to take notice of how far Russia has come militarily, especially in emerging as a major challenger to the US' own defence capabilities such as in electronic warfare. Russia has, time and again, displayed its own way of protesting against NATO's expansion and US dominance. Through the presidential address, Putin has expressed Russia's unrelenting focus towards developing the latest weapons, defence systems including nuclear missiles, and calling on NATO to cease its eastward expansion.

### **DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: THE FOURTH PILLAR OF RUSSIA'S MILITARY RESURGENCE**

Russia's military engagement in Syria and its anti-Islamic State (IS) campaign seems to have reinstated its lost glory as a military power. However, contrary to the viewpoint that the Syrian crisis has assisted in Russia's resurgence as a military power, the revival of Russia's military status has been a long diligent process undertaken by Russia since 2000. The major credit to Russia's current military capabilities is mainly the outcome of the revival of its DIC. The contribution of the upgraded DIC in enhancing Russia's military capabilities with cutting edge technology today poses a great threat to Western interests. This

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2. Sarmat is to be equipped with a broad range of powerful nuclear warheads, including hypersonic, and the most modern means of evading missile defence. The high degree of protection of missile launchers and significant energy capabilities the system offers will make it possible to use it in any condition. Ibid.
  3. n.1.

section will focus on the measures undertaken by Russia since 2000 to revive the DIC.

The DIC, the fourth pillar of Russia's military strength, was strategically an indispensable sector for the Soviet Union's superpower status, for its economic prospects, power projection as well as a foreign policy tool. The DIC was given top priority in all state programmes as it was the main source of national revenue and attainment of national security objectives during the Soviet period. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was mainly due to the unilateral focus on hard power capabilities throughout the superpower rivalry during the Cold War period. The Soviet collapse was mainly attributed to the failure of the DIC as huge state funds were diverted for the operationalisation of this sector that resulted in a large scale financial crisis. In due course, the DIC failed to deliver the Soviet era performance in terms of sustaining Russia's military capabilities and also its position as a defence supplier nation in the global arms market following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Political leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin made futile attempts to bring systemic changes related to the transition process and reform programmes to revamp Russia's DIC post Soviet collapse.

Moreover, the weapon systems put up for sale in the global arms market by the DIC in the 1990s were obsolete in comparison to Western defence equipment and the focus was mainly given to quantity rather than efficiency. The Chechnya War (1999) was the final nail in the coffin as, despite Russia's victory, the war revealed to the world the low efficient performance of the Russian defence equipment, and its ill equipped and low morale armed forces.

After Vladimir Putin took over the reins from Yeltsin in 1999, he came with a mission to revive Russia's military status. Given the fact that it faces unprecedented financial challenges due to its unilateral dependence on energy prices, Russia has possibly concluded that sustaining military power is the only way to challenge the US and its allies. Russia, therefore, began to focus on production of advanced weapon systems, and the size of the weapons procurement had to increase in order to retain its image as an invincible military power. Hence, Russia not only had to insulate its economic growth but



also revamp its hard power status, including the operation and functioning of its DIC.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2000, Russia witnessed huge infrastructural and doctrinal changes to closely follow the global military development and defence market competition. In order to consolidate the ownership structure and to re-nationalise many defence related industries, the State Armaments Programme (SAP) for 2001-10 drastically changed the very nature of property rights in the defence industry. Programmes for the reform and development of the DIC in 2002-06 aimed to rearrange the arms industry on the foundation of “integrated structures”. The SAP covered the spheres of nuclear weapons arsenal, space systems, aviation and air defence, conventional armaments, command and control, basic military research, and equipment destined for other power structures such as interior troops, border guards, the Federal Security Service (FSB), etc.

The Putin government pushed for the creation of state-owned holding companies which was accelerated in 2006-07. The defence reforms also aimed for a drastic transformation in the structure of the command and control system. Among the key structural targets of Putin’s revival defence reforms were Promeksport and Rossiiskie Tekhnologii— the two major government companies created in 1997, officially certified to sell arms. Promokesport was later merged with Rossiyskiye Tekhnologii and a decree was signed to set up Rosoboronexport as the sole state intermediary authorised to handle arms exports and imports. In 2007, the process of state monopolisation of arms exports was completed, with Rosoboronexport gaining absolute monopoly over the international trade of defence related goods and services in Russia.<sup>5</sup>

Under the leadership of Dmitry Medvedev, in 2008, the Russian State Armaments Programmes, 2011-20 (SAP 2020) was implemented with top priority for “reorganisation”.<sup>6</sup> The programme introduced

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4. Christopher Davis, “The Defence Sector in the Economy of a Declining Superpower: Soviet Union and Russia, 1965-2000”, Discussion Paper Series, Department of Economics, No. 8, April 2000, p.6. <https://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/Research/WP/PDF/paper008.pdf>. Accessed on September 10, 2015.

5. n.1.

6. Nebojsa Bjelakovic, “Russian Military Procurement: Putin’s Impact on Decision-Making and Budgeting”, *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, August 29, 2008, URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13518040802313753>. Accessed on March 3, 2014.

by Medvedev required attention as the Georgian War of 2008 drew the attention of the Russian administration for an introspection of the 'success rate' of the Russian defence reforms introduced since 2000. After the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, the most debated aspect comprised the large-scale Russian military operational failures. It is argued that the exodus of many Russian scientists and defence cadres, the loss of many defence infrastructures and enterprises established in the former Soviet states post the Soviet collapse and the low productivity were the major drawbacks for Russia's efforts to revive the DIC.<sup>7</sup> The leadership, thus, became more determined to enhance military capabilities.

Another important feature of the SAP 2020 was that it focussed on radical innovations in military technology, especially in the defence procurement sphere. In other words, as the domestic requirements at the security arena increased, Russia did not want to compromise on upgrading its defence sector and defence forces by merely modifying Soviet weapons but to receive high end technology with new designs, high efficiency, competent and innovative technologies. It is, thus, widely argued that the failure of the previous defence reforms introduced by Putin fell short of addressing the inadequacies of the defence industrial complex in carrying out Russia's national security which led to the implementation of the SAP 2020 defence programme.

The revamping of the DIC also saw Russia retaining its position in the global arms trade within a short span. By late 2000, Russia succeeded in gaining nearly five to six large defence customers apart from its traditional partners – India and China – which included Vietnam, Venezuela, Greece, Syria, Iran and Malaysia that have signed large contracts with Russia. Clearly, the Russian arms trade gained more defence clients as it not only addressed the growing demands of the global arms market but sold cost-effective advanced weapons technologies compared to the Western arms supplying nations. As Putin once stated, "*We offer to the customers Russian military equipment*"

7. Roger McDermott, "Defense Minister Shoigu Reports on Russian Military Modernization", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 13, issue 131, July 20, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/programprogrammes/defense-minister-shoigu-reports-on-russian-military-modernization/>

*boasting the best cost effective indicators, reliability, ease of use, as well as outstanding combat performance.”<sup>8</sup>*

Russia today has regained its position in the global defence market. Some of the modern and advanced weapons capabilities of Russia competing in the global defence market are Armata tanks, rocket- propelled artillery, Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA), advanced S-400 air defence missiles system, Kilo class submarines of stealth varieties, advanced radar systems, military drones, Kinjal hypersonic missiles, and many more. Over the past few years, Russia has also significantly increased and revamped its defensive capabilities on its northern borders, building new military facilities and refurbishing old ones as well as deploying more troops and hardware to the Arctic region.<sup>9</sup>

The annual Victory Day Parade 2018 witnessed the global debuts of some of Russia’s advanced weapon systems such as the already announced Kinjal (Dagger) hypersonic missile carried by advanced MiG 31K interceptor jets, Su-57 stealth fighter aircraft and Uran 9, an unmanned armoured reconnaissance and infantry support vehicle.<sup>10</sup>

As a foreign policy tool too, Russia’s defence cooperation continues to be a dominant factor as it holds greater leverage in this sector. For instance, while China has made significant progress in international relations, military technical cooperation with Russia continues to be a key aspect in the technical upgradation of China’s defence industry. Evidently, the defence industry has assisted Russia to venture and expand its strategic interests efficiently since the Soviet collapse.

However, in order to keep the momentum in reviving Russia’s DIC, any impact on the economic progress will have a domino effect on the domestic policies such as the defence reforms, including a halt on Russia’s aspirations to re-emerge as an influential global power. Reliance purely on the defence economy has been sidelined by Russia, unlike the Soviet Union, but, at the same time, the dependence on

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8. Rosoboronexport Home page, <http://roe.ru/eng/>. Accessed on April 23, 2018.

9. “Russian Anti-Sub Military Jets Flew Over the North Pole Towards North America for First Time Since the Soviet Times,” *Russian Aviation*, March 29, 2018, <https://www.ruaviation.com/news/2018/3/29/11105/>. Accessed on May 2, 2018.

10. “Russia Displays Advanced Weapons in Victory Day Parades”, Press TV, May 9, 2018. <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/05/09/561150/Russia-Victory-Day-Parade>. Accessed on May 10, 2018.

an unstable and unpredictable energy market has impacted Russia's programmes. Putin's economic policies, thus, must go hand in hand with the defence reforms programmes. For Russia to sustain its DIC, it needs to catch up with the changing trends in the defence procurement pattern, insulate its economic growth, promote market diversification, and focus on consistent upgradation with high-tech weaponry demand.

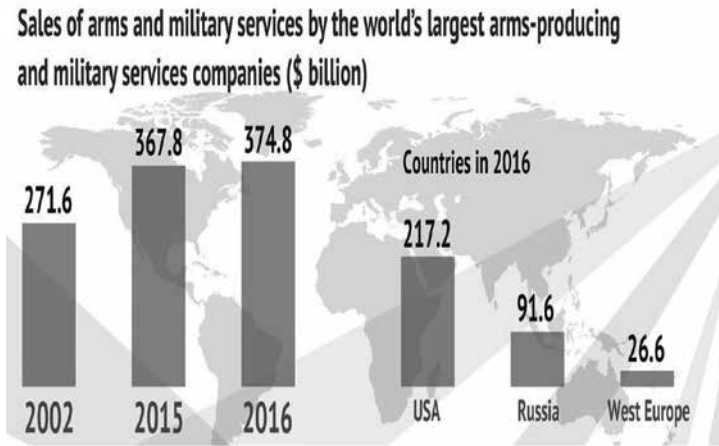
### **CAATSA: THE UNITED STATES 'WEAPON' TO CONTAIN RUSSIA'S MILITARY RISE?**

Russia's refocus on military diplomacy as a tool of power projection in recent times has alarmed the US and its allies, especially in the European region. Russia's largest joint military exercise, ZAPAD 2017, with Belarus, and the presidential address (2018) delivered by Putin have further increased the security concerns of the European countries, given the confidence with which Russia displayed its military capabilities and possession of an upgraded weapons arsenal. It only goes on to show that military preparedness has become an integral part of Russia's resurgence and sustenance, given NATO's expansion in the former Soviet space, which aggravated Russia's security concerns.

The US' pre-eminence in international politics is being challenged mainly by the non-Western countries, i.e. Russia and China. The strategic partnership between the two poses a threat to the US mainly in two spheres, i.e. economic sphere (China) and military domain (Russia). The US has taken up measures to 'contain' the growing influence of both Russia and China mainly through a trade war and sanctions. Moreover, the great power rivalry among the global powers, especially Russia, the US and China, and the rise of non-traditional threats has resulted in the rise of arms sale and increase in the defence budget allocations of many countries. The existence of a constant threat has resulted in countries pursuing their military modernisation process. This has, in turn, resulted in growing competition among global defence supplying nations. The military engagement of Russia in the Syrian crisis, for instance, has enhanced its position in the global arms trade as the anti-Islamic State campaign was seen as

a testing ground for Russia's defence systems and equipment. Additionally, some of the US' key NATO and non-NATO defence partners such as Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain have begun to purchase defence equipment from Russia. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the sale of major weapons has seen an increase of 10 percent between 2013-17 compared to the sale of arms from 2008-12. The main regions that have seen an increase in arms purchase are West Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, while Europe, America and Africa have seen a decrease.<sup>11</sup>

**Fig 1: Sales of Arms and Military Services by the World's Largest Arms-Producing and Military Services Companies (\$ Billion)**



*Source:* Sales of arms and military services by the world's largest arms-producing and military services companies—the SIPRI Top 100—totalled \$374.8 billion in 2016, according to new international arms industry data released by SIPRI. <http://valdaiclub.com/multimedia/infographics/sales-of-arms/>

In this direction, restricting our observations to the US-Russia rivalry, the US announced a defence trade war against Russia by introducing the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in August 2017. Section 235 of the Act clearly states that any party involved in defence transactions with

11. "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2017", Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Fact Sheet, March 2018, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/fssipri\\_at2017\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-03/fssipri_at2017_0.pdf). Accessed on April 11, 2018.

Russia's defence and intelligence sectors under the 231 (d) list is likely to have sanctions imposed on it. The defence and intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation under CAATSA Section 231 (d) include Rosoboronexport, Admiralty Shipyard JSC, Almaz Antey Air and Space Defence Corporation JSC, Rostec, Sukhoi Aviation, United Aircraft Corporation and many other major defence industries, including intelligence agencies such as Autonomous Noncommercial Professional Organisation/Professional Association of Designers of Data Processing (ANO PO KSI), Federal Security Service (FSB), Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).<sup>12</sup>

Arguably, the implementation of the CAATSA sanctions is speculated to put Russia's DIC and its position in the global arms trade in jeopardy. Another argument is that the impact of the US-Russia rivalry is mainly felt by their respective allies, and India being a common ally of both, the sanctions, for instance, have put India in a fix. The finalising of the S-400 missile defence system agreement between India and Russia is likely to face some hurdles as Almaz-Antey Air and Space Defence Corporation, which makes the S-400, also faces sanctions under the Act. In this context, experts<sup>13</sup> have made speculative commentaries on the likely impact that CAATSA may have on India's military modernisation, as 69 percent of India's defence equipment is mainly from Russia. Moreover, the only successful joint production for India has been with Russia. Russian assistance in building India's first nuclear submarine, the *INS Arihant*, and the BrahMos missile is boastfully displayed as an accomplishment of India-Russia defence relations. There are other joint productions with Russia that are in the pipeline such as the production of the Kamov Ka 226 light helicopters, which involves significant private sector participation. An all-out US defence trade war with Russia only means denying countries such as India the upgradation of defence capabilities. Let us not forget that Russia has been an enthusiastic player in India's 'Make in India' initiative. Nevertheless, while diversification of defence cooperation has given

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12. Section 231 of CAATSA, US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/t/isn/caatsa/>. Accessed on May 9, 2018.

13. Vinay Shukla, "CAATSA: A Nightmare for Indian Diplomacy", Russian International Affairs Council, April 25, 2018. [www.russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/Vinay-Shukla-blog/caatsa-a-nightmare-for-indian-diplomacy-/](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/Vinay-Shukla-blog/caatsa-a-nightmare-for-indian-diplomacy-/). Accessed on May 9, 2018.

India multiple options to engage with foreign partners other than Russia, it will ensure that it does not come at the cost of Russia as it has been the only country that has provided advanced technological assistance to India

One needs to also bear in mind that while the US' motive to develop a strategic partnership with India is mainly to counter China's rise in the Indo-Pacific region, CAATSA sanctions pose a threat to the US' own defence and strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific with countries such as India, Vietnam, and Indonesia which are traditional defence partners of Russia. Hence, with regards to the imposition of CAATSA on India, were it to continue its defence relations with Russia, it would be up to the US to recognise, and be sensitive to, India's national security requirements and priorities. India will look for 'exceptionalism' being granted on the lines of the nuclear cooperation with the US in this matter.

At the same time, at the domestic level, India has come a long way in taking up initiatives to suffice its defence needs. The Gagan Shakti drill conducted on April 10-23, 2018 saw the air force testing its war-fighting drills and the aim was to display real-time coordination and employment of air power in a short and intense battle scenario with even CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) attack scenarios coming into play.<sup>14</sup>

This exercise was also unique as the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) – our indigenous fighter – was deployed at forward bases. The LCA Tejas, which had so far been only a technology demonstrator, and was recently inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF), has now, for the first time, participated in enhancing its operational capability: firing close combat and beyond visual range missiles, it has amply demonstrated its power to pack to the enemy.

Additionally, though India's foreign policy has evolved over the years, keeping pace with the changes taking place in international relations, it has been firm on promoting its strategic autonomy. It has experienced great power rivalry in the past and some of the lessons learnt from its past experience will be the key in steering India's foreign policy interests today, including how

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14. "IAF Flies 11,000 Sorties in Mega Gagan Shakti Drill", *The Times of India*, April 25, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/iaf-flies-11000-sorties-in-mega-gaganshakti-drill/articleshow/63903380.cms>. Accessed on May 5, 2018.

it would continue to maintain harmonious defence relations with both Russia and the US.

India's version of 'military diplomacy' is to keep in tune with its multi-alignment policy. So, India's move to diversify its supply of arms and replenishment of its arsenal from the Western defence markets like the US, Israel, France, United Kingdom and other such defence markets has maintained the momentum in India's military modernisation process.

With India continuing to top the charts as the world's largest importer of defence goods – a situation that does not augur well for us and needs to be reversed at the earliest – major arms exporting nations are vying with each other to grab a larger portion of this market. The choice(s) India makes could impact India's bilateral ties in the future.

## SUMMATION

The imposition of Western sanctions post the Ukraine imbroglio and Crimean accession, and the fall in global oil prices was an eye-opener for the Russian government in terms of the spectre of budgetary shortfalls for its defence revival programmes. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov, on October 7, 2014, stated that the country could no longer afford the multi-billion-dollar revamp of the armed forces previously approved and a new defence programme should be drawn up to take into account the changed economic situation (as the effects of the Ukraine crisis, including the sanctions and capital flight, took effect). *"A new defence programme will be prepared now, and in its framework we want to reconsider the amount of resources that will be spent from the budget in order to make it more realistic,"* said Siluanov, even though Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, in charge of the sector, had ruled out any cuts in military spending.<sup>15</sup>

The Russian economy has made a steady recovery since the sanctions imposed in 2015, as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth recorded a fall of mere 0.8 percent in 2016 in comparison to the 3.7 percent negative growth in 2015. However, the Russian

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15. "Advanced Manufacturing in Russia", *Future Watch Report*, 2014, Available at [https://www.tekes.fi/contentassets/cf67fc7276164110b1e4ca0345d59ad2/advanced\\_manufacturing\\_russia\\_report.pdf](https://www.tekes.fi/contentassets/cf67fc7276164110b1e4ca0345d59ad2/advanced_manufacturing_russia_report.pdf). Accessed on January 18, 2018.



administration, in tune with the reality of the fragile nature of its economic growth, is set to reduce the federal expenditure for the next few years at least. It is said that the military expenditure based on the current status of the rouble is expected to fall by 1.3 percent in 2018. In other words, the military expenditure is set to fall by 7.1 percent in 2018, and then by a more modest 1.7 percent in 2019.<sup>16</sup> As a result of the 2014 economic sanctions, Russia's SAP-2018-25 has called for trimming down of its defence budget. Russia has also announced that it will not be involved in a 'senseless' arms race due to the rising tension with the US, a move that has come as a result of having learnt from the many mistakes that the Soviet leadership had committed in terms of pumping financial assistance into the DIC which had turned from an indispensable sector to a liability by the 1980s.

The revival programmes for the defence sector initiated since 2000, to a large extent, have achieved some of the set goals of the government. Russia's military engagement in the Syrian crisis is a case in point. Display of its efficient and advanced weapons systems such as the accurate launch of the Kalibr cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea on IS targets in Syria and the use of the Su-34 and Su 35 fighter aircraft has boosted the demand for Russian weapons in the global arms market. Russia has managed to gain momentum in the global defence markets and also in strengthening its own defence forces which, in other words, aims for self-sufficiency. Events such as the Ukraine crisis have highlighted the Russian military's hybrid warfare skills. Thanks to the upgradation of the DIC, today, Russia is able to challenge the military might of the US and its allies. In fact, defence experts have 'cautioned' the US to upgrade its artillery forces to meet Russia's cutting edge anti-aircraft capabilities. Should the US take Russia's military progress for granted, it would be taking a huge risk in operating over Europe in case of a military confrontation with Russia as Russia's anti-air systems would *limit close-air support and surveillance missions, thus, leaving US and the*

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16. Sudreau Lucie Beraud and Barrie Douglas "Russia's Defence Spending: The Impact of Economic Contraction", *IISS Military Balance Blog*, March 6, 2017. Accessed on April 18, 2017. Available at <http://www.iiss.org/en/militarybalanceblog/blogsections/2017-edcc/march-f0a5/russias-defence-spending-7de6>. Accessed on January 18, 2018.

*NATO ground troops with severely limited air coverage and intelligence-gathering options.*<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the US-Russia defence rivalry will make a third party such as China a beneficiary given the fact that it has made tremendous progress in supplying defence equipment in the global arms market. While weapons sold by the Western countries are unaffordable and come with conditions to the developing countries, the only option other than Russia would be China for these countries for buying cost-effective standard defence equipment would be China. While countering Russia through the defence trade war, the US is, thus, making way for China to emerge as its potential rival in the global arms market given the fact that it has made great strides in the indigenisation of its defence industry.

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17. David Brennan, "US War With Russia Would Leave American Forces With No Air Support in Europe for Weeks, Experts Warn", March 27, 2018. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/u-war-russia-leave-american-154659544.html>. Accessed on March 28, 2018.

# INDIA'S BALANCING ACT WITH WEST ASIA

**ANU SHARMA**

West Asia after the Arab Spring has become the epicentre for turmoil due to the prevailing threats to peace and security in the region. The political interplay between the external and internal players in the region has had an instrumental role in the emerging volatility in the region, making it more restless. The political heat accumulating over the last few years due to deepening political rivalries in the region could affect India's relations with West Asia which has gained a distinctive place in India's contemporary foreign policy and external relations. However, external players such as the US, Russia and China are the major power holders that affect India's relations with West Asia.

Although West Asia has gained greater traction in India's foreign policy-making circles, there is a need for India to factor its actions and the initiatives of these countries, and calibrate its own policies in an objective, equitable and sustainable manner. However, the present flux of geopolitical uncertainty in Asia has raised the strategic stakes for India. For India, which imports oil largely from West Asia, instability could cause an increase in prices, leaving less for its ambitious reforms. Globally, there is now space for new alignments—in the Great Power plays, in the Shi'a-Sunni rivalry, and

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in the war against terrorism. Some of these issues have the tendency to affect India's relations with the region.

As far as India's relations with West Asia are concerned, C. Rajamohan correctly points out that India does not have the power to mitigate the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia related to sectarian rivalries.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he argues that Delhi can try to encourage the trends for political and social moderation in West Asia as the best course for India's engagement with the region.<sup>2</sup> He further elaborates that there are three most important objectives for India in the West Asian region: firstly, the promotion of mutual political accommodation in the region; secondly, pressing for the need to end the export of destabilising ideologies from the region; and thirdly, the construction of a coalition against the violent religious extremism that has harmed the region and is now threatening the Indian subcontinent.<sup>3</sup>

In this respect, the high level visits of the Indian leadership to various nations in West Asia and the growing engagement with Iran reflect the bonhomie in the relationship. It has also helped in consolidating India's historical ties with the region. At the same time, it has helped in the ground work for India's engagement with West Asia. The Indian expatriates in West Asia and energy imports from the region are positive aspects of this relationship. They can also be regarded as the reasons for India's vulnerabilities in the region.<sup>4</sup> For decades, the region's political leadership has been under pressure to yield to the conservative religious edge. Any reversal in such a situation would be hugely consequential for India. As it intensifies its engagement with West Asia, Delhi must come to terms with a changing region and the opportunities it presents. Groups and regional organisations such as the Arab League or the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) have never been very effective in facilitating engagement between India and the region. More narrowly focussed

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1. C. Rajamohan, "India, Iran and a Divided Middle East", *Indian Express*, February 17, 2018, <https://carnegieindia.org/2018/02/17/india-iran-and-divided-middle-east-pub-75579>. Accessed on March 28, 2018.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Ibid.
  4. P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Trends and Prospects for Cooperation with the Middle East", *IDSA Comment*, January 21, 2016, [https://idsa.in/idsacomments/cooperation-with-the-middle-east\\_prkumaraswamy\\_210116](https://idsa.in/idsacomments/cooperation-with-the-middle-east_prkumaraswamy_210116). Accessed on March 28, 2018.

organisations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are also showing cracks due to the turbulence in the region. The Saudi-UAE effort to marginalise another member of the GCC—Qatar—is another part of the issue.<sup>5</sup> However, recently, this equation has changed. As mentioned earlier, the region is one of India's principal sources of energy, meeting most of the country's oil and gas requirements. It is also India's major economic partner, with the GCC countries collectively being the top three trading partners of India, the number one export destination, and major investment partners. The region is also home to approximately 8 million Indians.<sup>6</sup> The recent balancing by the Indian leadership in West Asia has resulted in a renewed zeal in this relationship.

### ISRAEL

Bilateral relations between India and Israel have remained multifaceted, related to agriculture and security concerns. India-Israel bilateral trade has crossed the \$ 5 billion mark, with defence trade valued at \$ 1 billion, annually.<sup>7</sup> This relationship has expanded considerably in recent years. To mark the 25 years of this relationship, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited India in January 2018. During this visit, India and Israel signed nine Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) related to cooperation in the fields of cyber security, space, metal batteries and solar thermal technologies, amongst others.

However, in the current times, the relationship between the two nations is moving beyond the sphere of defence. Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit largely focussed on economic and high-end technology cooperation as well as boosting people-to-people linkages through cinema and tourism. Israel's technological prowess remains unmatched in areas as diverse as waste management and

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5. C. Rajamohan, "As India Looks West", *Indian Express*, February 10, 2018, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/as-india-looks-west-5057824/>. Accessed on March 28, 2018.
  6. Talmiz Ahmad, "India's Engagement with Arab World under Modi", *Arab News*, April 23, 2017, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1088901>. Accessed on April 2, 2018.
  7. Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, "Independent Trajectory for India-Israel ties", *Live Mint*, January 12, 2018, <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/a9DH5GrWffjsCMU559mF8N/Independent-trajectory-for-India-Israel-ties.html>. Accessed on April 5, 2018.

reprocessing, desalination, agriculture, waste water recycling, health, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. This is something that India is looking to tap into.<sup>8</sup> Israel stands to gain more from this bilateral trade with India as it has established itself as one of the largest trading partner after the US and Russia. In the defence sector, Israel is now collaborating with India not only in the supply of sophisticated defence equipment but also in co-designing, co-production and manufacture of these systems under the 'Make in India' programme. In addition to meeting India's expanding needs in this field, it will also help in creating jobs and technological upgradation in the country. It will also boost innovation in this sector.<sup>9</sup>

India-Israel counter-terrorism cooperation is quite robust and has been scaled up gradually over the last few years through a joint working group on terrorism. Intelligence-sharing in this realm has been the most important element of this partnership. Intelligence-sharing has become the key for countering the menace of cross-border terrorism. At the same time, Israel is helping India improve border management along the India-Pakistan border given Israel's experience in dealing with cross-border infiltration and terrorism. Cyber security cooperation is also expanding, with cyber security academies being set up in India by an Israeli company, Vital Intelligence Group.<sup>10</sup>

## PALESTINE

The fact that Prime Minister (PM) Modi's visit to Palestine came just after Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu had visited India demonstrates India's abilities, and need, for becoming a major regional power that can help broker some peace in the region. This has also made PM Modi the first Indian prime minister to visit Palestine after almost 30 years. Since there were no active airports on Palestinian territory, he flew via Amman (Jordan), from where he embarked on a helicopter trip from Amman to Ramallah. While Delhi has burgeoning security

8. Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Ties Gather Momentum", *The Diplomat*, January 23, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/india-israel-ties-gather-momentum/>. Accessed on April 5, 2018.
9. Ashok Sajjanhar, "India-Israel Relations: A Burgeoning Partnership – Analysis", January 25, 2018, <http://www.orfonline.org/expert-speaks/india-israel-relations-a-burgeoning-partnership/>. Accessed on April 6, 2018.
10. Ibid.

ties with Israel, it has simultaneously tried to strengthen ties with the Palestinian Authority. Its positive image and soft power are what have enabled New Delhi to garner an invitation from President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas to sit on a proposed “multilateral forum” for negotiations on a peace deal between Palestine and Israel—a role India is increasingly able to fill.<sup>11</sup>

In the pre-independence era, there was solidarity between the Indian and Palestinian causes which coincided with India’s struggles against imperialism. India was the first non-Arab state to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974. India was also one of the first countries to recognise the state of Palestine in 1988. In 1996, India opened its Representative Office in the Palestine Authority in Gaza, which later was shifted to Ramallah in 2003. Since its independence, India has followed the ideals of non-alignment and Nehruvian principles of *Panchsheel*. At that time, India’s foreign policy was greatly influenced by “liberal internationalism” and believed in the values and objectives meant for eradicating colonialism. India maintained ethical support for the Palestinian cause and maintained a positive stand for the two-state solution, supporting a “sovereign, independent, united” Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> This visit by PM Modi allowed India to maintain the image of its historical moral support for Palestinian self-determination, and at the same time, to engage in military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel. During this visit, India and Palestine signed six Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in the fields of infrastructure and education.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Kadira Pethiyagoda, “Time for India to Play a Role in Israel-Palestine Peace?”, *The Diplomat*, February 17, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/time-for-india-to-play-a-role-in-israel-palestine-peace/>. Accessed on April 2, 2018.
  12. Ipsita Chakravarty, “Parleying with Palestine: After Decades of Warmth, Delhi and Ramallah Maintain a Fragile Equilibrium”, January 7, 2018, <https://scroll.in/article/863732/parleying-with-palestine-after-decades-of-warmth-delhi-and-ramallah-maintain-a-fragile-equilibrium>. Accessed on April 2, 2018; “India-Palestine Relations”, August 2016, [https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Palestine\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Palestine_July_2016.pdf). Accessed on April 2, 2018.
  13. “List of MoUs/Agreements Signed During Visit of Prime Minister to Palestine”, February 10, 2018, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29468/List+of+MoUs+Agreements+signed+during+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Palestine>. Accessed on April 2, 2018.

While India does not have the diplomatic resources or ambition to play a standalone role in the peace process, greater involvement through membership in a multilateral forum can fulfil New Delhi's ambitions. India has significant strategic interests at stake related to its reliance on foreign energy sources. These, and its diaspora in the region, are threatened by instability. In this context, the influence over the peace process will help enhance New Delhi's voice in regional power centres, be they Israel, the Arab states, or Iran. Indian foreign policy is also driven by a need to increase its global standing and prestige.<sup>14</sup> The Palestine-Israel conflict, being the world's most high-profile one, provides ample opportunity for New Delhi to present its credentials as a global leader, and compete with China as a champion of the developing world. Rising powers like India have less baggage in the region, a neutral image, and growing power and leverage. As demonstrated by US President Donald Trump's Jerusalem move, the status quo framework of the long-standing players has lost global and regional credibility.<sup>15</sup> This shifting towards a more multipolar West Asia presents opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the region's most intractable conflict. However, it is not without its own set of risks in this volatile region.

At the same time, India has been able to *de-hyphenate* its relationship between Israel and Palestine. This policy is being regarded as a shrewd and straightforward political policy by the scholars. It has enabled India to treat the two entities separately by choosing to pursue a distinct relationship with each party. This step by the Modi government provides India with the possibility and prospect to sustain its historical moral support for Palestinian self-determination as well as maintain military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Ahmad, n.6.

15. Ibid.

16. Mohamed K Mohamed, "Modi's Palestine Visit is Historic, But Will Not Affect India-Israel Ties", *The Hindustan Times*, February 9, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/modi-s-palestine-visit-is-historic-but-will-not-affect-india-israel-ties/story-mljjcWSzURSVhKgOA6KvI.html>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.



## UAE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's second trip to the UAE reflected the significance of this nation for India. With this visit in February 2018, India-UAE bilateral relations touched an all-time high. In the past three years, four official visits have been made between the UAE and India. The fact that cannot be ignored is that the Indian diaspora has played a substantial role in UAE's growth by helping to lay the foundations of this country's infrastructure and institutions.<sup>17</sup> At present, approximately 3.3 million Indians reside in the UAE, representing every level of society. As of 2018, the Indian diaspora in the UAE comprised the largest community of non-resident Indians in the world, with billions of dollars of remittances being received from them per year back in India.<sup>18</sup> The UAE is an important provider of crude oil, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to India. The UAE stands as the fifth largest exporter of crude, and accounts for almost 6 percent of our total crude imports from the region. The UAE is also the third largest source of importing LPG and POL.<sup>19</sup>

During his visit, PM Modi signed five MoUs including an MoU between an Indian consortium—ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), Bharat Petro Resources Limited (Bharat Petroleum—BPRL) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)—and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), for the acquisition of 10 percent participating interest in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession for \$ 600 million.<sup>20</sup> The current production of this field is about 400,000 barrels of oil per day and the Indian firms' annual share shall be about 2 million metric tonnes. The field output is set to plateau at 450,000 barrels per day by 2025.<sup>21</sup>

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17. "Modi's Second Visit in Three Years Highlights Strong India-UAE Ties", *The National*, February 10, 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/editorial/modi-s-second-visit-in-three-years-highlights-strong-india-uae-ties-1.703294>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.

18. Ibid.

19. "India-UAE Bilateral Investments", Press Information Bureau (PIB), February 13, 2018, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176531>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.

20. "List of MoUs Signed During Prime Minister's Visit to United Arab Emirates", February 10, 2018, <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29473/List+of+MoUs+signed+during+Prime+Ministers+visit+to+United+Arab+Emirates>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.

21. "ONGC Acquires 10 Percent Stake in UAE's Oil Offshore Concession," *The Economic Times*, February 11, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/ongc-acquires-10-per-cent-stake-in-uaes-oil-offshore-concession/articleshow/62861205.cms>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.

This mutually beneficial partnership will create opportunities for the UAE's oil company to increase its market share in the fast-growing Indian market. At the same time, it will be delivering high quality crude to India's expanding refining industry which will, in turn, help India meet its growing energy demand. This will be the first Indian upstream investment in a producing asset in the Gulf region and in the Middle East. The agreement reflects the vision of Prime Minister Modi towards strengthening hydrocarbon linkages with the UAE on a win-win basis.<sup>22</sup> With all these agreements, the UAE has become the first nation to participate in India's strategic petroleum programme.

The current momentum in bilateral ties between the two countries will enable them to surpass the traditional areas of collaboration, i.e. oil, trade and expatriate workers. To tackle contemporary challenges of mutual interest, the two countries signed the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement" last year. The strengthening of ties between India and the UAE allows them to focus on the emerging economic opportunities of food security and frontier science along with tackling their mutual security concerns in their respective regions.<sup>23</sup>

## OMAN

The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India in the Gulf. Oman also accords high priority to its ties with India. The two countries across the Arabian Sea are linked by geography, history and culture, and enjoy warm and cordial relations, which are attributed to historical maritime trade linkages with India and the seminal role played by the Indian expatriate community in Oman. For more than three years, India's engagement with Oman has increased considerably. This was clearly demonstrated when the then Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar visited Oman in 2016 and a number of MoUs were signed regarding Omani assistance for 'Operational Turnaround' (OTR) of the ships of the Indian Navy engaged in anti-piracy patrols as well as for technical support for landing and overflight of Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft. Four MoUs were signed in the sphere of defence and security which

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22. Ahmad, n.6.

23. N. Janardhan, "How India and the UAE Can Benefit From a Joint Multilateral Strategy", *The Diplomat*, February 27, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/how-india-and-the-uae-can-benefit-from-a-joint-multilateral-strategy/>. Accessed on April 4, 2018.

included an MoU on defence cooperation, an MoU between the coast guards of the two countries to prevent crime at sea, an MoU on maritime issues, and a protocol between their respective air forces on flight safety information exchange.<sup>24</sup> During PM Modi's visit to Oman in February 2018, he signed eight MoUs, including pacts on tourism, health, outer space and military cooperation.

Another reason for India's engagement with Oman has been related to its Duqm port that is situated in the middle of the international shipping lanes connecting the East with West Asia. During PM Modi's visit to Oman, India gained strategic access to Duqm port for military use and logistical support. This will help Indian naval ships to *inter alia*, extend their anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden for longer durations and strengthen India's bilateral strategic partnership with Oman.<sup>25</sup> India also needs an opportunity to engage with Oman and take initiatives to utilise prospects arising out of the Duqm port industrial city. Like many other countries of the Persian Gulf region, the Omani economy is also struggling with low oil and gas prices. In order to overcome this situation, Oman plans to develop its other economic sectors such as transport, shipping, agriculture, mining, tourism, and logistics. This is part of India's maritime strategy to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region and can be regarded as the key takeaway of PM Modi's three-nation tour to West Asia in February 2018.<sup>26</sup>

Recently, Duqm had seen a rise in Indian activities. In September 2017, India deployed an attack submarine to this port. A Shishumar class submarine<sup>27</sup> entered Duqm along with naval ship INS *Mumbai*

24. "Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar Visits Oman", Press Information Bureau, May 22, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145533>. Accessed on April 3, 2018.

25. "QUESTION NO. 3072 ACCESS TO DUQM PORT", Lok Sabha Unstarred Question, March 14, 2018, <http://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/29624/QUESTION+NO+3072+ACCESS+TO+DUQM+PORT>. Accessed on April 03, 2018.

26. Shubhajit Roy, "India Gets Access to Strategic Oman Port Duqm for Military Use, Chabahar-Gwadar in Sight", *Indian Express*, February 13, 2018, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-gets-access-to-strategic-oman-port-for-military-use-chabahar-gwadar-in-sight-5061573/>. Accessed on April 4, 2018.

27. The Shishumar class vessels are diesel-electric attack submarines, which are currently in active service with the Indian Navy. These submarines are a lengthier and heavier Indian variant. The first two of these were developed by Germany.

and two P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft. The naval units were on a month-long deployment with the aim of enhancing surveillance and cooperation.<sup>28</sup> In March 2017, India and Oman conducted the military exercises “al Nagah II,” at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh. This was the second joint military exercise between the two countries – the first one was held in Oman in January 2015. India-Oman defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar of the strategic partnership between the two countries.<sup>29</sup> All these activities demonstrate India’s growing engagement with the nation. This can help India to build trust with Oman in order to fructify the South Asia Gas Enterprise (SAGE) undersea pipeline through Oman.

## IRAN

With the tag line of “towards prosperity through greater connectivity”, India-Iran relations entered a new phase when Iranian President Hassan Rouhani visited India in February 2018. This was President Rouhani’s first visit to India. This trip was the result of the fact that the two countries recognised the unique role of Iran and India in promoting multi-modal connectivity within and across the region. The successful inauguration of Phase-1 of Chabahar port in early December 2017; the ratification of the Trilateral Agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan on Establishment of the International Transport and Transit Corridor by all sides; and the successful shipment of wheat assistance from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar port have opened a new gateway to and from Afghanistan, Central Asia and beyond. Both sides reiterated their commitment for early and full operationalisation of Shahid Beheshti port at Chabahar.

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28. Roy, n.26.

29. India and Oman conduct regular biennial bilateral exercises with all three Services. Besides the ‘al Najah’ exercise, the air force exercise ‘Eastern Bridge’ happened in January 2017 at Jamnagar and the naval exercise happened in December 2017 in Oman. Since 2008, Oman has been extending its support to the Indian Navy’s anti-piracy missions and Indian naval ships are regularly welcomed by Oman for overseas deployments. The Omani Navy’s sailing vessel *Shabab Oman*, along with the INS *Tarangini* participated in the joint sailing voyage from Muscat to Kochi in November 2015 tracing the ancient trading routes between India and Oman. The joint sailing was to commemorate the 60th anniversary of India-Oman diplomatic ties. The Indian Air Force and Indian Navy aircraft regularly utilise Omani airports for refuelling and operational turnaround. “India-Oman Relations,” November 2017, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/26\\_Oman\\_November\\_2017.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/26_Oman_November_2017.pdf). Accessed on April 4, 2018.

The Iranian side welcomed the investment of the Indian side in setting up plants in sectors such as fertilisers, petrochemicals and metallurgy in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone (FTZ) on terms mutually beneficial to the concerned parties.<sup>30</sup> The MoUs signed between India and Iran included visa liberalisation for diplomats and businessmen, panels to look at avoiding dual taxation and examining the possibility of a *rupee-rial* arrangement, which would allow India to invest in Iran using Indian rupees, which Iran could, in turn, use for Indian investments.<sup>31</sup> Another important MoU that was signed between India and Iran granted India an 18-month lease of Phase I of the jointly built Chabahar port. This port provides India with the much needed road and rail access to Afghanistan and further to the resource-rich Central Asian states.

President Rouhani's visit to India reinforced the continuation of India's robust outreach to West Asia. Another interesting point to note is that this visit comes on the heels of the Modi government's engagement with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who visited India in January 2018. It is a known fact that Iran and Israel are staunch enemies in the West Asian region and India's act of reaching out to both nations demands greater balancing. During this visit, India and Iran inked almost 12 MoUs across areas, including trade promotion, agriculture, medicines and hassle free travelling.

Rouhani's three-day trip comes after his country witnessed one of its biggest protests in years related to economic distress. Iran witnessed large-scale demonstrations in late December-January 2017-18 by people exasperated because of the increasing unemployment rate. The inflation rate was recorded at around 9.7 percent, with the unemployment rate at almost 13 percent. Furthermore, the restricted political freedom and the ban on social media have frustrated and enraged the people of Iran. The recent withdrawal of the US from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has actually

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30. "India-Iran Joint Statement during Visit of the President of Iran to India", Ministry of External Affairs, February 17, 2018, [http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29495/IndiaIran\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_during\\_Visit\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_Iran\\_to\\_India\\_February\\_17\\_2018](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29495/IndiaIran_Joint_Statement_during_Visit_of_the_President_of_Iran_to_India_February_17_2018). Accessed on April 4, 2018.

31. Ramanand Sengupta, "India, Iran ink Chabahar Port MoU", *The New Indian Express*, February 18, 2018, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/feb/18/india-iran-ink-chabahar-port-mou-1774984.html>. Accessed on April 5, 2018.

destabilised Iran's internal political situation further. This has led Iran to vigorously reach out to other five members of the P5+1 group in order to make it successful. However, without real reform, domestic turmoil is likely to continue and will provide opportunities to the outside powers to meddle in the internal affairs of the country. To avert this eventuality, it would be necessary for Iran to embark on long-term sustainable political and economic reforms.

India-Iran relations strengthened after the two countries reached an agreement on developing the two berths of Chabahar port. Along with that, India got a ten-year lease to equip and operate these two berths. However, India has made it clear time and again that any change in the deal will not affect India's long standing ties with Iran. The US pulling out of the Iran deal can have larger implications for India even if India was not party to the JCPOA. India has invested heavily in Chabahar port of Iran along with International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC). If the situation worsens, then India's stakes in these projects could be jeopardised. If oil prices increase due to diminishing Iranian oil sales, it can fuel inflation and affect the Indian economy adversely. Iran fulfills approximately 15 percent of India's oil needs. Also, a number of Indian firms are dependent on the US dollar for transactions for their commercial operations. It can become difficult for them to continue to do business in Iran. Indian and Iranian businesses will have to look for creative ways to surpass the sanctions that the US might impose. These might include arrangements for rupee payments, use of third currencies, trade channels, etc.

## CONCLUSION

What works in India's favour here is the tight-rope balancing act it is trying to pull off in the region, successfully dealing with the various power centres, religious and sectarian fissures and economic interests without breaking any relationship. India's policies vis-à-vis West Asia have to factor in *realpolitik* while keeping Indian interests uppermost in mind, but without abandoning abiding values; this poses a particularly distinctive challenge to the Indian bureaucracy. India's interests towards West Asia have historically been linear, predominated mostly by demographics and economic imperatives.

In this regard, India had attained various postures, keeping in line with non-alignment and anti-interventionism. These high-level visits are an acknowledgement of the success of India's regional foreign policy in the pursuit of national interests. At the same time, they are a glowing affirmation that these countries view a robust, positive relationship with a big regional power in their neighbourhood as essential to their growth and welfare. Through such engagements, India's efforts can be recognised in order to promote mutual trust and confidence. At the same time it is important to notice that India is moving beyond the traditional military-security paradigm to engage more on non-security and economic issues. As India tries to build closer relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia—two opposite power centres in the region—it is looking forward to establishing close relations with other middle powers of West Asia. Where, on the one hand, India is trying to *de-hyphenate* the relations between Israel and Palestine; on the other, it is striving to de-politicise its bilateral relations with these nations.

# CHINA-PHILIPPINES CONTENTION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

SANA HASHMI

## INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is one of the Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea dispute. Over the years, it has shown that despite being a smaller country with limited military and economic resources, it is a strong contender against China in the dispute. It is interesting to note that while countries such as Brunei and Malaysia have downplayed their claims and have opted for bandwagoning with China,<sup>1</sup> for long, the Philippines and Vietnam were two countries which stood up to China's aggressive postures. However, under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's administration, there has been a significant alteration in the Philippines' policy towards China. It has not only put the issue of the South China Sea on the backburner, it has also extended an olive branch to China.

While the dispute is a major feature in the bilateral relations, there has been immense political engagement. Duterte undertook

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*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.*

1. Sana Hashmi, *China's Approach Towards Territorial Disputes: Lessons and Prospects* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2016).



a state visit to China on October 18-21, 2016. In the joint statement issued during the visit, both sides acknowledged the centuries-old bonds of friendship of the Filipino and Chinese people, and agreed to continue making concerted efforts to cement the traditional friendship between the two countries.<sup>2</sup> Duterte has taken a u-turn and become accommodative towards China now. For example, on April 5, 2017, he made the statement, "I have ordered the armed forces to occupy all – these so many islands, I think nine or 10 – put up structures and the Philippine flag. And in the coming Independence Day of ours (June 12), I might, I may go to Pagasa Island to raise the flag there. Even those that are vacant, let us habitate there."<sup>3</sup> However, a week later, in a move to please the Chinese, he cancelled his visit to the islands in the South China Sea, and said in a statement, "Because of our friendship with China, I will not go there to raise the Philippine flag. They said, do not go there in the meantime, just do not go there please. I will correct myself because we value our friendship with China."<sup>4</sup> This move was praised by the Chinese side. In a press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Affairs spokesperson Lu Kang applauded the Philippines leadership, "We are glad that the Philippines chose to work with China to properly manage differences and advance cooperation, so as to deliver more benefit to our two peoples. As you can see, the situation in the South China Sea has seen continued progress. China-Philippines relations also enjoy fast and sound growth."<sup>5</sup> Duterte visited China once again on May 13-15, 2017, to participate, along with other 29 world leaders, in the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation hosted by China. Under the Duterte administration, both sides are aiming to mend ties and strengthen relations, with China reciprocating the Philippines' moves with equal fervour.

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2. "PHIL-CHINA RELATIONS", Embassy of the Philippines, China, <http://beijingpe.dfa.gov.ph/phl-china-relations>. Accessed on December 8, 2017.
  3. "Duterte Cancels Visit to Disputed South China Sea Island after Warning from Beijing", *The Guardian*, April 13, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/13/duterte-cancels-visit-to-disputed-south-china-sea-island-after-warning-from-beijing>. Accessed on December 20, 2017.
  4. *Ibid.*
  5. "China Elated by Duterte's Move Not to Pursue Visit in South China Sea", *Sun Star*, April 15, 2017, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/04/15/china-elated-dutertes-move-not-pursue-visit-south-china-sea-536515>. Accessed on December 25, 2017.

## BACKGROUND OF THE DISPUTE: CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS

While the Chinese claim that they were the first to discover, explore and inhabit the islands in the disputed sea, the Chinese government accuses the Philippines of laying its claims on the basis of the islands lying within its continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). China maintains that it is just reclaiming its lost territories and has rightful jurisdiction over the disputed territory in the South China Sea. The spokesman of the Office of the Commissioner of China posted in Hong Kong gave an interview to the *Wall Street Journal* in 2012 and described China's rift with the Philippines:

China's sovereignty over Huangyan Island has long been recognized and respected by the international community and had not been disputed by the Philippines. On the contrary, the Philippines claim over the island has never been recognized by any other country. The claim that the Huangyan Island belongs to the Philippines because it's closer to the country is a result of ignorance of the international law.<sup>6</sup>

The Philippines' claims to most of the Spratly Islands archipelago are based on the 1947 discovery of several islands by Tomas Cloma, a Filipino businessman and lawyer; at the time, he declared the islands were *terra nullius* (undiscovered territory) and in 1956, he proclaimed a new state called Kalayaan, which caused diplomatic protests from other players and visits to the area by several navies.<sup>7</sup> The Philippines government remained vague and non-committal regarding Cloma's claim but Cloma transferred his claim to the Republic of the Philippines in 1974, and in 1978, then President Ferdinand Emmanuel Edralin Marcos decreed that "the Kalayaan Island group was the Philippines' sovereign territory and part of the province of Palawan,"

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6. "Statement by Tang Rui, spokesman of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (Hong Kong)", *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304870304577488713068832048>. Accessed on December 20, 2017.

7. Stanley E. Meyer, "Incident at Mischief Reef: Implications for The Philippines, China, and the United States", *US Army War College*, pp. 3-4.

and also decreed a 200 nautical mile (NM) EEZ, extending from the territorial sea base lines.<sup>8</sup>

These claims and counter-claims have led to standoffs. In 1995, eight Chinese ships were found in the Mischief Reef. The Mischief Reef is located on the Spratly Islands and has overlapping claims, as in the case of other areas in the South China Sea. China claims that its fishermen have effectively occupied the islands since time immemorial. China built structures to protect its fishermen on Mischief Reef in 1994-95, sparking a furious response from the Philippines, and in 1999, China built more structures on the island, spurring more protests; as a result, the Philippines deliberately ran aground a World War II era landing craft on the Second Thomas Shoal, using it as an outpost for a garrison of sailors to keep watch.<sup>9</sup> With Chinese ships in the area, the Philippines had to get creative to keep the sailors resupplied, avoiding Chinese ships and, more recently, air-dropping supplies.<sup>10</sup> The Mischief Reef incident brought the dispute back to the world's attention. This standoff was significant in that it marked the first instance when China had directly challenged the claim of a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), not counting Beijing's blatant disregard of the ASEAN's 1992 Declaration.<sup>11</sup> However, subsequently, the dispute was dormant for the next 15 years and paved the path for Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs). The main reason behind this lull was China's initiation of its economic reforms. China started following the path shown by its paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, and focussed on keeping a low profile. It wanted to present itself as a benign neighbouring power. That was also the period when China resolved its land boundary dispute with the Southeast Asian nations (Vietnam and Laos).

Another standoff took place in April 2012 when the Philippines naval forces obstructed eight Chinese fishing vessels in the disputed area. Philippine surveillance aircraft identified the Chinese fishing

8. Ibid.

9. Chris Zappone, "South China Sea Disputes: The Biggest Incidents", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 5, 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/south-china-sea-disputes-the-biggest-incidents-20150604-ghh9jp.html>. Accessed on November 29, 2017.

10. Ibid.

11. Alice Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia", *Asian Survey*, vol. 43, no. 4, July-August 2003, pp. 627-628.

vessels at Scarborough Shoal, causing the Philippines Navy to deploy its largest warship, BRP *Gregorio Del Pilar* – newly acquired from the United States – to the area, and in response, China sent surveillance ships to warn the Philippines Navy to leave the area, claimed by both countries, prompting a standoff.<sup>12</sup> The Philippines replaced its surface combatant with a smaller coast guard vessel but instead of reciprocating, China raised the stakes by deploying the *Yuzheng* 310 – the most advanced and largest patrol vessel equipped with machine guns, light cannons and electronic sensors.<sup>13</sup> On November 11, following a 3-month standoff between Philippines and Chinese vessels around Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal, China informed the Philippines that Chinese Coast Guard vessels would remain permanently on the shoal by developing Sansha.<sup>14</sup> Later on November 22, the Philippines protested against China’s decision to print on its new e-passport the image of the controversial 9-dash line showing its claim over virtually the whole South China Sea.<sup>15</sup> When the Philippines government led a diplomatic protest, the Chinese Embassy in Manila contended that the three Chinese surveillance vessels in Scarborough Shoal were in the area fulfilling the duties of safeguarding Chinese maritime rights and interests, and that the shoal “is an integral part of the Chinese territory and the waters around it are the traditional fishing area for Chinese fishermen.”<sup>16</sup> Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert Del Rosario’s office said in a statement that the Scarborough Shoal is an integral part of the Philippines’ territory and Filipino authorities would assert sovereignty over the offshore area.<sup>17</sup> Much to China’s surprise, the Philippines did not shy away from fighting back and became confrontational.

12. Carlos Santamaria, “PH Protests New Chinese Passport Map”, *Rappler*, November 22, 2012, <https://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/139392-timeline-west-philippine-sea-dispute>. Accessed on December, 2017.

13. Renato Cruz De Castro, “The 12 July 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration’s (PCA) Award: The Philippines’ Lawfare versus China’s Realpolitik in the South China Sea Dispute”, *International Journal of China Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, December 2017, p. 348.

14. Santamaria, n. 12.

15. *Ibid.*

16. James Hookway, “Philippine, China Ships Square Off”, *The Wall Street Journal Asia* (12 April 2012), p. 2. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/993221572/fulltext/1368A3AE...>

17. Quoted in “Philippine Warship in Standoff with China Vessels”, *Guardian*, April 11, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/11/philippines-china-standoff-south-china-sea>. Accessed on November 9, 2017.

### PHILIPPINES' ARBITRATION CASE

Lacking a credible military capability to stand up against China's naval prowess in the South China Sea, the Philippines opted for the liberal/legal approach leading to the use of law to resolve its maritime dispute with the emergent power.<sup>18</sup> In January 2013, the Philippines submitted for arbitration a claim against China for violations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) after more than a decade of unsuccessful bilateral and multilateral negotiations over territorial claims in the South China Sea.<sup>19</sup> The Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, also sent a note verbale to the Chinese Embassy in Manila conveying that it had filed a case under Article 9, Annex VII of the UNCLOS. China refused to participate in the proceedings, citing the reason that the dispute was bilateral in nature and, therefore, it would not accept any third party's intervention. It also claimed that the matter was not in the purview of the tribunal, and it was incompetent to resolve the issue. However, rejecting China's arguments, the tribunal went ahead with the court proceedings, and maintains that it has jurisdiction over the matter.

After three years, on July 12, 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration of The Hague announced its verdict on the South China Sea dispute and ruled in favour of the Philippines in 14 out of its 15 submissions. The tribunal, in its 501-pages long award, mentioned that:

There was no evidence that China had historically exercised exclusive control over the waters or their resources and there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line'... There was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the 'nine-dash line'.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Castro, n. 13.

19. Greg Torode, "Philippines South China Sea Legal Case against China Gathers Pace," Reuters, September 27, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/27/us-china-philippines-idUSBRE98Q0 BX2013092>. Accessed on December 15, 2017.

20. For more details, see Permanent Court of Arbitration, Press Release on The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China) The Hague, July 12, 2016 <https://pca-cpa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/175/2016/07/PH-CN-20160712-Press-Release-No-11-English.pdf>. Accessed on October 8, 2017.

The ruling was anticipated and the Philippines welcomed it. Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay issued a statement on the ruling.

The Philippines strongly affirms its respect for this milestone decision as an important contribution to ongoing efforts in addressing disputes in the South China Sea (West Philippines Sea). The decision upholds international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS. The Philippines reiterates its abiding commitment to efforts to pursue the peaceful resolution and management of disputes with a view to promoting and enhancing peace and stability in the region.<sup>21</sup>

The ruling drew criticism from China which refused to accept the verdict. Chinese President, Xi remarked, "China's territorial sovereignty and marine rights in the seas would not be affected by the ruling, which declared large areas of the sea to be neutral international waters or the exclusive economic zones of other countries. China is still committed to resolving disputes with its neighbours."<sup>22</sup> The Chinese national media not only declared the verdict null and void, the Chinese state media mouthpiece stated, "The tribunal had ignored 'basic truths' and 'trampled' on international laws and norms. The Chinese government and the Chinese people firmly oppose [the ruling] and will neither acknowledge it nor accept it."<sup>23</sup>

The verdict did not have much impact on the image of China and the future of China-Philippines relations. What is important to note is that the arbitral award did not resolve the territorial sovereignty dispute, nor has it delimited maritime boundaries, addressed the issue of militarisation, or provided a solution to the management of

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21. "Full Text: DFA Secretary Yasay Statement on West PH Sea Ruling", *Inquirer*, July 12, 2016, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/140968/full-text-dfa-foreign-affairs-perfecto-yasay-west-philippine-sea#ixzz59Ko9xsch>. Accessed on October 9, 2017.

22. Tom Phillips, Oliver Homes and Owen Boycott, "Beijing Rejects Tribunal's Ruling in South China Sea", *Guardian*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/philippines-wins-south-china-sea-case-against-china>. Accessed on December 20, 2017.

23. For details see, [http://rmbimg2.people.cn/data/rmbwap/2016/07/12/cms\\_1745920168805376.html](http://rmbimg2.people.cn/data/rmbwap/2016/07/12/cms_1745920168805376.html)

seabeds and fishery resources.<sup>24</sup> For better or worse, the verdict has been shelved by the Philippines.

### **CHINA'S INTENTIONS AND STRATEGY**

China, which undertook a tedious task of renegotiating its land boundary disputes in the 1960s, was comparatively mute during most of the Cold War period. After the Tiananmen Square crisis in 1989 and with the onset of economic reforms, it began to settle its disputes with the remaining countries too. However, while China was keen to resolve the land boundary disputes, it became surprisingly assertive vis-a-vis its maritime disputes. Post-2010, China resorted to assertiveness to reinforce its claims on the disputed territories. Its aversion towards resolving the disputes is evident from its actions. In the last decade, China has been involved in consolidating its control over the disputed territory.

While the abundance of resources beneath the South China Sea is a primary motive for China to keep the conflict alive, it has been embarking on the path of becoming a formidable naval power. In July 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed China's ambition to establish itself as a 'maritime power' and stated that "China will adhere to the path of peaceful development, but in no way will the country abandon its legitimate rights and interests, nor will it give up its core national interests".<sup>25</sup> Secondly, China wants to take advantage of the Philippines' differences with the United States. The Philippines, before Duterte, was advocating for the presence of extra-regional powers to deter China. Xi has been a proponent of 'Asia is for Asians' and has never liked the interference of the United States in the dispute. At the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia in 2014, Xi took a jibe at the United States and suggested, "It is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia,

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24. Manoj Joshi, "The South China Sea Disputes: Territorial Claims, Geopolitics, and International Law", *ORF Occasional Paper*, August 8, 2017.

25. "Xi Advocates Efforts to Boost China's Maritime Power", *Xinhua*, July 7, 2013, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-07/31/c\\_132591246.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-07/31/c_132591246.htm). Accessed on November 5, 2017.

solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia."<sup>26</sup> Xi's statement was clearly aimed at the United States which China has accused of meddling in its internal matters.

China and ASEAN also announced the start of negotiations for a Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea. While the CoC, like the Declaration on the Conduct (DoC) of Parties in the South China Sea, will be non-binding and might take years to get fully implemented, it signifies that China and the Southeast Asian countries have diffused the tension. Apparent progress made on the CoC can, thus, be viewed as Beijing's attempt to assuage discontent and suspicion in the region, and since the arbitration ruling, Beijing has been active in trying to rebuild its image in the region.<sup>27</sup> Not long after the July 2016 ruling, Beijing announced the end of a fishing blockade around the disputed Scarborough Shoal, granting access to Filipino fisherman, and by going back to the negotiating table, Beijing is extending an olive branch to its ASEAN neighbours.<sup>28</sup> These confidence-building measures have been enthused by China's desire to bridge the trust deficit between itself and the Philippines as well as Vietnam and to keep the United States out of the region. In addition to this, the Philippines' proximity to China will influence the mood of other countries in the region and eventually help in China's image building.

In the past few years, China has become less assertive and has been moving towards cooperation. Though it is militarising the islands, it is not issuing statements every now and then. Officially, China maintains it has "indisputable sovereignty" over the disputed islands and recent developments indicate its hardening approach, but still, it does not aim to alter the *status quo* and its strategy is marked by restraint.<sup>29</sup> Over the years, its strategy has

26. "New Asian Security Concept For New Progress in Security Cooperation, Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia By H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, May 21, 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/yzxhxzyxrcshydsf/t1159951.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/yzxhxzyxrcshydsf/t1159951.shtml). Accessed on October 9, 2017.

27. Lee Ying Hui, "A South China Sea Code of Conduct: Is Real Progress Possible?", *Diplomat*, November 18, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/a-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct-is-real-progress-possible/>. Accessed on November 20, 2017.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Rahul Mishra, "Storm on the South China Sea", *Indian Express*, January 15, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/storm-on-the-south-china-sea/>. Accessed on December 29, 2017.



shifted from addressing the problem to delaying the resolution, and now from being assertive and reinforcing its claims to focussing on joint cooperative activities in the disputed sea. The significance of the semi-enclosed regional sea to their respective as well as mutual geostrategic and geoeconomic interests has made maritime cooperation a critical, if not compulsory, agenda in the overall vision and framework of China-ASEAN engagement.<sup>30</sup> China has mellowed down, specifically after the announcement of the construction of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which will go through the disputed sea, and requires China to project itself as a benign power. China needs the support of the maritime ASEAN countries to go ahead with its ambitious project, and is making efforts to mend fences and minimise the trust deficit.

#### **PHILIPPINES' APPROACH**

Given that there is asymmetry between China and the Philippines, the latter preferred to balance China by inviting extra-regional powers to the region. Therefore, it advocated the presence of the United States, India and Japan in the region. This led to internationalisation of the issue, basically for containing the China threat.<sup>31</sup> In January 2016, the spokesman of the Philippines Department of National Defence, Peter Paul Galvez, during his visit to the US, suggested, "The Philippines and the United States also patrol the area together. There is a need for a more collaborative presence in the South China Sea".<sup>32</sup> The Philippines was proactive in engaging other countries till 2016. In February 2016, it also concluded a defence pact with Japan, allowing the East Asian country to transfer defence technology and equipment to the Philippines. This was mainly to counter China and prepare the Philippines militarily.

Before Duterte's administration, the Philippines' approach had been to opt for a multilateral solution. It wanted ASEAN to

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30. Lai Yew Meng, "Sea of Cooperation or 'Sea of Conflict?': The South China Sea in the Context of China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation", *International Journal of China Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, December 2017, p. 321.

31. Hashmi, n. 1.

32. "Philippines Urges Patrols with US Amid Sea Dispute with China", Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-usa-idUSKCN0US0WJ20160114>. Accessed on December 23, 2017.

take the central role in resolving the dispute. Its preferred method of dealing with China had been hedging or balancing. However, with the coming of Duterte to power, Manila has inched closer to China to the extent that it has proclaimed its desire to go for bilateral consultation on the issue. Duterte has been following an appeasement policy towards China. The Philippines has found several reasons to cooperate with China rather than maintaining animosity. It sees potential in developing closer ties with China. It would not be wrong to say that Duterte has accepted China's regional leadership and, in fact, is contributing towards that. First, the Philippines' proximity to China is directly linked to its differences with the United States. It is in the process of minimising economic and military dependence on the United States and has inched closer to China. Duterte's criticism of the United States is attributed to the latter's condemnation of Duterte's war on drugs, which led to the killing of thousands of Filipinos.

Second, it wants to reap benefit out of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Philippines is a country with limited resources (economic and military). While Duterte's predecessor opted for confrontation and balancing, Duterte has become less confrontational. Amid his growing differences with the United States, he has realised that opting out of the BRI will only lead to the Philippines' isolation and missing out on the economic opportunities presented by the BRI. Duterte has shelved the arbitration ruling, which was almost entirely in his country's favour, in exchange for stronger economic cooperation with China, and for this, Duterte was rewarded heavily with huge tangible benefit in terms of trade deals amounting to US\$ 13.5 billion during his visit to China in October 2016.<sup>33</sup>

Third, China is one of the largest trading partners and a major investor for the Philippines. Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III stated, "In a couple of years, we expect China to become our most important partner in trade."<sup>34</sup> The Finance Department claims that bilateral trade had grown to US\$ 21.6 billion in 2016, up substantially from US\$ 12.32 billion in 2011 and tourist arrivals

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33. Hui, n. 27.

34. Quoted in Mayvelin U. Caraballo, "China to Become PH's Principal Trade Partner", *The Manila Times*, October 4, 2017, <http://www.manilatimes.net/china-become-phis-principal-trade-partner/354474/>. Accessed on October 8, 2017.

from mainland China also ballooned to 675,663 from 243,137 over the same period.<sup>35</sup>

**Table 1: Philippines' Trade with China (2010-15)**

Year	Exports (US\$ billion)	Imports (US\$ billion)	Total Trade (US\$ billion)
2010	5.70	4.61	10.31
2011	6.24	6.09	12.32
2012	6.17	6.69	12.85
2013	7.03	8.07	15.10
2014	8.47	9.87	18.34
2015	6.39	10.83	17.23

Source: Embassy of the Philippines, China.

The Philippines agreed for bilateral consultations on the dispute and both sides concluded the Second Meeting of the China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea in February 2018. According to the Joint Statement issued at the end of the meeting, "Both sides agreed to continue discussions on confidence-building measures to increase mutual trust and confidence and to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities in the South China Sea that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability."<sup>36</sup> In a departure from past practices, the Philippines hinted that it might go for joint exploration of oil and gas in the South China Sea with China. Justifying the decision of the country, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque Jr., in a press conference, said that "there are also other nations that have entered into such a deal. Even Vietnam, also a claimant to South China Sea, had agreed with its archrival China to jointly explore a block in the contested waters."<sup>37</sup> The Philippines has clearly

35. Ibid.

36. "Joint Press Release Second Meeting of China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 13, 2018, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/t1534824.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1534824.shtml). Accessed on February 15, 2018.

37. Quoted in "Joint Exploration of South China Sea A Common Practice, Roque Says", *Sun Star*, March 5, 2018, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2018/03/05/joint-exploration-south-china-sea-common-practice-roque-says-592019>. Accessed on March 6, 2018.

adopted a policy of appeasement towards China and is, slowly and steadily, distancing itself from the United States. This approach has direct implications for the resolution of the South China Sea dispute. It has further bolstered China's confidence and weakened the position of the Southeast Asian claimants.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Philippines' approach has posed a challenge to ASEAN's centrality. However, the benefits it has accrued, can be assessed as the following:

First, this newly-found approach has turned a traditional foe into a friend. China has agreed to diffuse tensions (though mostly on its own terms).

Second, the Philippines has been rewarded immensely, especially under the BRI framework. As far as China is concerned, this altered policy of the Philippines will help it in keeping a check on the United States, as well as having one more country sign up for the BRI.

What is important to note is that China will continue delaying the resolution of the South China Sea dispute and might also resort to assertive measures when the need arises.

# MANAGING CRUDE: A CHALLENGE FOR INDIA'S ENERGY BASKET

**ASHEESH SHRIVASTAVA**

*The more you seek security, the less of it you have. But the more you seek opportunity, the more likely it is that you will achieve the security that you desire.*

— Brian Tracy

Energy security<sup>1</sup> for a nation is defined as a reasonable level of assured access to energy and relevant technologies at all times, along with an ability to cope with sudden shocks in demand. Energy security does not mean complete energy independence, it only means an ability to meet realistic domestic requirements. It also represents an environment of assured supply of energy for its citizens under varied political conditions. In a nutshell, uninterrupted supply of energy is essential to support a country's economic growth and ensure its strategic outreach. India's energy security is primarily about ensuring continuous availability of commercially exploitable energy at a competitive price. India's rapid growth has created an ever-increasing energy demand,

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1. Planning Commission, "Power and Energy", <http://planningcommission.nic.in/sectors/energy.html>. Accessed on May 16, 2018.

which requires several initiatives at the diplomatic, political, economic and technical levels for fulfilment. Efficient<sup>2</sup>, reliable<sup>3</sup> and affordable energy is essential for sustainable development and inclusive growth. India is presently one of the fastest growing economies of the world and due to this rapid economic expansion, is poised to become the world's fastest growing energy market. Since 2015, India has surpassed Russia to become the 3rd largest energy consumer in the world after China and the USA. In 2016, India consumed about 884 Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (MTOE)<sup>4</sup> of energy, of which crude oil and gas accounted for about 35 percent. In the same year, India surpassed Japan to become the 3rd largest oil consuming nation in the world of which 82 percent was imported<sup>5</sup>. Given India's growing energy demands, limited domestic fossil fuel resources and excessive reliance on imports, it is important to look for long-term strategies to offset import dependency. This article analyses the steps taken by the political and administrative set-up of the country in achieving energy security. Postulates of the progressive roadmap proposed by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) to reduce import dependency are also deliberated upon.

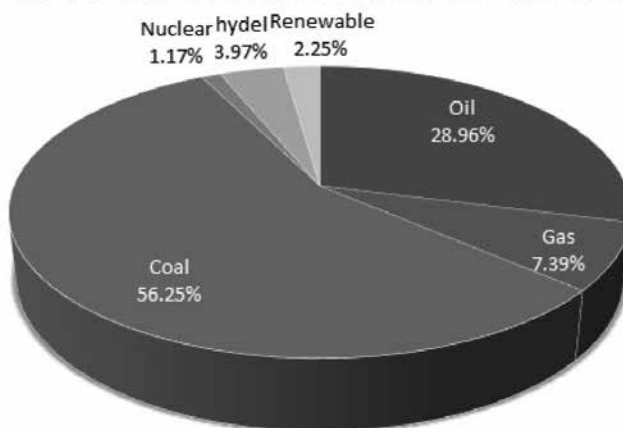
### **INDIA'S ENERGY BASKET**

It's understandable – energy is pivotal for economic development, for improving the quality of life and for increasing opportunities for sustainable inclusive growth. The policy-makers and the government of the day are responsible to ensure continuous supply of clean energy for raising the country's human development index. Therefore, a broad-based integrated vision, which is able to meet the energy demands across all sectors should drive the country's energy policy. The energy basket of India is dominated by coal/

2. Efficient Energy Represents - Energy Returned on Energy Invested (ERoEI); which is the ratio of the amount of usable energy extracted from a particular energy resource to the amount of energy required to obtain that energy – the higher the ERoEI, the more efficient the source resource.
3. Reliable Energy – measures the energy source on its ease of availability, i.e. its supply may not be influenced by geographical, political or technological factors.
4. Million Tonnes of Oil Equivalent (MTOE) is a unit of energy defined as the amount of energy released by burning one million tonne of crude oil. It is approximately  $42 \times 10^9$  gigajoules or  $11.63 \times 10^9$  kilowatt hours.
5. Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Annual Report 2016-17, <http://petroleum.nic.in/sites/default/files/AR16-17.pdf>. Accessed on May 10, 2018.

lignite and augmented by crude oil, natural gas, hydro and nuclear power. Recent additions to the basket include solar and wind power. The pie chart at Fig 1 depicts India's energy basket, in terms of consumption from different sources<sup>6</sup>. Clearly, coal contributes the maximum to the energy matrix. However, the contribution of oil and gas has been constantly increasing over the last few years. While India has sufficient coal and lignite stocks to meet sectoral requirements, it remains highly dependent on other nations for crude oil. This is a worrisome indicator for policy-makers. It is also true that while coal, nuclear and other renewable source of energy can easily displace each other in the energy pie, replacing crude is very difficult due to its unique position as energy provider for the transportation sector. Therefore, many technology and policy reviews would be required to reduce India's dependence on imported crude.

**Fig 1: Energy Basket of India**  
**INDIA'S TOTAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION DURING 2016: 723.9 MTOE**



Source: Statista GmbH, Bengaluru.

During 2013, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), constituted a committee to prepare a roadmap and suggest

6. Energy and Environmental Technology, Statista Inc, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265613/primary-energy-consumption-in-india-by-fuel/>. Accessed on May 12, 2018.

measures for sustainable reduction in import dependency by 2030<sup>7</sup>. The committee was headed by Dr Vijay Kelkar and included nine other distinguished members from various sectors. The committee assessed that India's import dependency can be reduced by more than half by 2030 if certain policy measures are actioned on the ground. The same was reiterated by the prime minister during the inauguration of the 'Urja Sangram, 2015, India's Global Hydrocarbon Summit', held on March 27, 2015.<sup>8</sup> He urged all stakeholders, including industry experts, explorers, refiners, distributors and consumers to devise methods and technologies to reduce India's import dependence for crude from 77 percent to 67 percent by the year 2022 and to 50 percent by 2030. The Draft National Energy Policy 2016 also advocates that the MoPNG should set a target to achieve 10 percent reduction in import of petroleum products by 2022 as compared to 2014-15 levels.

On July 20, 2017, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan, while inaugurating the 1st meeting of the Integrated Monitoring and Advisory Council (IMAC),<sup>9</sup> reiterated the government's resolve to achieve the target of 10 percent reduction in import dependency in oil and gas by 2021-22<sup>10</sup>. The minister directed all energy consuming ministries and departments to invest in fuel efficient technologies to achieve this goal. These efforts indicate the clear vision and approach of the policy-makers, towards energy security requirements.

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7. Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, GoI, *Roadmap for Reduction in Import Dependency in the Hydrocarbon Sector by 2030*, Kelkar Committee, September 2014, <http://petroleum.nic.in/sites/default/files/FinalReportKelkarCommittee2014.pdf>. Accessed on May 14, 2018.
  8. Press Information Bureau, GoI, *Prime Minister Inaugurates Urja Sangam 2015*, March 27, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117787>. Accessed on May 14, 2018.
  9. The IMAC is an inter-ministry monitoring and advisory body for policy formulation and implementation of the PM's visionary roadmap. The council is responsible to facilitate coordination and formulate a comprehensive strategy for all energy resources by focussing on supply and demand management. The council works under the chairmanship of the minister of petroleum and natural gas and comprises officials from energy consuming ministries/departments of the Government of India. The council also has members from MoP&NG, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MRNE) and other ministries like road and transport, agriculture, urban development, power, rural development and finance.
  10. Staff report, "Government Holds Meeting for Reducing Oil Import Dependence", *The Hindu, Business Line*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/government-holds-meeting-for-reducing-oil-import-dependence/article9781115.ece>. Accessed on May 14, 2018.



**CHANGING MATRIX: EXPLOITING NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY**

Table 1 compares type-wise (fuel) primary energy consumption of India between 2010 and 2016. As is evident from the table, India's energy consumption grew by about 28 percent while the contribution of renewable energy and nuclear energy increased by 53.94 percent and 39.53 percent respectively. During the same period, while the import of crude increased, its share in contribution to the energy basket reduced marginally as compared to other sources of energy. This may indicate the policy-makers' partial success in the continued and determined approach to exploit – other than oil – other sources of energy.

**Table 1: India's Primary Energy Consumption by Source**

PRIMARY ENERGY CONSUMPTION MIX DURING 2010-16 <sup>11</sup> IN MTOE								
Source of Energy	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change: 2010 to 2016
Oil	156.2	163	173.6	175.3	180.8	195.5	212.7	26.56
Natural gas	55.7	55	52.9	46.3	45.6	45.5	45.1	-23.5
Coal	270.8	270.6	302.3	324.3	388.7	407.2	411.9	34.26
Nuclear Energy	5.2	7.3	7.5	7.5	7.8	8.6	8.6	39.53
Hydro	25	29.8	26.2	29.8	29.6	28.1	29.1	14.09
Renewable Energy	7.6	9.2	10.9	12.5	13.6	15.5	16.5	53.94
Total	520.5	534.8	573.3	595.7	666.2	700.5	723.9	28.1

Source: Statista Inc

**REDUCING IMPORT DEPENDENCY: IMAC'S INITIATIVES**

During February-March 2018, the officials of MoPNG presented a detailed progress report to the Parliament Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas wherein they gave details of the steps

11. "Primary Energy Consumption in India by Fuel Type Between 2010-2016," Statista Inc, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265613/primary-energy-consumption-in-india-by-fuel/>. Accessed on May 12, 2018.

taken by the ministry<sup>12</sup> towards achieving the prime minister's target on reducing import dependency for petroleum products. The MoPNG also informed the parliamentary committee that it had formed the Integrated Monitoring and Advisory Council (IMAC) on July 20, 2017; and that the council is working on a two-prong strategy: firstly, to increase domestic production of oil and natural gas; and, secondly, to increase the share of renewable energy/ bio-fuel in India's energy basket. The detailed roadmap, firm measures and policy initiatives proposed by IMAC, in consultation with other ministries, included focussed attention to the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP), National Data Repository (NDR), Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP), Discovered Small Field (DSF) Policy, tapping unconventional sources such as shale gas and Coal Bed Methane (CBM), enhancing production of bio-diesel and increased use of Piped Natural Gas (PNG)/ Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for domestic and industrial application. Details of the action plan are as follows.

### **INCREASING DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF OIL AND GAS**

**Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP):** The government notified this new policy in March 2016. The aim was to have a uniform licensing system for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons.<sup>13</sup> The strategic outreach of HELP was to make the Indian oil exploration industry a business and investor friendly venture. Under this policy, the government would no longer manage or monitor exploration, production, marketing, sale and pricing of hydrocarbons. Further, in order to attract new entrepreneurs, the royalty on a single licence for exploration and exploitation of offshore areas was also reduced from 10 percent to 7.5 percent for shallow waters, 5 percent for deep water and 2 percent for ultra-deep-water areas. The other main features of the policy were:

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12. Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas, 23rd Report, Demands for Grants (2018-19), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, March 13, 2018. Accessed on May 15, 2018.
  13. Press Information Bureau, GoI, "Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)", March 10, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137638>. Accessed on May 15, 2018.

- Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP).
- Administering a revenue sharing model with industry.
- Marketing and pricing freedom for indigenous crude and natural gas producers.

**Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP):** Under this policy, domestic and foreign companies were allowed to bid directly for areas where they wanted to drill for oil and natural gas. The selection and identification of the oil and gas blocks for exploration could now be done by the bidders themselves. The seismic and oil well data, which is essential for identification of a potential block, could be obtained by the bidder from the National Data Repository (NDR).<sup>14</sup> Through this policy, the government aims at commercial exploitation of domestic oil and natural gas reserves and eventually at reducing imports. The first round of international competitive bidding for 59,282 sq. km, under OALP was held on January 18, 2018. Bidders were free to carve out and select promising areas for exploration within the offered basin. Fifty-five bidders participated in the auction. However, the exact strategic gains from this policy would be visible only after 2019, when correct estimates of the oil reserves of the country are made public.

**Discovered Small Field (DSF):** This is another path-breathing strategy aimed at monetising explored but unutilised hydrocarbon rich fields in a time-bound manner. The policy which was notified on October 14, 2015, is estimated to boost domestic oil and gas production by about 194.65 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT).<sup>15</sup> The policy covered certain small oil fields, which were discovered long ago by government owned oil companies, but relinquished, due to various reasons like isolated location, being uneconomical, small size of hydrocarbon

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14. The NDR was set up under the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons, MoPNG, on June 28, 2017, to store and maintain hydrocarbon Exploration & Production (E&P) data in a safe and reusable manner. The agency presently holds data on over 26 sedimentary oil & gas basins in India. The preserved E & P data is available for commercial exploration, research and development and academic purposes. The agency also facilitates efficient data reporting, data exchange, and data trading among existing players including all national and international geoscientific agencies. [https://www.ndrdgh.gov.in/NDR/?page\\_id=6](https://www.ndrdgh.gov.in/NDR/?page_id=6). Accessed on May 15, 2018.

15. MoPNG press release, "Cabinet Approves DSF Policy Bid Round-II for 60 Unmonetised Discoveries of ONGC and OIL Under Nomination and Relinquished Discoveries Under PSC Regime," February 7, 2018, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176357>. Accessed on May 16, 2018.

reserves, high development costs, and constraints of technology. Pioneering efforts to auction these DSF commenced on May 25, 2016. A total of 46 contracts for 67 oil fields across nine oil basins were offered for 1st round of bidding and 134 e-bids were received. On February 15, 2017, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved 31 production contracts.<sup>16</sup> The areas where production could start shortly include 23 mainland locations and 8 offshore locations<sup>17</sup>. While ten contracts were awarded to Public Sector Undertakings, 21 contracts awarded to private companies (PSUs) including one foreign and one public-private consortium. The policy also witnessed the participation of 15 new companies in the oil production sector. On implementation, the policy is expected to create over 37,500 new jobs in the petroleum sector, at isolated locations.

In-principle approval to commence the 2nd round of bidding for the remaining fields/ and new DSF identified thereafter has also been accorded by the Cabinet on February 7, 2018.<sup>18</sup> A total of 60 DSF will be available for auction of which 22 belong to the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited and 5 to Oil India Limited (OIL). The new investments into these fields are also expected to generate additional 50,000 jobs in both upstream and downstream<sup>19</sup> sectors of the petroleum industry. However, extraction of crude, including setting up oil wells, laying pipelines for transportation to refineries, etc have a long gestation period, sometimes extending to more than two-three years. Therefore, the impact of this policy change would be felt only after 2020 at the earliest.

## **PROMOTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION MEASURES**

The Energy Conservation Act (EC Act) was enacted in the year 2001

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16. MoPNG press release, "Discovered Small Fields Bid Round 2016," Award of 31 Contract Areas under DSF 2016, February 15, 2017, [http://dghindia.gov.in/assets/downloads/58a463707a613DSF\\_Press\\_Release\\_150217.pdf](http://dghindia.gov.in/assets/downloads/58a463707a613DSF_Press_Release_150217.pdf). Accessed on May 15, 2018.

17. Ibid.

18. n.15.

19. The oil and gas industry is divided into two major sectors, the upstream sector deals with exploration and production including transportation of crude from oil wells to refineries. The downstream sector deals with oil refineries, production of various petroleum products their distribution and retail.

with the goal of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.<sup>20</sup> The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) was set up as the statutory body on March 1, 2002, to facilitate the implementation of the EC Act. A number of energy efficiency initiatives in the areas of household lighting, commercial buildings, standards and labelling of appliances, demand side management in agriculture/municipalities, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and large industries were initiated by the Ministry of Power. According to the ministry's announcement of its initiatives and achievements,<sup>21</sup> the year 2016-17 was declared the first ever power surplus year, with no shortage of electricity and coal. The statistics further reveal that the amount of coal required to generate per unit of electricity reduced by 8 percent last year. This highlighted the increased efficiency of the thermal power plants. The ministry's efforts in enhancing the benchmarks of energy efficiency for consumer appliances, industry, power generation and transmission networks has increased the net availability of power. Concurrently, its investments into promoting the use of solar and wind power have also contributed towards reduction in the use of petroleum derivatives in some sectors. The efforts of the Ministry of Power and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy need not only to be sustained but also enhanced.

### **THRUST ON SUBSTITUTING CRUDE WITH GAS**

Piped Natural Gas (PNG), Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) are distributed across the country through a network of gas pipelines. The National Gas Grid represents the network of gas pipelines connecting various gas consumers, e.g. city gas distribution networks, fertiliser plants, power plants, road transport sector, etc. Until the year 2015, India had only about 15,000 km of gas pipeline infrastructure predominantly connecting the western, northern and southeastern gas markets with gas sources. Under the "Urja Ganga"<sup>22</sup> project, an additional about 15,000 km of pipelines are being

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20. Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Power, <https://powermin.nic.in/en/content/energy-efficiency>. Accessed on May 15, 2018.

21. "Ujjwal Bharat 3 Years, Ministry of Power," May 2017, [https://powermin.nic.in/sites/default/files/webform/notices/Ujjwal\\_Bharat\\_3\\_Year\\_Brochure\\_English\\_spread\\_0.pdf](https://powermin.nic.in/sites/default/files/webform/notices/Ujjwal_Bharat_3_Year_Brochure_English_spread_0.pdf). Accessed on May 15, 2018.

22. Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, GoI, PIB, *Aims and Objectives of National Gas Grid*, May 13, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=121645>. Accessed on May 16, 2018.

added to connect the eastern states of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. The gas grid will not only remove regional imbalances but also provide cheap, clean and green fuel to most populous parts of the country. This will enhance the share of gas in India's energy basket. CNG and LPG comprise cheaper sources of energy as the Energy Return on Energy Invested (ERoEI) is much less than that of crude. India's explored gas reserves stand at 1,289 Billion Cubic Metres (BCM) against 604 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) of crude.<sup>23</sup>

According to Shri DK Sarraf, chairperson, Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board, the government is also promoting the use of environment friendly transportation fuel, i.e. CNG by expanding the coverage of the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network in the country.<sup>24</sup> The move would not only make CNG available for domestic users as PNG but also promote the use of CNG in the transport sector. At present, 31 CGD companies are developing PNG networks in 86 designated Geographical Areas (GAs) spread over 21 states/Union Territories (UTs). These companies supply clean cooking fuel to about 40 lakh households. The target is to reach 25 percent energy consumption through natural gas by 2030.

### **CAPITALISING ON THE POTENTIAL OF BIO-FUELS**

On May 16, 2018, the government announced the approval of the National Policy on Bio-fuel 2018. Bio-fuels in India are of strategic importance as their use augurs well for the ongoing initiatives of the government such as 'Make in India', 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' and skill development. It also offers great opportunities to integrate energy security with the ambitious targets of doubling of farmers' incomes, import reduction, employment generation and waste-to-wealth creation.<sup>25</sup> Earlier, on December 1, 2017, the government had announced the increase in the procurement price of ethanol to Rs.

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23. Energy Statistics 2018, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Progress Implementation, [http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Energy\\_Statistics\\_2018.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Energy_Statistics_2018.pdf). Accessed on May 18, 2018.

24. Expert View, "We Plan to Take Gas Distribution Network Across India: DK Sarraf, PNGRB", *The Economics Times*, February 27, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/expert-view/we-plan-to-take-gas-distribution-network-across-india-dk-sarraf-pngrb/articleshow/63094340.cms>. Accessed on May 15, 2018.

25. PIB, "Union Cabinet, GoI, Cabinet Approves National Policy on Biofuels-2018," May 16, 2018, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=179313>. Accessed on May 18, 2018.

40.85/per litre, excluding tax.<sup>26</sup> Concurrently, the General Sales Tax (GST) on bio-fuel was also reduced to 5 percent, making it comparable with the ex-refinery price of petrol. According to the data provided by the MoPNG, during 2015-16, the oil marketing companies procured 111 crore litres of ethanol, while for 2017-18, they floated tenders to procure around 150 crore litres of ethanol. This confirms the growing strength of the ethanol market, which is an important component of bio-petrol. Lucrative supply side pricing by oil companies and regulatory support by green policies will definitely provide the required 'demand side' pull for the 'supply side' farmers to reach an equilibrium for sustained availability. Oil marketing companies also plan to establish twelve 2G ethanol plants across eleven states. Six Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed between oil marketing companies and technology providers (5 MoUs) / state government (1 MoU) for setting up of 2G ethanol plants in five locations.<sup>27</sup> The 2G bio-fuel refinery is being set up by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) at Bathinda, Punjab.

Since 2017,<sup>28</sup> the MoPNG has also allowed bio-diesel manufacturers to sell fuel directly to consumers like the Indian Railways and state transport undertakings as long as they meet the standards specified by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for high speed diesel. This move may further incentivise investment in the bio-fuel sector.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

Was the reduction in import dependency just a quixotic statement made by the prime minister of India in 2015? Is the target to achieve a 10 percent reduction in import unachievable? Well, looking at the import figures of crude oil between 2015 and 2017, it is difficult to contemplate an affirmative 'Yes'. Statistically, there has been

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26. Staff reporter, Reuters, "India Raises Ethanol Price by 5% to Ease Pressure on Suppliers," November 1, 2017, <https://in.reuters.com/article/us-india-ethanol/india-raises-ethanol-price-by-5-percent-to-ease-pressure-on-suppliers-idINKBN1D1475>. Accessed on May 14, 2018.

27. ET Energy World, "Dharmendra Pradhan to Inaugurate India's First 2nd G Ethanol Bio-refinery at Punjab," December 23, 2016, <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/dharmendra-pradhan-to-inaugurate-indias-first-2nd-generation-ethanol-bio-refinery-at-punjab/56137021>. Accessed on May 18, 2018.

28. MoPNG, GoI, "Gazette Notification-June 29, 2017," [http://ppac.org.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/MS%20and%20HSD%20Amendment%20Order-Distr\\_GSR728\\_29\\_06\\_2017.pdf](http://ppac.org.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/MS%20and%20HSD%20Amendment%20Order-Distr_GSR728_29_06_2017.pdf). Accessed on May 18, 2018.

a rise in the volumes of imported crude, rather than a progressive decline. During the same period, the production of crude and gas from domestic installations has also remained static. Thus, it may appear that the prime minister's call was not taken seriously by the administrative dispensation. The actions initiated by the IMAC were far too little and not driven by any sense of urgency or purpose. The lead ministry had also not fixed any annual target for reduction in import nor directed participating ministries for setting deadlines. Therefore, it is suggested that the IMAC prepare a detailed year-wise roll-on plan to achieve the prime minister's visionary target.

However, when we delve deep into the statistics, we find that baby steps have definitely been initiated. Nevertheless, changes in the energy basket require massive investment in infrastructure and associated policies. The new policies require long gestation periods. In a nutshell, the intensity of efforts by the principal ministries have to be enhanced to achieve the target within the stipulated timeframe. The stride of each step needs to be longer and more powerful. The IMAC should also be empowered to take punitive actions against ministries and departments if they fail to accomplish targeted reduction. In the worst case, financial grants provided by the Parliament to the ministry may correspondingly be withheld. There is also a need to focus on Research and Development (R&D) efforts and incentives for achieving targets: these points should be included in the energy roadmap. There appears to be inadequate coordination and cooperation amongst the various ministries towards attaining the national objective. It is also opined that the experiences of other nations on some of these issues may also be studied and suitably incorporated in the strategy, particularly in areas like the use of hydrogen as fuel, electric vehicles, solar equipment/ appliances, hybrid vehicles, etc. The targeted reduction in imports may appear difficult but is definitely achievable.



# SECURING THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE IN NORTHEAST INDIA UNDER THE 'ACT EAST' POLICY

**TEMJENMEREN AO**

The northeast region is India's gateway to Southeast Asia, not only because of its geographical proximity but also because of their cultural linkages that provide much scope to expand ties. The 'Look East' – and today the 'Act East' – policy is working in tandem with other developmental initiatives of the government towards pushing growth in the region. The negative impact of these developmental projects on the flora and fauna, along with the impact on the traditional way of living of the local communities needs to be addressed. While it cannot be denied that the region needs to get reenergised and move quickly on the road towards development and growth, it becomes even more important to focus on the issue of long-term, sustainable growth by maintaining the ecological balance in the region. This paper attempts to build a narrative that argues for the need to ensure the conservation and sustainable development of the northeast states of India, and how this would ensure the region's long-term growth.

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## DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHEAST PUSHING THE ECOLOGICAL IMBALANCE

The northeast region has a rich bio-diversity that includes a variety of endemic species of plant and animals. The eastern Himalayan provinces of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur are considered as one of the two hotspots of bio-diversity in India – the other being the Western Ghats – with half of the total number of the floral species of India growing in this region. The region forms the richest reservoir of genetic variability; and the presence of a large number of primitive plants makes the region the ‘cradle of flowering plants’. More than 50 percent of the total mammalian genera of India are found in the region out of which a large number of them are not found in the rest of India. Of more than 500 different species of mammals that are known in India, the northeast region alone has 160 species. This mammalian fauna, which forms the largest part of the wildlife resources of the region are today included in the list of protected animals, due to the destruction of their natural habitats.<sup>1</sup>

India’s Look East Policy (LEP) was introduced by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in his Singapore lecture titled “India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship” on September 8, 1994. In his lecture, the prime minister introduced the forging of India’s new relationship with the Asia-Pacific that comprised the nation-states of East and Southeast Asia. He had stressed on the point that India’s historical and cultural relations with the region were very old and strong and there was nothing new in India looking towards reinforcing cooperative linkages with its eastern neighbours. While emphasising on India’s preoccupation with economic development, the prime minister stressed on building strong economic and security cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries.<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his opening statement at the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit (November 2014), said, “Rapidly developing India and ASEAN can be great partners for each other. We are both keen to enhance our cooperation in advancing balance,

1. K R Dikshit and Jutta K Dikshit, *North-East India: Land, People, and Economy* (New York: Springer Dordrecht, 2014).
2. P V Narasimha Rao, “India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship”, Singapore Conference Hall, September 8, 1994.

peace and stability in the region. A new era of economic development, industrialisation and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become the 'Act East Policy'.<sup>3</sup>

The announcement of the Act East Policy implied that, over the decades, through the LEP, India's relations with its eastern neighbours have been elevated and now India seeks to establish a superstructure based on the sound and solid foundation that already exists. From India's point of view, it has been able to successfully implement its liberalisation policies, open its economy to more imports and investments, and now seeks to address the new challenges in the partnership with its eastern neighbours. It is in this context that the Act East Policy could become one of the major inducements towards the development of northeast India which, in turn, could act as a springboard for India into the markets of Southeast and East Asia. The 'Look East' Policy that recognised the potential of the northeast region has been able to push development and growth over the last two decades, and this would be carried forward through the 'Act East' Policy. However, one needs to realise that today the region's ecological system has also become extremely fragile as the population has increased, and the economy has expanded with the era of industrialisation.

One of the major components of the 'Act East' Policy is that of establishing a robust line of physical as well as digital connectivity between India and Southeast Asia which would go through northeast India. There is an agreement amongst the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India on the need for establishing measures to intensify hard connectivity such as roads, waterways, digital and aviation connectivity. The importance of connectivity as the major driver in the overall ASEAN-India relations is very much evident given the fact that in December 2017, the first-ever ASEAN-India Connectivity Summit was held at New Delhi, which saw active participation by India and all the ten ASEAN states. The underlying agenda is towards deepening digital and physical connectivity,

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3. "Opening Statement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 12th India-ASEAN Summit, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, Ministry of External Affairs, <http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/24230/Opening+Statement+by+Prime+Minister+at+the+12th+IndiaASEAN+Summit+Nay+Pyi+Taw+Myanmar>. Accessed on February 29, 2018.

in order to usher in peace, security and prosperity in India and Southeast Asia, and the Indo-Pacific region at large. This would help in not only strengthening the socio-cultural ties but also in carrying out inter-regional business, trade and commerce and, thus, would further enhance growth in other areas of cooperation. Ongoing projects such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway, and initiatives such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement, once completed, would allow for free flow of people, ideas, and goods. These developmental initiatives would no doubt also benefit the region of northeast India and help put it on track towards development and growth.

Whilst this is of utmost necessity, it is also important to realise that these very developmental initiatives, if not undertaken in a sustainable manner, would have a negative impact on the fragile ecosystem of the region. Developmental projects like the road network, building of hydroelectric projects on the rivers in densely forested areas, expansion of agricultural land by cutting down and burning forests besides the traditional *jhuming* practices – are challenges to the preservation of the rich ecosystem of the region. Thus, there is a requirement to have developmental projects that are sustainable while also providing quality infrastructure that would help maintain the rich ecology of the region. Apart from the unplanned and unsustainable developmental projects of the past, there are two causes which are also factored into the ecological imbalance being witnessed today.

### *Commercialisation of the Forest Resources*

The proliferation of forest-based industries and commercial crops in many parts of the northeast region has been dramatic in the last few years. It must be realised that unlike in many other parts of India, the forests of northeast India have contributed greatly to the economy of the country and the region, with the value of the forests being considered almost exclusively in economic terms. Of the forest resources, timber is one of the most important products and was exploited by the British for their fleets, and railway sleepers. This also led to the establishment of the paper, pulp and plywood industry in the

region that continued to exploit the resources. The ongoing resource exploitation activities, thus, called for the establishment of the forest department in order to manage the forests and undertake surveys, classification, and conservation measures against exploitation.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of cultivation, the hilly and mountainous region where the traditional *jhuming* cultivation is practised, according to a World Bank report, private entities financed by traders from the lowland areas, are encouraging the use of *jhum* lands for planting commercial crops. These cash crops that may not be sustainable given the terrain and soil fertility, while generating cash in the short term, could leave the upland communities with disturbed and unproductive land. Further, diversion of *jhum* land to cash crops reduces the pool for shifting cultivation, and ultimately, reduces the fallow cycle, thereby undermining the sustainability of the traditional agricultural system.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Growth of Urbanisation***

The onset of urbanisation in the region in the last few decades has witnessed a massive onslaught on the existing ecological system. The march towards modernisation, in the virtual absence of any significant development of the secondary or tertiary sectors, along with the inability to adopt and generate modern means of sustainable development in the region has degenerated the existing ecological system which, ever since, has been on a decline. According to the Census of India, the number of towns in the northeast region has increased more than ten-fold from 30 in 1951 to 414 in 2011, and along with this, the percentage of the urban population showed an increase of three and a half times. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the rest of India as a whole where the number of towns has not even doubled during the last 60 years nor has the level of urbanisation, which increased from 17.3 percent in 1951 to 31.2 percent in 2011. This could be attributed to the increase in the number of capitals in Assam, Tripura, and Manipur till the 1970s and the addition of four new capitals for the newly established states. Secondly, the

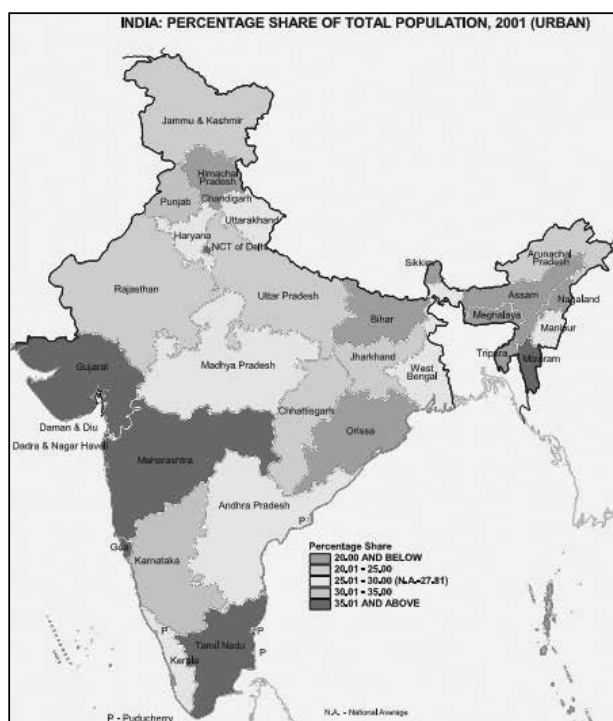
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4. Dikshit and Dikshit, n.1, pp.250-251.

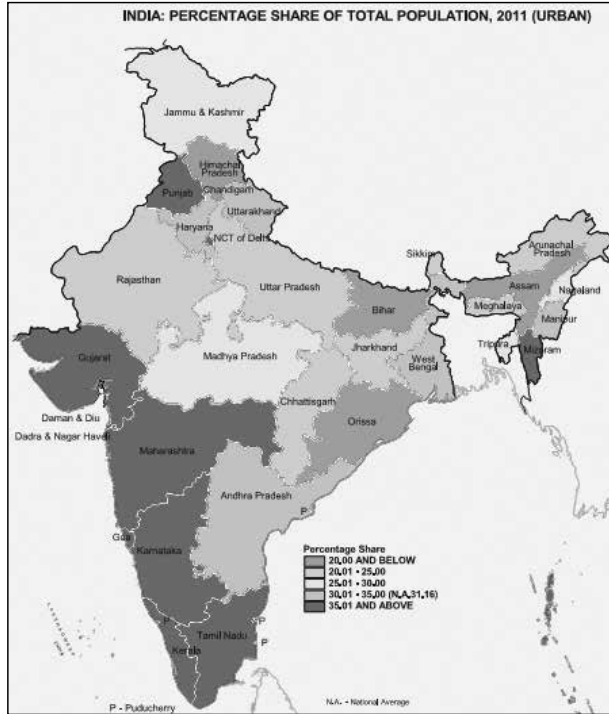
5. Mark Poffenberger, "Forest Sector Review of North-East India", Background Paper No. 12, March 2006, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSAREGTOPWATRES/Resources/Background\\_Paper\\_12.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSAREGTOPWATRES/Resources/Background_Paper_12.pdf). Accessed on February 29, 2018.

number of districts has also increased from 26 in 1951 to 86 in 2011, necessitating the establishment of district headquarters, which are usually given the status of town.<sup>6</sup> Finally, there has been a spurt in economic activities in the last few decades with the coming into existence of industrial units that have led to the development of a number of industrial clusters, prompting the growth of towns by increasing the size of the existing service centres.

**Fig 1. Growth in India’s Urban Population, Census, 2001 and 2011<sup>7</sup>**

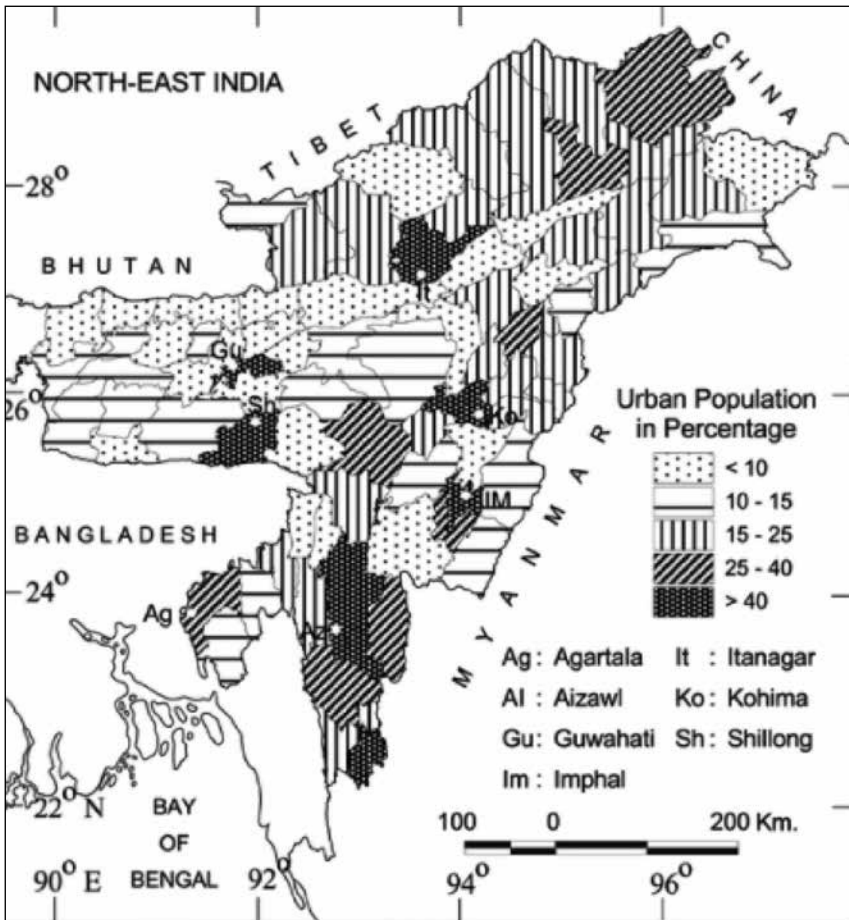


6. C. Chandramouli, “Rural Urban Distribution of Population”, Census of India, 2011, July 15, 2011, Ministry of Home Affairs, [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data\\_files/india/Rural\\_Urban\\_2011.pdf](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/india/Rural_Urban_2011.pdf). Accessed on March 1, 2018.  
 7. Ibid.



The maps in Fig 1, taken from the 2011 Census, compare the percentage share of the total population in the urban areas between the two census periods: 2001 and 2011. Looking at the northeast region in the two maps, it can be seen that between 2001 and 2011, the darker green colour that represents less population concentration in an area is being replaced by the lighter green, yellow and dark orange. This indicates an increase in the inflow of population in the same area as a consequence of better job opportunities from the increase in development in the region (see original source, as given in n.6).

Fig 2: Level of Urbanisation in the States of Northeast India, 2011<sup>8</sup>



A more detailed map in Fig 2 indicates the areas of the region that have the highest urban settlement. The level of urbanisation that has occurred in the northeast region has not been accompanied with the same level of infrastructural development that could help sustain this surge. The vacuum in which this fast urbanisation has taken place in the region has had a negative impact on the ecology, as the developmental plans ignored the issue of conservation and development of sustainable infrastructure in the region.

8. Dikshit and Dikshit, n.1, p.543.



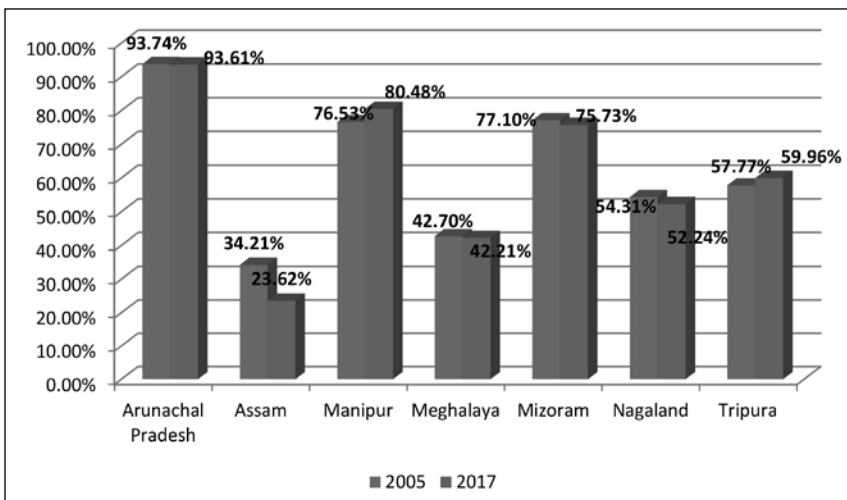
**Fig 3: Forest Cover in the Northeast Region<sup>9</sup>**

As indicated in Fig 3, in absolute terms, the state of Arunachal Pradesh has the largest area under forest, accounting for almost 40 percent of the total forest area in the northeast region (see original source, as given in n.9). In states such as Nagaland and Tripura, there has been a high level of forest degradation, while the other hilly states of Meghalaya and Mizoram indicate a modest area under forest cover. In 2017, according to the Forest Survey of India report, Arunachal had a total forest cover of 93.61 percent of its total area in comparison to 93.74 percent in 2005. In fact, one can divide the whole of the northeast region into two broad vegetation classes: the mountainous area covered with forest, and the plains occupied by agricultural land. The mountainous areas are mostly covered with dense forests while the plains areas, with a few exceptions like the Duar region of Kokrajhar district, have agricultural land and, thus,

9. "Forest Cover", Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region, <http://www.mdoner.gov.in/node/224>. Accessed on May 2, 2018.

less forest cover. The bar diagram indicates the forest cover in the seven states of the northeastern region between 2005 and 2017. The data on the figure indicates that with the exception of Manipur and Tripura, where there has been an increase in afforestation between 2005 and 2017, the other states have witnessed a decline in their total forest cover, implying an increase in urbanisation across the states.

**Fig 4: Percentage of Forest Cover in the Northeast States, 2005 and 2017<sup>10</sup>**

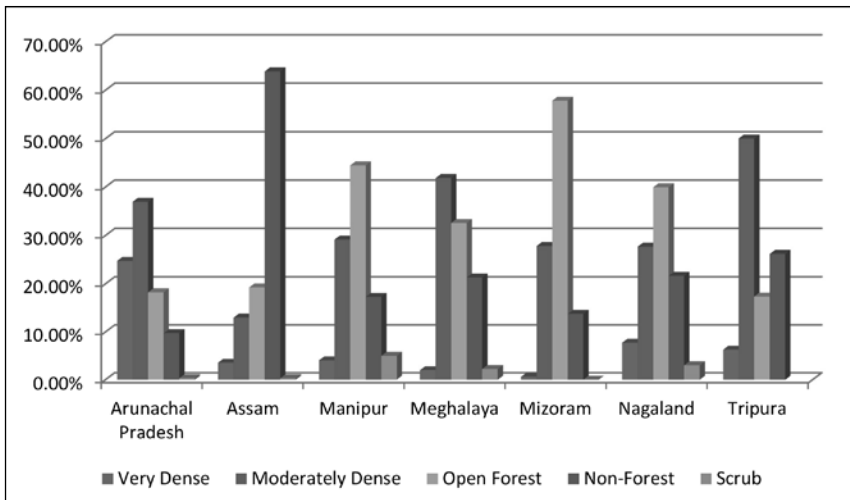


Further, if we look at the 2017 data for the proportion of the different types of forests in the different states, we also find a significant difference with regard to the forests under dense, moderately dense, open forest, non-forest, and scrub. This has been highlighted in the bar diagram given below (Fig 5). As indicated in Fig 5, the state of Arunachal Pradesh has the highest in terms of very dense forest cover at 24.74 percent (see original source, as given in n.11). There is also a high proportion of area under non-forest across all the states, with Assam at 63.89 percent of its total geographical area under this category. The high proportion of the area under non-

10. "State of Forest Report 2017", Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, [http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb\\_64](http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb_64), and "State of Forest Report 2017", Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, [http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb\\_18](http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb_18). Accessed on May 2, 2018.

forest in the mountainous and hilly states of the region also indicates the increasing urbanisation occurring in the region.

**Fig 5: Proportion of Different Types of Forests in the Northeast States, 2017<sup>11</sup>**



### CHANGING DYNAMICS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Today, the revenue from forests is no longer the primary consideration in their preservation. According to the National Environmental Policy 2006, “...while conservation of environmental resources is necessary to secure livelihoods and the well-being of all, the most secure basis for conservation is to ensure that people dependent on particular resources obtain better livelihoods from the fact of conservation, than from degradation of the resource”.<sup>12</sup> While the importance of forests as a primary source of food, fuel, and fodder remains significant, their importance has increased as a valuable storehouse for a large mass of plant resources and providing suitable habitats for varieties of animal, and thereby preserving the equilibrium of the ecosystem.

11. “State of Forest Report 2017”, Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, [http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb\\_64](http://fsi.nic.in/details.php?pgID=sb_64). Accessed on May 2, 2018.

12. National Environment Policy, 2006, Ministry of Environment and Forests, <http://www.moef.gov.in/sites/default/files/introduction-nep2006e.pdf>. Accessed on March 1, 2018.

It is also important to realise that poverty and environmental degradation are interlinked. The poverty-environment degradation relationship states that the prevalence of poverty causes environmental degradation. In the northeast region, the acute poverty along with the virtual absence of alternative modes of securing livelihoods in the past played a major role in the dependence on forest resources. The low socio-economic condition of the region continues to act as an impediment towards environmental conservation and a sustainable growth path in the region. Thus, along with the ongoing developmental push in the region, the need is to address the issues of conservation and sustainability in terms of developmental plans whether it is the laying of roads, railways, bridges, power plants, and so on.

The current 'Act East' Policy with its priority on developing the northeast region would have a great environmental impact in the region. By emphasising on the economic upliftment of the region through commerce and connectivity, the projects undertaken would impact the environmental degradation process. It becomes important that the projects are undertaken with awareness of their impact on the local environment. Thus, while going forward with the development of the entire region is of utmost necessity, emphasis should also be laid on ensuring conservation and the path of sustainable growth. Fortunately, today, in all economic planning, the environmental objectives are being incorporated into the national priorities.

Further, realising that human beings are at the centre of any sustainable growth agenda, there is a need to engage the locals in the developmental plans. This will allow policy-makers to get inputs and insights while formulating developmental plans, since the local forest communities in the northeast, till today, have ownership over the forests and their resources. Further, a heightened awareness of the people, who are proud of their bio-resources, would promote their participation in the efforts to save the ecosystem from further destruction while also involving them in the expansion of the sustainable growth projects in the region. Thus, the policies for the development of the northeast should incorporate the theme of environmental protection and sustainable growth in the overall agenda.

# SOUTH ASIA'S REFUGEE EXPERIENCE: WHAT ABOUT THE ROHINGYAS?

SRIPATHI NARAYANAN

Since the turn of the new millennium, forced movement of people from one nation to another and from one continent to another, has been largely associated with West Asia and northern Africa. Wars, ethnic strife and political polarisation have been key drivers behind the forced displacement of people, first, from being yet another case of 'Internal Displacement of People' (IDP) to becoming cases of a 'refugee crisis'. Seldom in the past decade and a half has South Asia been a subject of this humanitarian question. Yet, the region has a long history of IDPs, refugees and relief camps, which have not only affected the lives of individuals and societies but also rewritten the history and relations between nation-states in this region.

In the contemporary era, the refugee experience in South Asia can be traced back to the partition of India, which has been termed as one of the "bloodiest upheavals in human history" with an estimated displacement of over 14 million people and an estimated loss of

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*Disclaimer: The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the views or the position of the ministry or the Government of India.*

between 200,000 and two million lives.<sup>1</sup> Unlike most other human tragedies, the partition violence did not have a state sponsor or state support, at least on the Indian side of the border. Much of the violence was carried out by individuals and groups that were affected by the partition. Some of the major problems between the two countries, India and Pakistan today can be traced back to the memories of the human tragedies that engulfed them both at birth.

### **BACKGROUND: REFUGEE CRISIS IN SOUTH ASIA**

South Asia's tryst with humanitarian crises is not limited to the partition but has been a constant feature that has been haunting this region at frequent intervals. Within years of independence, when India was grappling with the issues of resettlement flowing from the post-partition violence and refugee arrivals, New Delhi had to open its borders for the Tibetans, after the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China overran the Himalayan plateau in 1959. With the Dalai Lama crossing over into the country, along with a sizeable number of followers, India has become the temporary home to the Tibetan community for nearly six decades now. In the post-War era, Tibetans in India would be one of the oldest refugee communities in the world, with multiple generations being born and raised in India. Befitting his status and position, India provided the Dalai Lama a 'temporary capital' in Dharamsala, where a 'Tibetan-government-in-exile' has also been 'functioning'. Alongside the arrival of the Tibetan refugees, there has been an influx of refugees from Burma (now Myanmar) and Tamil-speaking estate labour from Sri Lanka, as host governments are tracing back their origins to their Indian forebears and declaring them state-less, and have also enfranchised them.

However, the 'Bangladesh refugee crisis' in 1971 has been the largest and worst of all cross-border movements and settlement of war-affected people in the region. Unlike the partition, this involved massive, one-way movement of 10 million refugees, who were all victims of state violence against a large section of their

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1. Vidhi Doshi and Nisar Mehdi, "70 Years Later, Survivors Recall the Horrors of India-Pakistan Partition", *The Washington Post*, August 14, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/70-years-later-survivors-recall-the-horrors-of-india-pakistan-partition/2017/08/14/3b8c58e4-7de9-11e7-9026-4a0a64977c92\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.48438efd79e6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/70-years-later-survivors-recall-the-horrors-of-india-pakistan-partition/2017/08/14/3b8c58e4-7de9-11e7-9026-4a0a64977c92_story.html?utm_term=.48438efd79e6). Accessed on February 3, 2018.

own population, distinguished by language and culture, region and political preference. Pakistan formally launched a war on India after the international community ignored New Delhi's appeals for humanitarian intervention to end the massacre of East Pakistan residents in their country. India intended to help reverse the people's movement and, thus, the Bangladesh War of 1971. Despite the outcome of the war, an estimated 1.5 million refugees opted to stay back in India, creating demographic, political and possibly internal security issues within India.

The euphoria of India's victory and its humanitarian intervention in Bangladesh was shortlived. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve in 1979 triggered another humanitarian crisis in the subcontinent. The Afghan crisis, like that of Bangladesh, had its own unique narrative, wherein the refugee camps and the refugee population, particularly in neighbouring Pakistan, became the vanguard of the resistance movement, the 'Afghan Mujahideen', or freedom fighters. Post-Soviet withdrawal, the political crisis in Kabul was followed by the post-9/11 US-led 'Global War on Terrorism'. The Mujahideen network of the Soviet vintage, established with American assistance and funding in the Eighties, continued to be a part of the internal security problem of Afghanistan and also their host, Pakistan, where they were originally housed, trained and armed.

The Taliban command centre, based for some time out of the Pakistani city of Quetta, not only operated on both sides of the Hindu Kush and the Durand Line but also rechannelised its energies against both governments: Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Quetta Shura, for a considerable part of the American 'war on terror', was the *de facto* headquarters of the top leadership of the Taliban. Owing to the multi-decade security crisis in Afghanistan, Pakistan today is hosting about 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees<sup>2</sup> while the number of unregistered refugees is put at 700,000.<sup>3</sup>

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2. "UNHCR Welcomes New Government Policy for Afghans in Pakistan," *UNHCR-Pakistan*, <http://unhcrpk.org/unhcr-welcomes-new-government-policy-for-afghans-in-pakistan/>. February 12, 2018.
  3. "For Refugees, It's a Choice Between Death in Afghanistan or Bitter Life in Pakistan," *Dawn*, February 10, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1388564/for-refugees-its-a-choice-between-death-in-afghanistan-or-bitter-life-in-pakistan>. Accessed on February 10, 2018.

The decade of the Afghan Mujahideen and the Soviet occupation of the landlocked country also witnessed another humanitarian crisis in the region. This was the influx of Sri Lankan Tamils into the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, across the Palk Strait, following the 'Black July' anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983, in Sri Lanka. Possibly learning from the experience of the 'Bangladesh refugees' in the previous decade, and also the long-term experiences with various groups since partition, the Indian government displayed great dexterity and organisational skills. The Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, numbering over 250,000, were housed all across Tamil Nadu in camps and were provided with adequate infrastructure facilities. It also needs to be pointed out that at no time in the Sri Lankan refugee operations did the Government of India or Tamil Nadu need to press the security forces for setting up camps and other social infrastructure like hospitals, schools and water and power provisions. Most the essential needs of the incoming refugees were addressed by both the Union and state governments. The deployment of security agencies was confined to Tamil Nadu police officials screening the visitors for undesirable elements, and for ensuring law and order in the camps.

In a bid to help Sri Lanka to address the ethnic issue, and to facilitate the early return of the refugees from camps in Tamil Nadu, India, for its part, did negotiate a political settlement and also sent in a large contingent of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) as a part of the settlement; while, at the same time, it provided a section of the Tamils the ability to protect themselves. Owing to competitive politics among the majority Sinhala-Buddhist parties, and also the extremist positions taken, especially by the Tamil militant group, Indian efforts in facilitating a political resolution to the crisis proved futile after a point. In the intervening space, India did manage the affairs, despite being accused of arming and training Tamil militant groups, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), to fight the Sri Lankan state.

### **MYANMAR'S TRYST WITH FORCED MIGRATION**

While the Tamil question and the situation in Afghanistan still linger at either end of the South Asian spectrum, the region was also playing host to another issue that has resurfaced once again in



recent times: the question of the Rohingyas. Unlike other crises in the region, the Rohingya issue has its origins not in the higher corridors of competitive politics, or in street violence, but can be traced back to Myanmar laws, passed when the nation still went by the name Burma, wherein the government revisited the eligibility criteria for citizenship. In a way, it was like the junta-led Burmese government in the Sixties, and the then Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), in the late Seventies, that threw out Indians. The Rohingya refugee crisis is unlike the 'Bangladesh issue', which was centred on domestic politics, and the later-day ethnic question in Sri Lanka, where the victims were local Tamils, as different from the disenfranchised upcountry Tamil labour of recent Indian origin. In the case of the Rohingya issue, a part of the problem lay also in the need for the government of the day to reinterpret and to rewrite the nation's own history.

Myanmar, a diverse country with a number of ethnicities, has been struggling to address the question of ethnic identity from prior to its independence from the colonial British rulers. 'Ethnic identity' has been a bone of contention in the nation for the past seven decades, with the result that Myanmar has also been home to a unique, yet most diverse and the longest ethnic insurgency in the world. This internal strife has had its fair share of ups and downs over time, including both genuine and half-hearted attempts at reconciliation. Insurgency and the totalitarian nature of the administration under military rule since 1962 had come to define the identity of the nation to much of the outside world. However, amidst all these challenges, there was an issue which caught ample attention—the question of a community of Bengali-speaking Muslims concentrated in the Rakhine state in a predominantly Buddhist nation, known as the Rohingyas. It is not only the linguistic and religious practices of the Rohingyas that differentiate them from the majority Buddhist Bamar population, but also the histories of the two communities. The Bamars of the Irrawaddy plains have been at the heart of the nation's political history, whereas the Rohingyas are not only located along the frontier region of Myanmar but are also relegated to the fringes of the nation's history. From a majority perspective of Myanmar's history, the Bengali-speaking Muslim Rohingyas are seen as outsiders who made the Rakhine state their home after the Anglo-Burmese War of the 19th century.

However, the region that now constitutes the border regions of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar have been lands that have marked the outer realm of the kingdoms which had dominated either the Brahmaputra or the Irrawaddy basin. At different points in time, the political influence of the ruling class, whether based out of the Irrawaddy or the Brahmaputra plains, has extended beyond the confines of the border of the modern-day nation-states of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Presently, the primary challenge before the Rohingyas relates to overcoming challenges of not only the right for self-determination, or even for their acceptance as citizens of Myanmar, but to be known by their self-ascribed identity: Rohingya. Of late, this community has been addressed as *Rakhine Muslims*, thus, denying their unique identity. In addition to this, the xenophobic attitude of the state and the dominant Buddhist Bamar community has only added to their woes, along with the hardships of being treated as stateless people.

The Burmese state's xenophobia first came to the fore in the early 1960s, right after the military coup in 1962. The military junta under Gen Ne Win introduced the Burmese way of socialism and along with it, programmes aimed at 'Burmanisation', aimed at reducing the lingering influence of British colonialism. Burmese socialism adversely targeted specific sections of the population that were visibility identifiable as immigrants. These were people of Indian origin, many of whom had made Burma their home since the early days of British colonialism. At the time of the military takeover in 1962, the country had a significant presence of people of Indian origin, including half the population of the capital city Rangoon, now Yangon. The forced expulsion of the community was accompanied by nationalisation of private enterprises, which were predominantly in the hands of non-locals, including Indians. Indians who were, thus, denied citizenship were sent back home, almost empty-handed, with the government or locals taking over their businesses, farms and homes, without any or adequate compensation.

For the Rohingyas, amendment to the citizenship laws in 1982, (mainly) fuelled their crisis. The revised legislation, Burma Citizenship Law of 1982, replaced the Union Citizenship Act,

1948, and the Union Citizenship (Election) Act, 1948. The new law revised the criteria for citizenship, and only those ethnic groups that had settled down in the country prior/ anterior to 1823 were to be considered as citizens of Burma.<sup>4</sup> The revised law of 1982 recognised a total of 135 ethnic groups like the Bamar, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan and others as nationals of Burma. Since the Rohingyas were considered to have migrated to Burma post-1823, they were not recognised as Burmese nationals nor eligible for citizenship.

As a result, the Rohingyas were not only denied citizenship but were also rendered stateless by the government. In all this, 1823 as the cut-off year became sacrosanct as it marked the First Anglo-Burmese War, which resulted not only in a British victory but also in the slow merger of Burmese territory in the British Empire. The victorious Britain, as part of the war-spoils, made a list of demands, among which secession of the Burmese region contiguous to British India, was an important part. The merged territory included much of the present-day Rakhine province of Myanmar which in the later days became home to the Rohingyas. It was only in the aftermath of the Third Anglo-Burmese War of 1885 that the whole of Burma became a part of the British Empire.

As a colony, which was administered as a part of British India till 1935, much of the civil administration was conducted with the help of the armed forces, manned mostly by Indians. The influx of an outside population occupying the higher echelons of both state and society left considerable heartburn in the majority Burman community. This was because British Burma largely focussed its energies along the Irrawaddy basin, dominated by the Burman population.

This interaction between the Burmans and British India could have been the trigger for the differences among the local communities and ethnicities that surfaced in later days and whose effects are felt even today. For the Burman ethnicity, it was not only their numerical superiority alone that counted but also the fact that Myanmar to date—its politics, society and economy—has come to be associated with the Irrawaddy basin. The Burmans, since independence in 1948,

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4. "Discrimination in Arakan", Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-02.htm>. Accessed on February 11, 2018.

have come to dominate the affairs of the state and have been trying to undo many aspects of their colonial past, including the restructuring of the nation's demography.

### **THE ROHINGYA QUESTION**

The differences between the Burman and other ethnicities of Myanmar is not only limited to race but is also engraved on the lines of their political history. In the contemporary context, the experience during World War II fired much of the ethnic animosity in the nation. The shifting loyalties and alliances with the advancing Japanese and the retreating British during World War II became a contributing factor responsible for the current ethnic challenges of the nation.

In the context of the Rohingyas, they were seen as allies of Britain, since the time of the Anglo-Burmese War. During World War II, the Rohingyas were firmly on the side of Britain, whereas the Barmars initially welcomed the advancing Japanese but extended their support to Britain during the latter stages of the war. The domestic politics during the war, along with questioning the loyalty of the Rohingyas, clubbed with their religious and linguistic identities, have been used as justification for the disenfranchisement of the Rohingyas. For the nationalistic Burmans, the Rohingyas are seen as an immigrant workforce brought into the country by the British rulers, as the latter had done in the case of the population from the colonised countries. Since 1982, Myanmar has claimed that the Rohingyas are migrants from what is now Bangladesh and are now living in the country illegally.

In recent times, one of the oft-repeated historical references now held against the Rohingyas was their continuing loyalty to the British during World War II, when most Burmans were supporting the advancing Japanese. This historical narrative along with political decision by the state has fuelled a series of communal clashes in Myanmar, leading to a continuing history of displacement of the Rohingyas since the 1960s. However, the first major displacement occurred only in 1979, when over 200,000 Rohingyas crossed over into Bangladesh as refugees, owing to

a military operation against them.<sup>5</sup> The military operation was aimed at disarming a small group of budding Rohingya militants but soon targeted the community as a whole. This was followed by another round of displacement, in 1991-92. This time around, one of the triggers was the political development that dominated the Irrawaddy basin, which was marked by the anti-junta, pro-democracy movement. The junta's repressive actions against the pro-democracy movement also spilled over and targeted the Rohingyas.

However, the real crisis happened in August 2017. A little-known militant group called the 'Arakan Rohingya Solidarity Army' (ARSA) launched simultaneous attacks on security installations in the Rakhine state, on the night of August 25, 2017. This incident was not a standalone episode but the third such attack by ARSA in a year. Prior to ARSA's military actions, an undercurrent of communal unrest was simmering between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists since 2010. On August 25, 2017, over a hundred poorly armed militants belonging to ARSA, not only attacked security establishments in Rakhine state along the border, but also inflicted a considerable number of casualties. This attack took place on August 25, when the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan-led committee was to submit its report on communal reconciliation to the government.

The clearing-out operations led by the military resulted in a large number of Rohingyas fleeing Rakhine province and Myanmar, seeking refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. According to UN data, over 688,000 Rohingyas had crossed over into Bangladesh by February 2018.<sup>6</sup> The sudden influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh was not only because of apprehensions for their safety but was also fuelled by the targeted brutality on the part of the Myanmar Army, since Myanmar was using its combing operations for tracking down ARSA militants as a pretext to encourage the mass exodus of the Rohingyas.

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5. Syed Zain Al-Mahmood. "Timeline: A Short History of Myanmar's Rohingya Minority", *Wall Street Journal*, <https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/12/23/timeline-a-short-history-of-myanmars-rohingya-minority/>. Accessed on February 10, 2015.

6. "Rohingya Refugee Crisis", United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>. Accessed on February 11, 2018.

There were also reports that Myanmar was planting landmines along its border with Bangladesh, to discourage the return of these refugees to Myanmar.<sup>7</sup>

### ROHINGYAS AND SECURITY CONCERNS

The Rohingya crisis, unravelling at the time it did, once again, raised a number of security concerns. There have been variants of such concerns wherever and whenever there have been large-scale movements/migrations of refugee populations, especially across international borders.

The first among them is the apprehension of global Islamic militancy of the 'Islamic State' variant, either rallying behind the Rohingyas and becoming the next flashpoint for religion-driven global terrorism. These apprehensions are not entirely out of place since a number of proscribed and known terrorist organisations have been raising their voices and have been extending their support through public rallies and fund-raising for the Rohingyas' cause.<sup>8</sup> Such initiatives have both been preceded and accompanied by various governments taking up the Rohingya issue at various platforms since militant organisations find a good opportunity in crises of this nature to raise fresh recruits and support.

Secondly, in the context of the Indian subcontinent, the Rohingya crisis has triggered a serious concern of cross-border militancy and terrorism. The first notable instance of such violence would be the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 by the LTTE. The terrorism in Pakistan during the better part of this century would be another example. With respect to the Rohingya question, the security concerns are two-fold. The first relates to the reluctance of Bangladesh to house and support this refugee community; and, second, is the real possibility of the crisis escalating into another armed movement in the region. Apprehensions about

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7. "Draft UN Resolution Pressures Myanmar Over Rohingya Crisis," *The New Indian Express*, October 26, 2017, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2017/oct/26/draft-un-resolution-pressures-myanmar-over-rohingya-crisis-1683179.html>. Accessed on February 8, 2018.
  8. Ayesha Tanzeem, "UN-listed Terror Group Found Collecting Donations for Rohingya in Pakistan", *Voice of Asia*, September 26, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/terror-group-found-collecting-donations-rohingya-pakistan/4045507.html>. Accessed on February 11, 2018.

the latter are not misplaced for more than one reason. The first is the history of Bangladesh territory being used as a launch pad for anti-India terror operations in the past by groups that were aided by Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Already, a large number of militant groups operating in India's northeast have had their bases either in Bangladesh or Myanmar. At times, this has had the benign blessings of the armed forces in these two countries, with the result that they themselves are now finding it difficult to eject or liquidate them, even if they wanted to. The second, however, is the perception of limited contact and support received by ARSA from other known terrorist groups.

Fortunately, security apprehensions, thus far, seem to be ill-founded, for the Rohingyas as a community have not yet taken to armed resistance as a means to assert their political rights. The Rohingyas are still housed in poorly maintained camps in the country, with funding and other assistance from the UN and other agencies, and nations like India. But for South Asia and much of the greater region as a whole, refugees, as an issue, still comprise, a concern and at times, an opportunity for opportunistic politics. The South Asian experiences on this count, be it Bangladesh or Afghanistan, are only pointers.

# BOOK REVIEWS

**Pakistan's Nuclear Bomb: A Story of Defiance,  
Deterrence and Deviance**

Author: Hassan Abbas

Publisher: Penguin Random House  
India Pvt Ltd., 2018

Rs. 699



## MANPREET SETHI

Research undertaken towards a doctoral dissertation is often detailed, thorough and analytical. This can be found in Hassan Abbas' book which has grown out of his Ph.D work at Tufts University. It is, indeed, a valiant effort to explore and explain the rationale for Pakistan's nuclear weapons, as also the motivations for, and the circumstances under which, the country indulged in nuclear proliferation. In fact, the latter dimension constitutes a major part of the book and the author lucidly examines the questions that have long concerned India and the international community.

Ever since the A Q Khan story broke in 2003, it has been debated *ad nauseum* as to whether proliferation from Pakistan was a rogue operation orchestrated by one man, or a state-sanctioned enterprise?

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The book answers this by, first, examining Pakistan's desire for nuclear weapons and the manner in which it went about developing them. The author provides good historical insight on the evolution of the Pakistani nuclear programme. Starting off as a peaceful effort whose foundation was laid by the US' encouragement to nuclear power as part of its Atoms for Peace initiative, the weapons dimension had begun to be explored by the early 1960s. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, first, as the country's minister for fuel, power and natural resources in 1958, then, as the country's foreign minister in 1963, and, subsequently, as the prime minister, played a crucial role in sensitising different constituencies to the need for nuclear weapons. In 1964, when China conducted its nuclear weapons test, Bhutto was certain that India would follow suit. He paid close attention to the discussions on the subject amongst the Indian policy-makers, especially the pronouncements of Homi Bhabha. Evidently, on nuclear issues, adversaries pay closer attention and read more into the developments than do policy-makers within the country. So, even as Bhabha was trying to convince his own political leadership about "the remarkably low cost of a stockpile of fifty atomic bombs at \$21 million", it was Pakistan that was "listening very carefully". And, Bhutto was convinced that Pakistan needed to step up its own efforts in this direction.

An interesting insight provided in the book is the fact that while Bhutto did not shy away from expressing his pro-bomb views while he was out of power or as the prime ministerial candidate during the election campaign, when he actually made the formal decision to launch Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme at a meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet on June 15, 1974, he did so in secret. Thereafter, in his interactions with the US, he was found assuring them about the peaceful intentions of his nuclear programme. So much so that he said, "In 1965, when I was the foreign minister, I said that if India had the atom bomb, we would get one too, even if we had to eat grass. Well, we are more reasonable nowadays."

Unfortunately, though, reasonable behaviour was never the hallmark of the Pakistani nuclear programme. Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons emanated from a deep sense of insecurity, something the author highlights that the country was born with. Over the years, instead of this feeling of insecurity reducing, it has only heightened. In fact, it has been exploited as a tool by the country's military to augment its own role in the domestic power structure. The resultant environment, according to the author, created a

unique set of circumstances that provided an enabling environment for proliferation to take place. He argues that the proliferation was the result of “civil-military tensions within Pakistan, weak and unstable state structures and institutions (political, security related, and judicial), flawed decision-making processes at the highest level (especially in the realm of the nuclear programme), impact of the Afghan War on Pakistan’s worldview, the lingering threat from India, and last but not the least, the turbulent US-Pakistan relationship”. This complex political and security conundrum made it possible for the proliferation activity to take place.

Abbas divides the proliferation episode into three phases: in the first phase in the late 1980s, A Q Khan, the central figure in the enterprise, did act “on behalf of the sovereign state”. Iran was the beneficiary of this period. In the second phase, in the early 1990s, he represented the Government of Pakistan, “and was possibly in league with the military leadership” in offering nuclear technology to North Korea. And, in the third phase, beginning in the late 1990s, he had “started operating independently” and the deal with Libya came out of this period.

Also well explained in the book is the role of Pakistan’s Islamic identity in creating the nature of proliferation that it turned out to be. The author writes, “Khan’s phobia about the USA and Israel trying to destroy Pakistan’s nuclear programme was a factor, as was his sense of self-imposed obligation to help other Muslim countries acquire nuclear technology.” In this context, he refers to Gen Mirza Aslam Beg and A Q Khan as ‘proliferation nationalists’ who were inspired by a burning desire to defy the West in general and America in particular, as “their ideological leanings revolved around their perceptions about a clash between the Muslim world and the West.”

In explaining AQ Khan’s activities, Abbas lists a combination of factors: “his personal ambitions and inward looking worldview; the Pakistan Army’s need to compete with the Indian missile development; weak state institutions; fragmented decision-making processes; and compartmentalised authority structures”, besides “the political chaos in the country and the absence of civilian oversight and effective controls” as the factors that enabled the network to peddle its nuclear merchandise and expertise globally. In his analysis of the strategy followed by A Q Khan, the author identifies some features that can be seen to be in common with the North Korean strategy too – extensive use of professional connections; availability of financial

freedom; careful monitoring of export controls and their systematic abuse; focus on self-reliance; extensive use of front companies and Pakistani businessmen; use of Pakistani Embassies around the world; use of the media to plant misleading and distracting stories; maintenance of secrecy, effective management and financial benefits for employees to win loyalties.

All this looks quite plausible. But what is worrisome is the fact that none of these factors that the author has mentioned as providing the fertile ground for proliferation has changed much in contemporary times. How then does one believe that the Pakistani state may not throw up another Khan?

The author identifies five lessons from the proliferation episode to be implemented for obviating such a possibility in the future. These include timely intelligence sharing to track illicit smuggling networks; effective monitoring of front companies and subsidiaries; strengthening and empowering of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); sustained diplomatic and political engagement with states of concern; improving the capacity to understand the political dynamics of countries that are marred by regional insecurity, internal ethnic and religious conflict and political instability.

These are useful suggestions. But the most helpful part of the book is the advice the author renders to his own country. He says, "Pakistan needs to relocate its identity through religious accommodation and internal political reconciliation. It will have to invest more in domestic security through effective counter-terrorism strategies, building counter-narratives to religious extremism, and reforming its criminal justice system. Building more nuclear bombs is no substitute for these inadequacies." If only his country would heed this advice. A perpetual sense of insecurity and distrust has brought Pakistan to this pass. It is time some right thinking nationals offer another alternative to the citizens and explore roads that have not yet been travelled.

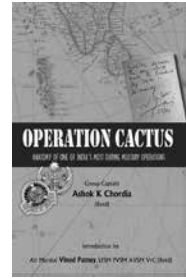
Meanwhile, for all Pakistan watchers, the book makes for interesting reading. One missing piece in the book though is China's extensive help in the making of Pakistan's bomb. The author does fleetingly refer to it but he remains concentrated on his own country and does not explore that link in any great detail. Perhaps, that can be the theme of his next book. And, if he decides to do so, it would be advisable to use footnotes instead of endnotes since moving back and forth is distracting and slows the reader.

**Operation Cactus: Anatomy of one of India's Most Daring Military Operations**

Author: Group Captain Ashok K Chordia

Publisher: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2017

Rs. 1280



**NISHANT GUPTA**

*Operation Cactus: Anatomy of one of India's Most Daring Military Operations* by **Gp Capt Ashok K Chordia (Retd)** is an attention-grabbing narration of the Indian military operation which was undertaken in November 1988 in response to the SOS message of the Maldives' President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to save him, and his country, from the rebels and/or mercenaries. The Indian leadership had taken a quick decision to extend a helping hand to the legitimate political head of a friendly nation who was in dire need. This decision to undertake the operation was taken despite the availability of only sketchy, limited and uncertain information and virtually nil intelligence. The Indian leadership only knew that certain intruders had entered Malé at about 0430hrs. They were well trained and armed. Their actual strength was not known. It was estimated to be anything between 100-200 to 800-1000 or even more. They were equipped with small arms, General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMGs), grenades, rocket launchers, mortars and perhaps Surface-to-Air Missiles (SAMs). They had killed many people. They had taken the capital in their control but President Gayoom had escaped and had gone into hiding. Maldives did not have any national military force. The National Security Service (NSS) of the Maldives was putting up a fight. Hulhule International Airport

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was still functional and was in the hands of the men loyal to the president.

Malé had sent the SOS to many countries. India had to immediately weigh the pros and cons and take a quick decision in line with international practices and India's geopolitical stance. At that point of time, the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) was already deployed in Sri Lanka and the whole world was closely watching the progression of India's military endeavour. India could not afford to go wrong in terms of appropriateness and the political legitimacy of extending military help. In the given circumstances, the decision to undertake a military operation far away from the homeland was, thus, a major call. India had to measure whether the military help that was being extended was absolutely necessary and, more importantly, the danger the military troops were going to be exposed to was judicious and not out of proportion.

This book is an elaborate research work covering most of the pertinent dimensions of the operation that cross one's mind, including the political background and origin of the crisis, the international scenario and the details of how India responded to the SOS message from the besieged Malé in an unprecedented, expeditious and highly professional manner. This successful operation was executed with sheer grit and élan against numerous odds, including virtual absence of situational awareness and intelligence inputs which are critical for undertaking such operations. For the first time in the history of independent India, the military was deployed on an 'out of country'<sup>1</sup> mission within hours of receiving the request from a distant nation. Contrary to some opinions that the decision to embark on this mission was ill-informed and could have been avoided, Gp Capt Ashok K Chordia (Retd) puts this operation under the category of Cold Start. The author underscores that the "*Indians did not sleepwalk into the Maldives*".

Gp Capt Chordia had the advantage of having first-hand experience of military execution of the operation since he was a part of the contingent as a fully operational and young Parachute Jump Instructor (PJI). Nevertheless, he has undertaken extensive academic research to make his work comprehensive and unbiased,

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1. Western literature terms such operations as 'Out of Area' Contingencies.

and not just 'his version' of the military operation. In this scholarly work, the author has explored and stitched together various aspects of planning and execution of Op Cactus. Hence, this book is an interesting narrative of the operation.

This book would be a 'primary source' for researchers since the author has documented numerous interviews with the personalities who were directly involved in the planning/execution of the operation and has also explored several other sources to construct a 360 degree view of the operation and its planning. He has garnished the narrative with his personal knowledge and experience. The minute-to-minute account of the then developing situation has been presented in a gripping fashion.

To understand the dynamics of the decision-making process, he has gone for an in-depth analyses of the senior military leadership including their background check to appreciate their personalities well. He has indicated that certain commonalities like having studied in the same school/having undergone a course together/having common family and social bonds help in an intangible manner in cultivating the much required inter-personal relations and thereby achieving the desired synergy levels and quick decision-making, which are critical for the success of such time-sensitive operations. For example, as per the author, inter-Service bonding between the top Indian Army and Indian Air Force military leadership was exemplary and beyond the mandated protocol since Gen VN Sharma (then Chief of the Army Staff) and Air Mshl NC Suri (then Vice Chief of the Air Staff who later became Chief of the Air Staff) had studied in the same school (Rashtriya Indian Military College) and Vice Chief of the Air Staff and Vice Chief of the Army Staff were coursemates during their pre-commissioning training.

Gp Capt Chordia has written this book in a manner that would interest military strategists, practitioners of military power, historians as well as the general public. The complex and insightful details have been put forward in a simplistic manner. He has consciously avoided the military jargon to make the reading simple and absorbing. Instead of following the conventional linear model of military history, Gp Capt Chordia has innovatively presented his

work in the form of a tree. Part II of the book, entitled “Op Cactus” is the main trunk which covers the details of the operation under five chapters. Whereas, Part I entitled “A Besieged President” and Part III entitled “Comprehending Cactus” form the branches which are independent of each other and can be read in any order, depending upon the reader’s interest.

The author has described/deliberated/pondered upon several pertinent and interesting questions/aspects. Did President Gayoom have any indication/prior knowledge of this coup attempt? How was the operation planned and executed? What was the level of information/intelligence available to the political leadership/planners/executers? Why did India respond, while the USA/erstwhile USSR did not? Why was the IPKF deployed at Sri Lanka not chosen for the operation despite being battle hardened for more than a year and located much closer to the scene than the para brigade at Agra? How could the para brigade at Agra get airborne at eight hours notice while they were entitled to three days preparation time? Why was the National Security Guard (NSG) initially activated and moved from Delhi to Trivandrum (now Thiruvananthapuram) via Nagpur, but subsequently not used in the operation? What was the role played by Mr AK Banerjee, the high commissioner of India to the Maldives? Why and how was he on board the first military aircraft that landed at Hulhule Island with the Indian troops? What was the level of tri-Service coordination? How did the civil-military relations play out during the build-up and execution of the operation?

Gp Capt Chordia (Retd) has brought out minute details pertaining to the crucial decision-making process that led to India’s participation in this rescue operation. He has also highlighted first-hand details of the operation. His analysis is unbiased. The attempt is to inform the reader of the then prevailing situation so that the reader is adequately informed to make his own opinion. This book fills a significant gap in the military history literature of independent India by providing an insight into an extremely bold, unprecedented and successful military operation.

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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.

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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.