



# DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

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- Emerging 'Middle Power' Influence in West Asia:  
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- Book Reviews*

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

As the year draws to a close, let us recount some of the major developments, not only in our neighbourhood but also around the world, that have a bearing on stability in the region as well as the world at large. To say that the year gone by was eventful would be an understatement. While new 'alliances' were sought to be formed, existing ones were in danger of falling by the wayside.

With the impending US withdrawal from Afghanistan, a return of a power vacuum in the region is likely. Recent Russian overtures to Pakistan could be viewed as an attempt by Russia to win over the newly elected Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan—more importantly the Pakistan military—so that the government that is installed in Afghanistan keeps Russian interests in mind, i.e. does not encourage Chechen, Uzbek or Tajik militants in its cadres as these could foment trouble in Russia in the future. The Russians have assessed that Pakistan would be a key player in deciding the future power sharing in Afghanistan where the Taliban's presence is increasingly being accepted by most, including President Ashraf Ghani, who sees a political—and not a military—solution as the best prospect for peace in Afghanistan. Russia's offer for the production of the Su-35 in Pakistan needs to be seen in this backdrop. Whether this is merely shadow-boxing by the Russians—stung as they are by the growing proximity of India to the US—or they are actually willing to go ahead with this offer, will possibly depend on Pakistan's ability to rustle up the required resources.

Although Russia has been successful in getting all the stakeholders (in Afghanistan) together under one roof—Afghanistan,

Pakistan, China, Russia and the Taliban—the greatest challenges that require urgent attention include the non-traditional security ones, i.e. the refugee crisis owing to large scale migration, famine, and water shortage. For Russia, terrorism is a global problem, not only a regional one, as it has the potential to impact civilisations of the future; hence, its concern at stemming the rot created by organisations like the ISIS.

Some academics in India are of the view that we should recognise that the Taliban needs to be a part of the governance in Afghanistan. Will such a dispensation ever be advantageous to India's interests in Afghanistan? With Pakistan pushing hard for the Taliban to get into the driver's seat in Afghanistan, any such solution can never be to India's advantage, unless...? And that is where the real question rests. Unless there is a bigger threat on the horizon that puts this apparent 'victory' of the Pakistanis—of gaining strategic depth—in the shadows. One has to also consider the *realpolitik* being witnessed in the region wherein Iran has agreed to 'humour' the Taliban in an attempt to jointly face the threat posed by the Islamic State's Khorasan chapter in Afghanistan—a bigger threat to Iran than the Taliban. Therefore, keeping to the dictum that permanent interests—and not permanent friends—should govern one's foreign policy, and with a multiplicity of actors in the region vying for a peaceful solution to the Afghanistan problem, India would need to do some careful thinking on this issue.

Peeved at the 'double game' being played by Pakistan—of harbouring terrorists who are 'killing' American troops in Afghanistan while, at the same time, also seeking arms aid from the US, President Trump had, in his 2018 New Year tweet, mentioned that the US had *"foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies and deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"* He has suspended the \$1.3 billion aid to Pakistan until he sees concrete action taken against militant safe havens in that country. He has also decided to suspend 66 vacancies for Pakistani military officers under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme from 2018 onwards. The courses for which training of Pakistan military officers has been suspended include the US National Defence University

(NDU), US Naval War College and Naval Staff College, US Army War College, and a few cyber security related courses. Pakistan military officers will now undergo training courses at Russian institutes instead!

Not content with Hambantota being firmly in their lap, the Chinese developed their first overseas military base at Djibouti on the east coast of Africa (as was covered in our previous issue of *Defence and Diplomacy*). Now it appears that they are stretching further south along the eastern coast of Africa. Mombasa seems to be the next 'Hambantota' if the reports emanating from the African continent are to be believed. The 'takeover' is contingent on the Kenya Railways Corporation's (KRC's) ability to pay back Kenyan Shilling 227 billion that is owed to the Exim Bank of China—the amount that the Kenyan government borrowed for the construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) by China Roads and Bridges Corporation, a Chinese state-owned company. A report by the Kenyan auditor-general states that as per the payment agreement, the revenue of the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA)—which has been named as a 'borrower' in the deal with the Chinese company—would be used to clear the debt in case of any shortfall in repayment by KRC. If the KPA, in turn, defaults in payments, 'Hambantota' is the model that will ensue at Mombasa also! Further forays into Africa by the Chinese indicate that in September 2018, Zambia lost its international airport (the Lusaka international airport) to China over debt repayment. With more than 60 percent stake in the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation, China would be in a position to dictate that only 'China-friendly' news is aired over Zambia TV and radio networks. Further afield in Africa, China has gained a strong foothold in Ghana and is in the process of taking over its biggest mining companies. Strategists in Africa are ruing the day China set foot in their country as they see a return to the colonial days.

Will the Asia Africa Growth Corridor proposed by India and Japan be able to free Africa from the Nelson's hold that China has on Africa? Some deft handling by the two nations (India and Japan) with an earnest gesture of goodwill and well-meaning development work could turn the tide away from the Chinese juggernaut that

has already spread its tentacles in almost every corner of the Dark Continent.

Following PM Modi's visit to Japan in October, the two nations agreed, *inter alia* on a USD 75 billion currency swap that is likely to bring greater stability to the rupee and capital markets in India. With greater emphasis on forging closer defence and security ties towards enhancing 'strategic depth', the commencement of negotiations on an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) has been suggested. While both nations are also recalibrating their ties with China—for Japan, in view of the trade sanctions that have been applied by the US not only to China, but also to Japan; and for India, post the informal Wuhan Summit—both India and Japan have also affirmed that they are committed to work together for a "rules-based and inclusive world order". An Annual Space Dialogue for enhancing cooperation in outer space was also launched by the two leaders.

The impending withdrawal of the US from Syria announced by President Trump has already claimed its first two political heavyweights—Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis, and Brett McGurk, the US envoy to the coalition fighting the ISIS. In the closing days of 2018, President Trump has indicated that he may be reconsidering the timelines for the withdrawal of US troops from Syria.

What has prompted this sudden change of decision by the US President, one might ask?

Following the withdrawal of US troops from Syria—that would leave a power vacuum in the region—supplies of arms to the Hezbollah by Iran would resume, unchecked by US troops' presence in Syria; the Kurds, without US support, would face a backlash from Turkey; and, the worst impact of the sudden pull-out of US troops from the region would be that it would give a chance to the ISIS to resurrect itself.

Russia's resurgence, meanwhile, is indicated not only by its bold actions in annexing Crimea—and withstanding the sanctions threat—but also by its continued presence in Syria where it claims to be more effective in its fight to rid the area of the Daesh. After the recent seizure by Russia of three Ukrainian vessels and 24 crewmen in the Kerch Strait, Russia appears to be sending strong messages that the 2003 Agreement between Ukraine and Russia about access to the Sea of



Azov through the Kerch Strait might no longer be valid ever since the annexation of Crimea (which was under Ukrainian control earlier); Ukraine, of course, has not recognised the annexation of Crimea. It appeared that Russia was testing the waters to see what would be the reaction to its seizure of Ukrainian vessels, viz. would there be fresh sanctions? There appear to be none, except the proclamation of martial law by the Ukrainian president in areas bordering the Donbass region. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has not sent any warships to the region as these countries feel a political solution is more beneficial than a military one. Under the 1936 Montreux Convention, countries that do not have a coastline on the Black Sea must notify Turkey at least 15 days prior to transiting the Bosphorous Strait for entering the Black Sea—which they must vacate after 21 days. Accordingly, the United States is required to notify Turkey about the passage of its warships into the Black Sea through the Dardenelles. As in the past, the US was still considering sending a warship into the Black Sea region (at the moment of this writing) in a show of solidarity with Ukraine.

Such actions by the Russians appear to point towards the question: “Is the world witnessing a reemergence of great-power (old time super powers) rivalry?” Or is this merely a ploy by the Russians to attract world attention to itself in an area where it has strength and where the US knows better than to up the ante. The real challenge to US dominance lies elsewhere, and Russia knows it, but in its present economic state, can do very little but play second fiddle to its eastern neighbour.

In order to take advantage of Russia’s overtures to India to participate in the Eurasian landmass initiatives, greater momentum needs to be created to reach the regions that have traditionally been India’s extended neighbourhood—the Central Asian Republics (CARs). With no direct connectivity to the CARs, the International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC) offers this avenue to India to reestablish ancient contacts, the difficulties and challenges notwithstanding. Travel time to St Petersburg would be cut by half; the INSTC promises to be 30 percent cheaper and 40 percent shorter than the existing trade route via the Mediterranean Sea. The INSTC would also provide the option to swing east to cover Tajikistan,

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Far East Russian territories by the land route. Concerned about the Chinese threat at altering the demographics of its Far East regions, Russia has also given Indian companies the option to collaborate in sectors such as agriculture, mining, port development and infrastructure, diamond processing and agro-processing in the region. With ONGC Videsh already in East Siberia, greater investment by major Indian companies could eventually pay rich dividends.

Today's science fiction is tomorrow's reality.

Nothing could be a better example of this simple adage than the Hollywood blockbuster 'Avataar' that depicted man exploring/exploiting another planet for its mineral wealth. This activity has already found takers amongst the likes of Elon Musk who has begun the quest for mining asteroids. Of course, the US government has been supportive of the endeavours proposed by private entrepreneurs. In fact, private players have been shielded from the strict provisions of the Outer Space Treaty that make a state liable for any damage caused by its space-faring vehicles to another country's Space-Based Assets (SBAs) or to human life or property during such space vehicle's reentry into Earth (on completion of its mission). With space travel and space tourism likely to be the next great attractions, the US has sought to streamline regulations governing commercial space flights by passing (by the House of Representatives) the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act of 2017 on April 24, 2018. Once the Bill is enacted into law, it would enable private enterprises like Space X, Blue Origin, etc. to carry out commercial activities in space without the US in any way being liable for damages that may result from that space object. As per some sources, with partial funding from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), mining mineral wealth of the various celestial bodies—asteroids to begin with—has already begun.

And, finally, we come to the realm of high technology. In recent times, quantum computing has taken the more serious nations by storm. With the launch of Micius—China's quantum communication satellite in August 2016—the Western nations have been jolted into action for fear that they might actually be conceding their primacy in cutting edge technology to China. The European Union (EU), United

Kingdom (UK), Australia, Netherlands, Canada are all setting aside huge sums towards Research and Development (R&D) in quantum computing. However, nothing comes even close to what China has earmarked for R&D in this field—USD 10 billion! With the National Quantum Initiative begun by the US, it has begun the process to try and retain pole position in this technology, albeit with funding that is one-tenth of the Chinese outlay. Quantum surprise would be achieved, not the least because of quantum computing's usefulness in the blockchain and cryptocurrency industries—where it has a huge potential by being able to easily break the encryption used to protect financial data and military secrets—but being able to develop applications that the rest of the world would not be able to even dream about. Technological surprise would then be complete.

Quantum computing throws up a challenge that needs to be accepted in right earnest. It is gratifying to note that serious work has already begun in this direction by academic institutes of repute within the country. The tempo needs to be sustained. May the New Year be a harbinger for India realising its rightful place among the more scientific-minded countries of the world!

Happy reading and best wishes for the New Year.



# EMERGING 'MIDDLE POWER' INFLUENCE IN WEST ASIA: ROLE OF TURKEY

ANU SHARMA

## CONCEPT OF POWER AND MIDDLE POWER

Hans Morgenthau being the foremost advocate of the concept of power as the theoretical core of international politics states that "all politics is a struggle for power." This is derived from the logic that each state should act and perform in order to increase its power. Therefore, international politics can be conceived of, and analysed, as a struggle between independent units seeking to dominate others.<sup>1</sup> Theoretically, power is not a fixed attitude in the region, and middle power status fluctuates more frequently in the West Asian region than anywhere else in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of middle powers in the international system and their behaviours has been the subject of long debates. The first use of the phrase can be traced back to the 15th century European state system. Historically, the Mayor of Milan, Giovanni Botero was the first

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1. K. J. Holsti, "The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations", *Background*, vol. 7, no. 4, February 1964, pp. 179-194.
2. Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Middle East Middle Powers: Regional Role, International Impact", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, vol 11, no 42, summer, 2014, p. 29-49, [http://www.uidergisi.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/42\\_1.pdf](http://www.uidergisi.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/42_1.pdf). Accessed on June 19, 2018.

person to use the concept in a similar sense.<sup>3</sup> He divided the world into three types of states. These were: *Grandissime* (empires) which may be called great powers or superpowers, *Mezano* (middle powers), and *Piccioli* (small powers). According to his definition, middle powers are the states that "have sufficient strength and authority to stand on their own without the need of help from others."<sup>4</sup>

This concept of middle powers gained more traction in international circles after World War II, where these powers were referred to as the states which were materially less equipped than the great powers, defenders of the balance of power and providers of peace and order. However, the newer usage of this concept of middle power has become more about the distinct diplomatic capabilities such as the active, creative, entrepreneurial and innovative use of diplomacy leveraging niche areas and coalition building skills, along with exercising power than coercion in the international arena.<sup>5</sup>

In world politics, there are cases in which secondary countries show massive involvement, strong influence and have impressive positive influence on world power and politics despite their own intermediate and small power status. For example, in the case of arms control, Canada and Norway took the initiative in the Ottawa process in 1997. In the same process, Norway showed strong leadership skills in the negotiation process for the treaty. Such cases are increasingly becoming a phenomenon after the end of the Cold War. This is because the diplomatic strategies of each nation stress on increasing influence as well as cooperation with other actors rather than a demonstration of physical national power such as military strength. Thus, the need to understand such diplomacy is increasing in recent years, especially in times of uncertain global political shifts.

In international relations studies, middle power diplomacy has not received much attention because, traditionally, most of the theoretical studies of international relations focus on politics among great powers

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3. Dong-Min Shin, "A Critical Review of the Concept of Middle Power", *E-International Relations*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/12/04/a-critical-review-of-the-concept-of-middle-power/>. Accessed on November 16, 2018.
  4. Kevin Rudd, "Leading, Not Following: The Renewal of Australian Middle Power Diplomacy", *The Sydney Papers*, vol. 19, issue 1, summer 2007.
  5. Andrew F. Cooper, *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Emel Parlar Dal, ed., *Middle Powers in Global Governance: The Rise of Turkey* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

such as the larger European countries, Russia, China and the United States. Furthermore, there is a chance that a relatively large proportion of middle power foreign policy has a scope that extends beyond the immediacy of geography and direct self-interest. Middle power states typically adopt an activist style in that they interfere in global issues beyond their immediate concern. Middle powers do not interfere in all situations of conflict, but they do impede more than non-middle power states with similar compositional profiles. Middle power foreign policy often focusses on conflict reduction in the world system, by involving other like-minded states in an attempt to arrive at a workable compromise, usually through multilateral channels and institutions.

### **TURKEY AS A MIDDLE POWER**

The West Asian region forms one of the most dynamic and conflict-ridden parts of the international system. Resource-rich, with a considerable population, the region is vast and is made up of a complex mix of ethnicities, religions, sects and regime types. This region is at the strategic crossroads of the world. At the same time, this region interacts frequently with the great powers, and often violently. A lot of countries in this region can be described as the “middle powers”, as they project influence, exert pressure and try and drive agendas which are of direct interest to them.

The uncertainty and instability prevailing in the region including the turmoil in the domestic structure of various prominent players of this region have given way to smaller states playing a prominent role in regional engagement.<sup>6</sup> West Asia is a region with a highly dynamic and unstructured regional system in which power relations are fluid, and order is in short supply. Inevitably, the fluidity of power and the absence of a regional hegemonic power have invited external intervention in West Asia. The region’s dynamism has not only aggravated the fragmentation of the regional structure into further sub-regions, but has also provided opportunities for the affluent and opulently rich small Arab states to play a significant role in regional power politics. At the same time, only a few states have directly impacted the region’s power relations, and today only four of these countries, i.e. Iran, Israel, Turkey and Saudi Arabia meet the

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6. Ehteshami, n. 2.

minimum requirements of middle power status in the West Asian regional system.<sup>7</sup>

Already established middle powers are often considered as 'catalysts' for promoting a liberal international order, 'facilitators' for building pro *status quo* coalitions, and 'managers' for disseminating orthodox norms and practices in their respective regions. In this scenario, Turkey is a case of emerging middle powers with potential demonstration effects in its neighbouring regions and beyond.

Various scholars have regarded Turkey as a middle power in West Asia from the realist perspective. These scholars have been observing Turkey's changing power status in the complex power hierarchies and categories under the auspices of "rising/emerging middle powers".<sup>8</sup> They summarise that this will help in understanding the role of middle powers in international politics in West Asia, a region which is marked by a high degree of instability.

The role of Turkey in the aftermath of the popular demonstrations in Arab nations has proved that it has the capabilities, entrepreneurial skills and resources to become an important mid-level player, not only in international politics, but also at the regional level. The question that needs to be addressed is whether Turkey is a middle power based on the capabilities it has demonstrated in addressing regional foreign policy challenges or does it still qualify to be a small power only.

## **TURKEY IN WEST ASIA**

West Asia has suffered, and is still suffering, from many conflicts—inter-state and national—which have arguably shaped the psyche of the region's leaders. The conflicts have spawned a hard-realist perception and, as a consequence, made it difficult for the states of this region to accept change. This has, eventually, led to the perception of the region as being an anarchic and disorderly one—a subsystem without any shared or accepted "rules of the game". In this highly dynamic and chaotic regional system, power relations are fluid and the absence of a single regional hegemonic power has resulted in the

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7. Ibid.

8. Emer Parlar Dal, "On Turkey's Trail as a 'Rising Middle Power' in the Network of Global Governance: Preferences, Capabilities, and Strategies", *Perceptions*, vol. XIX, no. 4, winter 2014, pp. 107-136, [http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/05\\_-Dal.pdf](http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/05_-Dal.pdf). Accessed on October 22, 2018.

inducement of the external powers for intervention. The great powers continue to guide the political fate of the region. Nonetheless, in the recent years, the rising friction between the established powers has made way for the rise of the middle powers in the region.

Turkey has adopted an explicitly proactive foreign policy strategy that positions it as 'an emerging soft power' in its immediate neighbourhood. In the current global economic and political system, pivotal middle powers seem to possess a range of economic and political power resources, thus, they have some capacity to contribute to the production of international order, both regionally and globally. Turkey is trying to find a new role for itself in the region in the newly emerging multipolar world. Since Turkey has lost its significance as a barrier to Soviet expansion, it has had to reorient its foreign policy and objectives. Beginning from the 1990s and the first Gulf War, Turkey has turned towards practising a proactive policy as compared to what was being followed during the Cold War era. New strategies were being implemented in the Balkan region, West Asia, South Caucasus region, the Black Sea region and in Central Asia, and these led Turkey to reorient its foreign policy objectives too. Though Turkey is excluded from European Union on the basis of its poor democratic credentials, it is considered a model for *bon-pour l'Orient*.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it can be said that Turkey's new activism in the neighbourhood and elsewhere is the consequence of its determination to play an influential role in the region.

The governance of Turkish foreign policy has relied on a set of practices that prioritised mutually inclusive coalitions with established major players and emerging regional powers simultaneously. In terms of 'niche diplomacy', Turkey targeted key areas to expand its power and influence in global governance. Turkey emerged as a soft-power oriented regional and global actor in its role in West Asia by investing in humanitarian diplomacy

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9. *Bon-pour l'Orient* is a French supercilious term that refers to the stamps affixed in the 19th century to the diplomas of students coming from colonial or Ottoman territories. These students were subjected to a less intensive level of education in Western educational institutions and obtained degrees which despite being useless in Europe, were deemed good enough to secure employment in the colonies. In modern use, the phrase disparagingly describes practices which although unacceptable in the advanced Western countries, may be thought appropriate for the less developed countries.



over the last decade. Its role as a regional power has increased since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power under Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2002. Turkey succeeded in improving its position in the hierarchy of regional and world politics during the period 2002-11.<sup>10</sup> The long-standing good relations with Israel and the improvement in relations with the Arab countries during this period have facilitated Turkey's aspirations. Turkey's first successful engagement in the West Asian region was its role in the war in Lebanon in 2006.<sup>11</sup> During this period, Ankara expressed its willingness to be involved in the mediation processes. This resulted in the participation of Turkish troops in the UN-led peace-keeping forces deployed in Lebanon. However, the domestic situation in Turkey questioned its role, citing two different opinions.<sup>12</sup> Where, on the one hand, this rationale explains the Turkish desire to increase its soft power and engagement in the region at that time; on the other hand, as per Ahmet Davutoglu's (former prime minister of Turkey and chief architect of Turkey's current foreign policy) vision, prioritising Turkey's active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and European Union (EU) missions was more important than participation in UN peace operations. It both underscored Turkey's European credentials and showed that Ankara is an important regional player. Along with President Erdogan's criticism of Israel's military action, it allowed Turkey to demonstrate its solidarity with key Arab governments in the region, which supported the peace-keeping mission.<sup>13</sup>

Turkey's participation was welcomed by the UN, the EU and local actors such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which boosted Turkey's standing in the region, elevating its significance for the EU as well.

Turkey's greater activism in West Asia had also been reflected in its effort to strengthen ties with Iran and Syria. Ankara's relations with

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10. Aylin Gulzrel, "Turkey's Role as a Regional and Global Player and its Power Capacity: Turkey's Engagement with Other Emerging States", *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, vol. 22, no. 50, April/June 2014, [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0104-44782014000200007](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0104-44782014000200007). Accessed on November 19, 2018.

11. F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2007-07-01/turkey-rediscovered-middle-east>. Accessed on November 25, 2018.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Tehran and Damascus were strained in the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of Iran's and Syria's support to the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK)<sup>14</sup> in their effort to destabilise Turkey. But relations have significantly improved in recent years, thanks to the three governments' shared interest in containing Kurdish nationalism and preventing the emergence of an independent Kurdish state on their borders.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Turkey sits at the intersection of various security complexes without being a part of them. The AKP leadership's aspiration has been to make Turkey a regional power and a global player. Turkey has, therefore, assumed different roles: the natural leader and the protector of the Muslim minorities of the region, the role of a "mediator" and a "facilitator" by trying to negotiate the deal between Brazil and Iran, in order to attempt to resolve the controversial Iranian nuclear issue. By playing a prominent role, Turkey has tried to solidify its "long desired role as a rising power" by increasing its influence in its neighbourhood and engaging with other emerging powers. As a result, Turkey has emerged as a promising middle power which had influence and impact beyond its material power capacity. In all dimensions of middle power activism that are framed in this study, Turkey became a textbook definition of how and through which mechanisms a middle power can 'punch above its weight' by contributing to the stability and order in its neighbourhood as a role model and source of inspiration. Turkey's ability to maintain a relatively independent foreign policy while remaining a NATO ally makes it a potential model for countries (i.e. Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) where compliance with the West has widened the gap between the regime and the people. Turkey's reputation as a Western power with the will and power to stand up to the US, from time to time, on issues like Iraq, Iran, and Israel has already become a case study of considerable interest in West Asia. The Turkish military is the second largest standing force in NATO.<sup>16</sup>

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14. The PKK is a militant and political organisation based in Turkey and Iraq, founded in 1978 by a group of Kurdish students. Since 1984, the PKK has been involved in an armed conflict with the Turkish state—with a two year ceasefire during 2013-15—with the initial aim of achieving an independent Kurdish state, later changing it to a demand for equal rights and Kurdish autonomy in Turkey.

15. Larrabee, n. 11.

16. "Number of Military Personnel in NATO Countries in 2018 (in thousands)", <https://www.statista.com/statistics/584286/number-of-military-personnel-in-nato-countries/>. Accessed on November 19, 2018.

Apart from being a member of NATO, Turkey also holds membership in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Turkey is a part of some regional organisations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation (BSEC), which was founded upon its initiative, and the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO). Turkey seeks to expand its development aid programme in neighbouring regions and beyond; this can be seen as an indication of its bigger role in international affairs.

Economically, at 7.4 percent annual growth in 2017 and with a strong first quarter in 2018, real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has been among the fastest worldwide, exceeding both market expectations and official projections:<sup>17</sup> a robust foreign demand and sharp real exchange rate depreciation supported exports. Domestic fiscal stimulus, including a massive extension of the government credit guarantee scheme had boosted the domestic demand in Turkey.<sup>18</sup> According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Survey Report in July 2018, the living standards of the people of Turkey have also improved over the last seven years. In 2010, 67 percent of the Turkish population was aged between 15 to 65 years. This has increased to 67.78 percent (approximately) in the year 2018.<sup>19</sup> These figures clearly indicate that Turkey is trying to fulfil the criteria of being a middle power in the region. The significant military capabilities of Turkey, financial resources, young population and high development rate makes it an apt case for being a middle power based on these capabilities and geographic location.

Turkey is a country trying to establish a certain distance from some of its Islamic neighbours so as to enable greater association with the European Union (EU). It is part of numerous international and regional institutions, has fairly good diplomatic and trade relations with its neighbouring states and is an important actor in various regional cooperation schemes. Turkey's geographic positioning is of great importance since it is placed at the juncture of east and west,

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17. "Turkey", *OECD Economic Surveys*, July 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Turkey-2018-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>. Accessed on November 19, 2018.

18. *Ibid.*

19. "Turkey Demographics Profile 2018", [https://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/demographics\\_profile.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/demographics_profile.html). Accessed on November 19, 2018.

north and south—a bridge between Europe and West Asia, linking the energy rich regions to the Caspian Sea. This makes Turkey a significant transit country for energy supplies to Europe. It can be said that it has evolved from a “buffer” to a “bridge” and finally to a “model” for middle powers in West Asia.

## CONCLUSION

The characteristic method of middle power diplomacy is coalition-building with like-minded countries. The middle powers have limited hard power resources and rather use soft power. Middle powers play a self-declared role in the international system demonstrating a status and influence seeking behaviour. Therefore, a combination of considerable capabilities and an active foreign policy with an inclination to multilateralism in favour of the stability of the international system are considered the minimum preconditions for a state to be labelled as a middle power.

From the analysis of Turkey’s relations with its neighbouring regions, it can be maintained that Turkey has displayed foreign policy activism with the new post-Cold War international realities. Various factors have contributed to its activist foreign policy such as being part of several regional systems, seeking security and stability in the turmoil hit West Asian region. In the past three decades, the Turkish economy has become significantly integrated within the world economy and, thus, it is now looking for new markets to supply products and energy. At the same time, the AKP’s proactive liberal foreign policy to get integrated in the EU has resulted in a process to enhance its prestige in various multilateral forays. This aspiration to join the EU, along with economic growth and internal democratisation and modernisation, has resulted in Turkey’s rise to power.

Middle powers are not expected to bandwagon with powerful actors since that behaviour by definition limits middle power activism. This can explain Turkey’s challenging relations with the US, which has undeniably increased Turkey’s credibility in the region from 2002-05. However, it also has decreased its ability to manoeuvre in the region. It is significant that Turkey has been asserting its power in the West Asian region because it is important for enhancing its

global status. Turkey's greater engagement in West Asia is part of the gradual diversification of Turkish foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. In effect, Turkey is trying to rediscover the region of which it has historically been an integral part under the Ottoman Empire. In continuing Turkey's role of acting as a bridge between Europe and Asia requires it to have good relations with both the Western as well as West Asian nations. At the same time, analysing Turkish foreign activism around the concept of a middle power has provided an understanding of its foreign policy behaviour. As a middle power, Turkey is trying to increase its international effectiveness in the West Asian region by using foreign policy tools, and also by focussing on issues, both of which are often ignored by the great powers.

# INTERNATIONAL NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR: A GAME CHANGER FOR INDIA?

POONAM MANN

*Transport infrastructure is one of the most important factors for a country's progress...One cannot overemphasize the importance of transportation than call it the 'lifeline' of a nation...Good physical connectivity is the prerequisite.<sup>1</sup>*

Lack of physical connectivity has often been cited as one of the main reasons for the low volume of trade and commercial relations between India and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>2</sup> Although India's relations with all these countries are close and cordial, bilateral trade remains well below its potential. It only records one percent share in India's total exports and 2.1 percent in

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1. "Why Transport Infrastructure is Most Important for Country's Progress", *The Economic Times*, February 10, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/why-transport-infrastructure-is-most-important-for-country-s-progress/articleshow/50865730.cms>. Accessed on November 25, 2018.
2. The Commonwealth of Independent States was created after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. The CIS countries include twelve countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

its total imports<sup>3</sup>. While there are many factors that can be attributed to the low level of economic relations, lack of a continuous border is notably one of the serious impediments to enhancing bilateral trade with the countries of this region. Against this backdrop, the present paper will try to contextualise the potential that the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) provides to expand India's economic presence in the region. An attempt is also made to analyse how this corridor can be a game changer for India in diversifying and facilitating its economic integration with the CIS countries in general and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in particular.

### **BRIEF BACKGROUND OF INSTC**

The INSTC is a 7,200-km-long, multi-modal transportation route that links the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and onwards to northern Europe via St. Petersburg in Russia. The route involves transportation of passengers and merchandise by sea, road and rail. It envisages movement of goods from Mumbai (India) to Bandar Abbas (Iran) by sea, from Bandar Abbas to Bandar-e-Anzali (an Iranian port on the Caspian Sea) by road and then from Bandar-e-Anzali to Astrakhan (a Caspian port in the Russian Federation) by ship across the Caspian Sea, and thereafter from Astrakhan to the other regions of the Russian Federation and further into Europe by Russian railways. The project was initiated by Russia, Iran and India in September 2000 and ratified in 2002, in order to establish a transportation network among the member states and enhance connectivity with the Eurasian region. Later, it was joined by another eleven countries, namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, Syria and Bulgaria (Observer).<sup>4</sup> The progress on this initiative, however, had been very slow in the initial years. But, in 2014, for understanding the problem areas and to realise the full potential of the corridor, a dry run was conducted by the

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3. "India's Trade Relations with CIS Countries – India CIS Trade Statistics", January 30, 2018 <https://www.exportgenius.in/blog/indias-trade-relations-with-cis-countries-india-cis-trade-statistics-186.php>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.

4. "International North-South Transport Corridor" (INSTC), [www.instc-org.ir/pages/Home\\_Page.aspx](http://www.instc-org.ir/pages/Home_Page.aspx). Accessed on October 20, 2016.

Federation of Freight Forwarder's Association in India (FFFAI), on the NhavaSheva-Bandar Abbas (Iran)—Baku (Azerbaijan), and the NhavaSheva-Bandar Abbas-Amirabad (Iran)—Astrakhan (Russia) route via the Caspian Sea. The dry run report pointed out that "the proposed INSTC route via Bandar Abbas in Iran to Russia and CIS destinations could be the best route with optimal transit/cost for the Indian exporters/importers.<sup>5</sup> Further, in 2015, officials from India, Iran, Russia and other eleven countries met and approved draft transit and customs agreements for INSTC. This provided the legal framework for addressing the logistical issues and moving freight on the ship-rail-road route, linking India, Iran, Russia, the CARs and Europe.<sup>6</sup> The dry run-2014 also highlighted Baku (Azerbaijan's capital) as the transit point between Iran and Russia, to be developed as a transport hub. Consequently, the trial runs conducted in 2016 ran through both Azerbaijan and Iran.<sup>7</sup> The process of constructing and developing the rail networks between Azerbaijan and Iran is underway.<sup>8</sup> In fact, in a trilateral meeting held in October 2016, the leaders of Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan also emphasised on the need to work on reducing the trade tariffs in order to encourage trans-border trade via INSTC. It was noted that "the success of this corridor will depend not only on construction works, but also on effective synchronization of national legislation as well as tariff issues and transport fees".<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in a meeting of the Experts Groups and Coordination Council of INSTC in 2015, the decision

5. "International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC): Dry Run Report 2014", [commerce.nic.in/publications/INSTC-Dry-run-report-Final.pdf](http://commerce.nic.in/publications/INSTC-Dry-run-report-Final.pdf). Accessed on October 20, 2016.
6. "International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) Conference-India 2015", [http://commerce.gov.in/writereaddata/uploadfile/MOC\\_635986655921421162\\_INSTC\\_Conference\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://commerce.gov.in/writereaddata/uploadfile/MOC_635986655921421162_INSTC_Conference_Report_Final.pdf). Accessed on November 26, 2018. Also see, Dipanjan Roy Choudhary, "INSTC Draft Approval: Big Step Forward on India-Iran-Russia Corridor", [economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nations/instc-draft-approval-big-step-forward-on-India-Iran-Russia-Corridor/articles/ow/48766349.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nations/instc-draft-approval-big-step-forward-on-India-Iran-Russia-Corridor/articles/ow/48766349.cms). Accessed on October 20, 2016.
7. Ritika Passi, "Money Matters: Discussing the Economics of the INSTC", <http://www.orfonline.org/research/money-matters-discussing-the-economics-of-the-instc/>. Accessed on November 29, 2018.
8. "Tehran- Baku Rail Route to be Launched Soon", *AzerNews*, June 24, 2018, <http://www.azernews.az/business/133866.html>. Accessed on November 28, 2018.
9. "Baku set to Become Major Eurasian Hub", <http://www.freightweek.org/index.php/en/viewpoints/2258-baku-set-to-become-eurasian-hub>. Accessed on November 28, 2018.



to focus on introducing soft infrastructure and improving banking and insurance facilities was taken.<sup>10</sup>

In October, 2016, the route was tested successfully and the first test shipment was organised by JSC RZD Logistics of Russia, Iran Railways and Azerbaijan Railways and the logistics company ADY. The transit time from Mumbai to Russia was 23 days, which was much less than the traditional route.<sup>11</sup> This development also prompted a German railway company, Deutsch Bahn, to express its interest to deliver goods from Europe through Azerbaijan to Iran by using this corridor,<sup>12</sup> thus, giving INSTC a Western direction as well. Besides, reportedly, Estonia has also shown interest in joining the corridor and negotiations have already begun. If this materialises, India will get an easy access to the markets of the Baltic Republics.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, in a bid to popularise the INSTC route, a Friendship Motor Car Rally was organised in May 2018. It symbolically passed through the territories of the partner countries of the corridor: India, Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia.<sup>14</sup> With all these developments, the INSTC initiative has come a long way and is taking shape. On the regulatory front, there is some advancement too. In 2017, India became the 71st signatory to the International Roads Transport (TIR) Convention.<sup>15</sup> After India's accession, all INSTC countries, except Oman, are party to the TIR convention.<sup>16</sup> Another positive sign is

10. Meena Singh Roy and Rajorshi Roy, "Placing India in the Emerging Regional Dynamics of Central Asia", *UNISCI Journal*, no. 45, October, 2017, p. 104.
11. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Deutsche Bahn Wants to use INSTC to Trade with Iran", *The Economic Times*, October 28, 2016, <http://epaperbeta.timesofindia/Article.aspx?eid=31816&articlexml=Deutsch-Bahn-Wants-to-Use-INSTC-to-Trade-28102016028029>. Accessed on September 1, 2017.
12. Ibid.
13. Boris Egorov, "Estonia Interested in Joining North-South Transport Corridor", [https://www.rbth.com/news/2017/01/19/estonia-interested-in-joining-north-south-transport-corridor\\_684316](https://www.rbth.com/news/2017/01/19/estonia-interested-in-joining-north-south-transport-corridor_684316). Accessed on November 26, 2018.
14. "Ambassador: Motor Rally of Friendship Between India and Azerbaijan is Aimed at Popularizing North-South Route", <http://report.az/en/foreign-politics/ambassador-motor-rally-of-friendship-between-india-and-azerbaijan-is-aimed-at-popularizing-north-south-route/>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.
15. Indrani Bagchii, "India Joins UN TIR Convention", *The Times of India*, June 19, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-joins-un-tir-convention/articleshow/59220976.cms>. Accessed on October 10, 2017.
16. Roshan Iyer, "Good News for India as North-South Trade Corridor Takes Shape", *The Diplomat*, June 10, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/06/good-news-for-india-as-north-south-trade-corridor-takes-shape/>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.

India's and Russia's push to put in place a green corridor that aims at simplifying the customs operations in mutual trade between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> This will help in further expansion of trade between the two countries. In fact, a number of other positive developments, for the furtherance of INSTC, have taken place in 2017 and early 2018. For instance, in May, 2017, India's Foreign Service Institute held an INSTC conference in New Delhi in which various stakeholders from the diplomatic circle civil society, freight forwarders, media, etc. participated. At the conference, the discussions centred around the finalisation of the INSTC routes and the development and optimal utilisation of the Chabahar port in Iran to complement INSTC.<sup>18</sup> Even during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to India in February 2018, both sides reiterated their commitment to INSTC and stressed on the need for inclusion of Chabahar within its framework.<sup>19</sup>

Besides, there are many other existing, planned and under-construction routes, which, if linked up with INSTC, would make a network of connectivity across the Eurasian landscape.<sup>20</sup> All these developments underscore the need to fully evaluate the significance of this project which could become a key factor in deepening the economic integration of the region.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF INSTC**

Some of the features that signify the importance of this project are:

- It is been estimated by FFAI, after conducting the trial run in 2014, that the INSTC route will bring down the transportation time by 40 percent and the cost by 30 percent in comparison to the traditional route from India to Russia that passes through the Suez Canal, Mediterranean Sea and Europe<sup>21</sup>. Thus, it will

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17. "Russia, India Plan to Launch 'Green Corridor' Project in Trade Shortly", *Tass Russian News Agency*, October 5, 2018, [tass.com/economy/1024696](https://tass.com/economy/1024696). Accessed on November 28, 2018.

18. "INSTC (International North South Transport Corridor) - Express Corridor from India to Russia", [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28470/INSTC\\_International\\_North\\_South\\_Transport\\_Corridor\\_Express\\_Corridor\\_from\\_India\\_to\\_Russia](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/28470/INSTC_International_North_South_Transport_Corridor_Express_Corridor_from_India_to_Russia). Accessed on November 28, 2018.

19. "India-Iran Joint Statement during Visit of the President of Iran to India (February 17, 2018)", <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=176621>. Accessed on November 28, 2018.

20. Passi, n. 7.

21. n. 6.

save time and is cost-effective. Hence, the Asian and European countries would be able to transport their cargo at double speed.

- For India, the corridor provides a feasible surface connectivity, specifically with the Central Asian region and wider Eurasian region in general. It will help India not only to bypass Pakistan and yet reach out to Central Asia but also enable it to collaborate with the European markets at a cheaper cost.
- It would help boost India's trade with the CARs, which are known for their natural resource richness specially hydrocarbons and minerals. But without direct transport access, India cannot acquire this natural wealth. This is also one of the main reasons why India's presence in the Central Asian energy sector has remained minimal and its trade with these republics nominal. It is just around US\$ 1 billion and has not grown much.<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that INSTC will facilitate carrying 20-30 million tonnes of goods per year, thus, providing India an opportunity to increase its trade substantially with the CARs.
- Similarly, INSTC can help in increasing the economic content of the partnership between India and Russia and bring business on both sides into closer contact with each other. In fact, in the recent years, bilateral trade and investments frequently occupy the centre-stage of the India-Russia dialogue. It has been noted that the bilateral trade between the two does not correspond to their potential.<sup>23</sup> Besides other reasons, connectivity issues and distance are important reasons for the low level of trade between the two. Hence, for the long-term sustenance of their strategic partnership, INSTC can help in providing a strong geoeconomic foundation. India is interested in establishing a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). There is a need to expediate the process through negotiations. Once finalised, the FTZ with the EEU, aided by INSTC, could enhance the trade between the two.

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22. For details, see P. Stobdan, "India's Economic Opportunities in Central Asia", *IDSA Policy Brief*, [http://idsa.in/system/files/policybrief/pb\\_india-economic-opportunities-in-central-asia-pstobdon.pdf](http://idsa.in/system/files/policybrief/pb_india-economic-opportunities-in-central-asia-pstobdon.pdf). Accessed on October 22, 2018.

23. Boris Volkhonsky, "North-South Transport Corridor Begins Functioning", *Russia and India Report*, December 12, 2016, [http://in.rbth.com/blogs/the\\_outsiders\\_insight/2016/12/12/long-awaited-north-south-corridor-close-to-launch-655489](http://in.rbth.com/blogs/the_outsiders_insight/2016/12/12/long-awaited-north-south-corridor-close-to-launch-655489). Accessed on September 1, 2017.

- INSTC can help in building partnerships. The geopolitical environment of today's world is very challenging. Therefore, countries need to invest more in the existing regional/multi-lateral arrangements/institutions. These may not create security guarantees, but can become instruments to manage problems. Besides, in today's world, it is necessary to just not conceptualise the multipolar world, but to construct or reconstruct it.<sup>24</sup> INSTC can provide such a platform.

These advantages and motivations allow India to play an active role in the early operationalisation of this corridor, keeping in mind the huge potential it provides and its long-term prospects. However, for realising the full potential, India, along with other member countries, needs to work on alternative routes and the missing links in order to enhance its efficiency.

#### **MISSING LINKS OF INSTC**

As mentioned earlier, there are many other existing, planned and under-construction connectivity projects, which, if linked up with INSTC, will increase the viability of this route significantly. In this context, the Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran (KTI) rail link holds great significance.

#### ***Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran Corridor***

Underlining the importance of INSTC, it was mentioned<sup>25</sup> that if the main section of the corridor fails, there are alternate and support routes. KTI is such an alternate route in the east of the Caspian Sea. The route was operationalised in December 2014 to become a linked corridor of INSTC.<sup>26</sup> The route links the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean through the Bandar Abbas and Chabahar ports in Iran and it has been forecast that three million tonnes of freight would be carried per year from this route in the first stage and ten million in a longer term.<sup>27</sup>

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24. Views expressed by scholars in the 2nd India-Russia International Conference organised by Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, November 14-15, 2018.

25. n. 6, p. 22.

26. Tej Kadam, "India-Kazakhstan Joint Statement", [mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?25437/Tej+Kadam+India+Kazakhstan+joint+statement](http://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?25437/Tej+Kadam+India+Kazakhstan+joint+statement). Accessed on May 12, 2016.

27. n. 6.

From the Indian side, Kazakhstan's national railway company, Kazakhstan TemirZholy (KTZ) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Adnani Ports for building a port in Mundra (Gujarat). The importance of this port lies in the fact that once the link with Mundra port and Bandar Abbas is ready, the goods can be transported via the KTI rail link which will be shorter and cheaper.<sup>28</sup> Besides, in October 2018, officials from both countries held deliberations on linking Mundra port with Bandar Abbas and connecting it further to the KTI network and onwards to the eastern parts of Russia.<sup>29</sup> It was also agreed to implement a pilot supply of goods through this route in the beginning of the year 2019.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the KTI link will become an important source for India to connect with the resource rich Kazakhstan which is also a member of the EEU and is seen as a promising 'transit-hub' for the future trade flow between Europe and Asia.

### *Central Asia-Persian Gulf Corridor*

The agreement to create an international corridor connecting the CARs with the countries of the Persian Gulf ports was signed in 2011 by Iran, Oman, Qatar, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with an aim to develop trade and transport links with Iranian and Omani ports. The land component of the agreement includes rail links through Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan and Iran. However, Qatar withdrew from the agreement in 2013 and Kazakhstan joined it in 2015 and India in 2017. The agreement is popularly known as the Ashgabat Agreement. This multilateral agreement creates a trade corridor for the smooth transportation of cargo to the countries of the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and Europe via railways, sea and land. An annual transportation cargo was estimated at around 10-12 tonnes.<sup>31</sup>

28. "Kazakhstan Eyes Terminal at Mundra to give Fillip to Bilateral Trade", [www.thestatesman.com/news/business/Kazakhstan-eyes-terminal-at-mundra-to-give-filip-to-bilateral-trade/106535.html](http://www.thestatesman.com/news/business/Kazakhstan-eyes-terminal-at-mundra-to-give-filip-to-bilateral-trade/106535.html). Accessed on October 19, 2016.

29. "India, Kazakhstan Mull Starting Work on Eastern Extension of INSTC", <http://sputniknews.com/analysis/201811261070143422-india-kazakhstan-extension-of-instc/>. Accessed on November 29, 2018.

30. Ibid.

31. "Kazakhstan Joins Central Asia- Middle East Transport Corridor", July 6, 2016, <http://www.railwaypro.com/wp/kazakhstan-joins-central-asia-middle-east-transport-corridor/>. Accessed on October 20, 2016.

Its synchronisation with INSTC will give a further boost to the enhanced connectivity.

### **INSTC–CHABAHAR INTEGRATION**

The trilateral Chabahar agreement among India-Iran and Afghanistan, when linked with INSTC, suggests integration, development and stability. Chabahar port is located in the Sistan-Balochistan province on the southeastern coast of Iran. Its significance lies in the fact that the port will give India sea-land access into Afghanistan and through Iran's eastern borders, to the Central Asian region. The discussions to develop the Chabahar port complex between India and Iran started in 2003, but finally the deal was materialised in 2016. During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran in May 2016, a commercial contract for the development and operation of Chabahar port was signed between the Indian Joint Venture India Ports Global Pvt Ltd (a consortium of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Kandla Port Trust) and Iran's Arya Bandar. The bilateral agreement provided India the right to develop and operate two terminals and five berths, with multi-purpose cargo handling capacities in the port of Chabahar for ten years. At the same time, a Trilateral Transport and Transit Corridor agreement was signed among India, Iran and Afghanistan for connecting Chabahar with the Afghan road and rail network.

As mentioned above, Chabahar has two terminals—Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti. Shahid Kalantari is handling about 2.1 million tonnes of cargo per year and with the operationalisation of Shahid Beheshti, the capacity is expected to go up to 10 million tonnes.<sup>32</sup> The first phase of the Shahid Beheshti was completed in December 2017 and the first shipment of 1.1 million tonnes of wheat through Chabahar port to Afghanistan proved that it could become a reliable alternative for India's access to the Central Asian region as well.<sup>33</sup> This connectivity can be reinforced through bilateral or multilateral initiatives. So far, India has completed the 218-km road from Delaram (Afghanistan) to Zaranj on the Afghanistan-Iran

32. P. Stobdan, "To make Chabahar a 'Game Changer', Central Asian States Need to be Roped in", *IDS Comment*, 12 December, 2017, [http://idsa.in/idsacomment/to-make-chabahar-a-game-changer-central-asian-states\\_pstobdan\\_121217](http://idsa.in/idsacomment/to-make-chabahar-a-game-changer-central-asian-states_pstobdan_121217). Accessed on December 12, 2017.

33. Kallol Bhattacharjee, "India Ships Wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar", *The Hindu*, October 29, 2017.

border. Further, India's assistance for building Chabahar-Zahedan Railway was discussed, during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to India in February, 2018, so that the full potential of port could be realised to connect it to Afghanistan and Central Asia.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Afghanistan's integration with the region will foster its development.

Additionally, the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan railway link is another important link connecting the regional countries. Uzbekistan is contributing by building a rail-road from Termez on Uzbek-Afghan border to Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan that will be further extended to Sheberghan, Maymana and then Herat and from here, the doubly land-locked Uzbekistan will be one step closer to the sea—i.e. Chabahar Port via Afghan-Iranian rail projects.<sup>35</sup> These rail-road construction projects in Afghanistan, undertaken by Uzbekistan compliment India's participation in the Chabahar Port project.

All these strategically important missing links provide an added advantage to the INSTC project as these will not only help promote connectivity but also expand trade volumes among the member countries, resulting in trust-building and cooperation. India's participation in the aforementioned projects is quite noticeable. The early implementation and success of the INSTC project is in India's interest as economic integration with the less connected spaces is one of the important components of India's foreign policy and "rebuilding connectivity, restoring bridges and re-joining India with our immediate and extended geographies"<sup>36</sup> are its key pillars. However, there are number of challenges, and a very competitive environment in which India has to navigate. Given China's rise and its regional and global aspirations, India's competing interests with China in the region, warming up of China-Iran relations, Russia's growing convergence and understanding with China, etc. increase

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34. "India Supports Developing Chabahar Port as Alternate Access Route to Afghanistan, Central Asia: MEA", *The Indian Express*, March 15, 2018, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-supports-developing-chabahar-port-as-alternate-access-route-to-afghanistan-central-asia-mea-5098974/>, Accessed on March 16, 2018.

35. Catherine Putz, "Ghani and Mirziyoyev Meet, Renew Afghan-Uzbek Ties", *The Diplomat*, December 6, 2017, <http://the-diplomat.com/2017/12/ghani-and-mirziyoyev-meet-renew-afghan-uzbek-ties/>. Accessed on December 21, 2017.

36. "Text of the Inaugural Address by Prime Minister at Second Raisina Dialogue, New Delhi (January 17, 2017)", <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=157417>. Accessed on August 10, 2018.

India's complexities. Equally complex and volatile relations between the regional countries and their relations with the extra-regional players, like India-Pakistan, Afghanistan-Pakistan, US-Russia, US-China, US-Iran, and India's relations with the US restrict the extent of cooperation. Also, a number of connectivity projects are ongoing in the region, reflecting similar geopolitical thinking. It is in the backdrop of these complexities that India has to negotiate its own space. However, as rightly suggested by Samir Saran, "For every belt they create, and every road that we create, can we create a slip road that connects Indian opportunities to the larger global market rather than reject it outright? Can we use their institutions to our own advantage?"<sup>37</sup> Therefore, keeping in mind the changing global networks, linking with other stakeholders' logistic frameworks, keeping in mind the 'slip-roads', India has to create its own space. The fact remains that enhancement of trade and commercial relations and tapping new markets remain the converging interest of all the stakeholders.

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37. Amy Kazmin, "India Watches Anxiously as Chinese Influence Grows", *Financial Times*, May 10, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/content/e9baebee-0bd8-11e6-9456-444ab5211a2f>. Accessed on December 1, 2018.



# ROTARY UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE AS A MILITARY PLATFORM

**B S NIJJAR**

*The future battlescape is vertical and unmanned systems would lead.*

## **ORIGINS OF “UNMANNED” THOUGHT**

The research work in the field of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) had commenced with Nikola Tesla hypothesising the possibility of an unmanned flight in the 1890s. On November 8, 1898, Nikola Tesla had also patented (US patent No. 613,809) his “*Method of, and Apparatus for, Controlling Mechanism of Moving Vessels or Vehicles*”. The finer details of the patent indicated its applicability to “*any type of vessel or vehicle which is capable of being propelled and directed, such as a boat, a balloon or a carriage*”. He even demonstrated his “three-foot-long” battery powered unmanned ship in a large tank of water, controlling it wirelessly.<sup>1</sup> Uninformed witnesses believed Tesla actually was wielding “*supernatural and magical*” powers. He was

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1. Austin Weber, Assemblymag, “Nikola Tesla: Father of Unmanned Vehicle Technology, April 26, 2010”, [www.assemblymag.com/articles/87689-nikola-tesla-father-of-unmanned-vehicle-technology](http://www.assemblymag.com/articles/87689-nikola-tesla-father-of-unmanned-vehicle-technology). Accessed on August 16, 2018.

unable to, however, sell the idea and the equipment he invented to the US Navy. He was almost two decades ahead of the military minds of the time.

### **THE HELICOPTER AND ITS UNMANNED VERSION**

World War II had provided the necessary impetus to develop technologies aiming to gain the slightest ever edge over the adversary. Helicopters had also been used by war-fighters, especially the Germans. After their defeat, one of the prototypes of the German FL282 (FL 282 V23, CI+TW) helicopter, had even been captured by the Americans.<sup>2</sup>

During the post war period a company called Kaman Aircraft Corporation was founded by Charles H. Kaman on December 12, 1945, for manufacturing helicopters.<sup>3</sup> This corporation manufactured various helicopters, including the K-125 and K-225. These were based on an intermeshing rotor design and were procured by the US Navy and US Coast Guard in 1949.

Simultaneously, both the US Navy and US Army initiated a joint project in August 1952, to convert the “Kaman” for a pilotless role. The development was to be a combination of a “stabilisation equipment” being developed by the Naval Bureau of Aeronautics as well as a “guidance system” being developed in the Office of Naval Research (ONR). These inputs, along with the already existing radio control systems in use for conventional target drones, were to be used along with electromechanical controls.<sup>4</sup> By March 1954, successful flights had been demonstrated to the US Navy, US Marine Corps and US Army. By May 1956, the helicopter was able to hover automatically at an altitude of 1,000 ft for over 20 minutes, a feat which is difficult to emulate by a pilot flying the helicopter manually.

The Radio Corporation of America which had developed a portable camera and transmitter for the US Army Signal Corps had also mounted the camera onboard this helicopter. By September

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2. Schiffer Military Aviation History, *The Luftwaffe Profile Series No.6: Flettner FL282* (Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1996), p. 15.

3. Kaman, “History of Aviation Timeline”, <https://www.kaman.com/our-company/history-of-innovation>. Accessed on August 16, 2018.

4. Ragay.nl, “HTK Drones”, <https://www.ragay.nl/kaman-htk-hok-huk/htk-drones>. Accessed on August 8, 2018.

1956, the ONR was able to savour the results as they had a Rotary Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (RUAV) system which could undertake battlefield surveillance with TV broadcasts to a mother station, take photos as per command from the controller, lay communication wire, fly on a pre-programmed course which was fed into the ground control station and was also able to fly as per the command from an airborne station located in another helicopter.

One of its test flights was also broadcast on American TV in 1953, as a part of a programme called "You Asked for It". The programme revealed it to be a joint army-navy project and the Chairman of the Kaman Aircraft Corporation Charles H. Kaman listed out the intended role of the helicopter as follows<sup>5</sup>:

- Deliver weapons on enemy submarines.
- Artillery spotting.
- Aerial photography/reconnaissance.
- Battlefield surveillance.
- Chemical and radioactive warfare.
- Cable laying.
- Laying smokescreen.
- Fire-fighting.

Even though the effort in the video seems to be to market the pilotless helicopter, it was also a demonstration for validating the flight of the world's first RUAV capable of undertaking military operations.

### **THE RUAV EVOLUTION: GEOPOLITICS AND MILITARY BUDGETS**

The post-World War II era saw the emergence of two major power blocs on the global arena. On one hand was the US-led democratic set-up and, on the other were the Soviet led Communists. World War II, as well as the Korean War, had put a severe strain on US resources and its ability to modernise its navy. The US Navy was aware of the threat posed by the Soviet Union's method of modernising its military, by fielding over 300 fast attack submarines with long range torpedoes. The

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5. Youtube.com, "Kaman HTK-1K-The First Unmanned Helicopter (1953)", [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1dIzvp5aMc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1dIzvp5aMc). Accessed on August 8, 2018.

threat was compounded by the fact that the US destroyers were facing “block obsolescence” and were unable to meet the threat. The problem was compounded by the fact that the Eisenhower Administration was also seeking to limit US defence spending.

In order to meet this triad of challenges, the then Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Arleigh A. Burke (aka “31-Knot Burke” of the World War II Pacific operations fame) formulated a three-pronged approach. The approach comprised three major programmes viz. the Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernisation (FRAM), Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter (DASH) and Anti-Submarine Rocket (ASROC) programmes.

The FRAM comprised a series of retrofits to the ageing destroyers to extend their useful life by a complete overhaul of the onboard machinery and installation of state-of-the-art weapon systems in the form of the DASH and ASROC. Both the DASH and ASROC were to use similar MK-44 torpedoes; however, the range limitation of 1-5 miles could be increased to 22 miles using the DASH system.

The thought process was to meet the emerging threats using legacy systems by retrofitting them with state-of-the-art systems as a part of an overall strategy of countering the Soviet submarine threat. Thus, the RUAV formed an important component of this strategy and each destroyer had two of these onboard. The technologies tested onboard the Kaman HTK helicopter, and owned by the ONR, were used to develop the twin single shaft contra-rotating helicopter the Gyrodyne QH-50.

The contrarotating Gyrodyne QH-50’s development began on February 4, 1960, with the ordering of the first two QH-50 aircraft for Research and Development (R&D) purposes. However, the urgency of the requirement forced the navy to bring in its “Concurrent Development and Production” programme. As a part of this concept, additional 15 QH-50C drones were ordered on April 1, 1960, with the first flight of the aircraft (with a safety pilot onboard) taking place on April 6, 1961. It was another nine months before the first flight was conducted without a safety pilot onboard, on January 25, 1962. The urgency was primarily due to the fact that the DASH programme did not keep pace with the FRAM and the ASROC, which were completed three years ahead of schedule.

Of significance is the fact that due to the emergent requirement and under the “Concurrent Development and Production” programme, helicopters with known defects were accepted and flown. The QH50 drone had the capability of delivering two MK-44 homing torpedoes to a sonar contact some 22 miles away from the launching destroyer.<sup>6</sup> The chief characteristic of the QH50 programme was the simultaneous operational deployment, as well as development of the system. Once the DASH was deployed onboard the US Navy destroyers around the world, it was a very visible and state-of-the-art equipment, visible to its adversaries. It was also deployed during the Vietnam conflict wherein under “Project Snoopy”, it was used as a reconnaissance platform, along with the installation of video and film cameras. A transponder was also installed to monitor its location, along with a telemetry system to monitor the actions.<sup>7</sup> These were deployed in spotting duties and provided over the horizon target data to the destroyer’s five-inch batteries. However, the results were described as “mixed”, indicating that traditional methods of observation by a human observer were still required.<sup>8</sup>

However, on November 30, 1970, DASH operations were discontinued. The reason was attributed to “the lack of feedback loop from the drone to the controller i.e. its electronic remote control system, a low radar signature (causing inability of the mother ship to fix its position) and the lack of a transponder”.<sup>9</sup>

It is significant that the QH-50 was also operated by the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force between 1965 and 1977 in an Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) role. The Japanese were forced to discontinue its role due to the logistical issues arising due to the US Navy discontinuing the DASH programme.

For the world, however, the DASH programme had displayed a range of possibilities which were offered by the RUAV, especially in terms of its key characteristic of operating from restricted spaces and ships.

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6. Gyrodynehelicopters.com, “QH50C”, <http://www.gyrodynehelicopters.com/qh-50c1.htm>. Accessed on August 15, 2018.

7. Global Security, “QH-50 Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter (DASH)”, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/qh-50.htm>. Accessed on August 19, 2018.

8. Steven Paget, *The Dynamics of Coalition Naval Warfare: The Special Relationship at Sea* (UK: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2017).

9. Ibid. p. 25.

### **THE CONSOLIDATION PHASE: UAV AS A SYSTEM**

An audit report of the US General Accounting Office dated December 9, 1988, had estimated that the Department of Defence (DoD) was expected to spend over six billion dollars<sup>10</sup> on various UAV programmes.

The concept of the optionally piloted helicopter had also gained prominence. The concept can be termed as an “accidental” discovery, as the initial trial flights were cleared by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) with a mandatory requirement of “*a man to be on board and if not on board, a the RUAV must be tethered*”. Therefore, for actual trials without anyone on board, a rope was tied to one of the landing gears. Even in a tail chase mode i.e. when being flown by a control unit in a chase helicopter, it had to have a safety pilot on board.

As a budget rationalisation measure, the requirements of all the three Services had been clubbed together under a single authority. Even more significant was the intention to ensure the interoperability of the platforms and payloads being developed individually by each Service. The result was an annual master plan for UAV development, first published in 1988. Under the plan there was a distinction made between the flying platform and the system. With a threat assessment favouring the development of the High Altitude Long Range (HALE) and Medium Altitude Long Range (MALE) systems, the fixed wing platforms were preferred, with the rotary wing platforms consigned to the background. The other elements of the system such as the payloads, data-links and associated system architecture, however, were developed in a manner that the systems could easily be adapted to be used by the rotary wing platforms also. However, there were many technological challenges faced by the RUAV as a platform, which were distinct from fixed wing UAVs and those had to be addressed.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES: UAV AND RUAV SYSTEMS**

True technological revolution and miniaturisation in the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) development and its exploitation, was a result of the technological developments in the field of embedded electronic

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10. US GAO, “Report No. B-229489”, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/80/77234.pdf>. Accessed on August 19, 2018.

systems as well as the Micro Electro-Mechanical Systems (MEMS) which took place in the 1980s. The result was an extremely efficient and compact design of the required avionics and control systems—data processors, navigation sensors and communication units—while retaining the computational power, measurement accuracy and communication range. By the early 1990s the continued investments in the necessary R&D resulted in the design of complex RUAV systems which were capable of self-stabilising, self-navigating and interacting with the surroundings. These developments, classified as “aerial robotics,” were showcased in various international competitions held since 1991.

However, the key elements of the control laws, especially in the case of RUAVs, were kept a closely guarded secret and every developer had to develop his or her own.

These key requirements of a military UAS were also defined in terms of platform capability, payload requirements for the designated role and the aspects of communication data-links.

However, on the flipside, despite the obvious military advantages of the RUAV in the DASH programme of the 1960s, they did not come about to be widely used, probably due to the limitations of the platform.

### **LIMITATIONS/ KEY CHARACTERISTICS GOVERNING MILITARY USE OF RUAVs**

The use of a RUAV as an unmanned platform has not followed the same trajectory as its fixed wing counterpart.

The UAS employing fixed wing platforms have seen a significant proliferation all over the world, while very few systems employ the rotary wing platforms. This aspect gets even more highlighted and the numbers become negligible if the systems in use by the US military forces are ignored.

Even in the US, only proven systems such as the Schweizer, Bell-407, Kaman and MD-500 helicopters are the platforms of choice for a variety of RUAV systems, being deployed in a myriad roles, ranging from battlefield logistics and kinetic attack to long duration surveillance operations.

The Austrian Schiebel-100 has been one of the success stories in the “non-US” category, with it being inducted in the inventories of various countries such as the UAE and Germany. In October 2007, the Indian Navy also evaluated it on board its Offshore Platform Vessel (OPV). This was followed by a trial/demonstration on board a Pakistan Navy Type 21 frigate in 2008, before becoming the first one to have flown in the Paris Air Show in 2009. The success of the Austrian RUAV platform sporting a conventional main rotor/tail rotor configuration, is highlighted by the number of countries working in partnership with the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM), which range from the US, Russia, France, Germany to Jordan.

The acceptability of the platform is also indicated by the fact that the US Air Force Research Laboratory, under a project named “Yellow Jacket”, intends to use this RUAV for detecting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), with a plan to upgrade its range endurance and electrical outputs by installing additional fuel tanks and underslung loads.<sup>11</sup> For understanding the military success of this particular RUAV platform vis-à-vis its fixed wing counterparts, its primary characteristics need to be highlighted: Some of these are:

- The RUAV is limited by the payload carrying capacity, which is significantly less than that of the fixed wing counterparts. The rotor system was a key limiting factor in the capability of the helicopter to attain forward speed. It also resulted in a significantly high noise and radar signature thereby adversely affecting its battlefield survivability.
- The capability of the RUAV is often limited by the capability of the available data-links which mostly work in a Line of Sight (LOS) mode. This limitation was, however, overcome by having redundancy of the satellite control and autonomous control.
- Optionally manned helicopters such as the HTK-1K (Kaman) are the most capable due to the versatility accorded by its capability to be flown in both unmanned and manned missions.
- RUAVs form an important force multiplying component of modern-day naval warfare systems due to the ability of operating

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11. Airforce-Technology.com, “CamcopterS-100UAV”, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/camcopters-100uav/>. Accessed on August 21, 2018.



from highly restricted spaces and increasing the Beyond the Horizon (BTH) operation capability.

- Multicopter systems are easy to control and manufacture and convenient for short range operations but the trend of powering them with electric motors and battery packs limits their operations to less than an hour.

The present trend focusses upon manufacturing platforms capable of Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) and thereafter transforming into a fixed wing platform during forward flight. The unmanned version of the V-22 Osprey (tiltrotor), the Bell-247- Vigilant is one such type of RUAV presently under development.

### **REVIVAL OF THE MILITARY RUAV**

The fixed wing-based UAVs were much sought after and were operationally deployed in Operation Desert Storm (1990-91), Bosnia and Kosovo (July 1995), Afghanistan (October 2001), Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 2003) with the UAVs being used in multi-mission profiles ranging from reconnaissance, target designation and destruction missions. These fixed wing UAVs also acquired targets for the OH-58 and AH-64 helicopters which worked as a “hunter-killer” team. (The AH-64 engaging the target sought by the OH58 helicopter). During the “lean” period of the RUAV operations that is between the 1970s and 1990s, conceptual studies had continued and the RUAV platform survived in the form of the US Special Forces using the AH6X/MH6X “Unmanned Little Bird (ULB)” platform for various roles. The “A” signifies an armed version and “M” the mobility version in the designation AH6X and MH6X respectively.<sup>12</sup>

A key turning point in RUAV operations was the demonstrated ability (June 1999) of the Kaman K-Max optionally manned helicopter of airlifting in underslung mode a semi-autonomous mortar system (“Dragon Fire”) to a pre-determined position and thereafter using an onboard video camera and a laser range finder to direct the mortar fire which itself was remotely controlled from a ground station. This

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12. Global Security.org, “A/MH-6X/MH/AH-6X Unmanned Little Bird (ULB)”, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/amh-6x.htm>. Accessed on August 26, 2018.

was the start of the Broad-area Unmanned Responsive Resupply Operations (BURRO) programme with an intention of undertaking battlefield supply during active operations. By 2003 the K-Max was also capable of delivering supplies to multiple points in a single mission profile. The most significant part, however, is its ability to airlift—in an underslung mode—a payload (2,721 kg) more than its own weight (empty weight 2,334 kg).<sup>13</sup>

The RUAV programme also received a major stimulus in 2003 when the MQ-8B Firescout was selected by both the US Army and Navy for operating from unimproved surfaces as well as the need to revisit the DASH programme for the navy. The process itself for the tactical RUAV was initiated as early as 1999. The MQ-8B, with an endurance of three hours and a ceiling of 6,095 m is capable of carrying a payload of 272 kg. Over a period of time, the system is integrated with the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) which converts a “dumb” 70 mm rocket into a Precision Guided Munition (PGM) using semi-active laser guidance.<sup>14</sup>

By 2010, the US Navy issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a “Persistent Ship-Based UAS” with an on-station time of eight to 72 hours (using multiple aerial vehicles), range of 556 to 1,852 km, payload carrying capability of 272 to 454 kg and an operational ceiling of between 4,572 to 7620 m. Indicative of the military strategy adopted to meet the emerging threats, the Bell 407 was chosen as the platform of choice. By 2013, the onboard electronics were also protected from interference by an on board “Faraday Cage”. The rest of the countries, though aware of the significant developments in this field, continue to play the “catch-up” game in terms of their respective RUAV programmes.

The Chinese also tapped into the available expertise in the US, when a China-based company called Qingdao Haili Helicopters Manufacturing Company Ltd. acquired the Brantly-Hynes Helicopter Inc. in 2007.<sup>15</sup> The result has been the V750 and its

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13. Martin Streetly, *IHS Jane's All the World's Aircraft :Unmanned* (UK: IHS Jane's, 2015) pp. 307-309.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 335-341.

15. hktc.com, “Qingdao Haili Helicopter Mfg Co.LTD-China (Shandong),” [www.hktc.com/manufacturers-suppliers/QINGDAO-HAILI-HELICOPTER-MFG-CO-LTD/en/1X061QU0/](http://www.hktc.com/manufacturers-suppliers/QINGDAO-HAILI-HELICOPTER-MFG-CO-LTD/en/1X061QU0/). Accessed on December 22, 2016.

military version the QY-1 RUAV presently being marketed by the Weifang Tianxiang Aerospace Industry Co. Ltd.<sup>16</sup> The QY-1 likely to be equipped with two 50 kg anti-tank missiles, such as the HJ-9 and HJ-10, or rocket pods is also being offered for export.<sup>17</sup> The only other RUAV system known to have been certified to fly in the civil air space is the Dutch manufactured twin engine Geocopter GC-201. The focus of the ongoing research, as a part of the Facility for Unmanned Rotorcraft Research (FUORE) run programme is the development of automatic and safety procedures for RUAV research in the civil domain but the spinoffs to the military applications are almost certain.

The extensive RUAV research landscape has been further complicated with the developments in the human-machine interface, commonly known as “Artificial Intelligence” (AI), along with developments in the field of swarm technologies.

### **MILITARY RUAV: AI AND SWARM TECHNOLOGIES**

In case of the military RUAV, AI has been the backbone, based upon which more and more demands are being placed. The first of the two examples is the award of the contract for a K-Max-based fully autonomous reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition experiment for operations in areas assessed to be too risky for human presence. It involved delivery of an unmanned ground vehicle as a part of Squad Mission Support System (SMSS). A task strikingly similar to the one performed by the K-Max in 1999 prior to the commencement of the BURRO programme covered earlier in the paper. The second example is the demonstration as a part of the US Navy’s Autonomous Aerial Cargo/Utility System (AACUS). The entire mission planning was done within 15 minutes using a hand-held tablet computer, with inputs of the required load, destination and a “last second” no-fly-zone information. The RUAV autonomously selected an alternative landing site in flight. The AI aspect is also visible in the operating mode of the Austrian S-100 helicopter in which the airborne platform is capable of autonomous

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16. Wikipedia, “Superior Aviation Beijing,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superior\\_Aviation\\_Beijing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superior_Aviation_Beijing). Accessed on December 22, 2016.

17. Popsci.com, “China’s Armed Robot Helicopter Takes Flight”, <https://www.popsci.com/chinas-armed-robot-helicopter-takes-flight>. Accessed on August 22, 2018.

operations, from take-off to landing, with no or negligible human involvement. And this is accomplished from the restricted confines aboard a moving ship in extreme sea states.

On July 31, 2018 a research article on the Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUM-T) was published. It gives details on a Department of Defence (DoD) funded programme initiated in 2010.<sup>18</sup> As a part of the programme, one of the tasks was to test the system being developed for Air Mission Commanders (AMCs), involving a team of Black Hawk (two “manned” helicopters controlling three RUAVs while undertaking a high risk troop induction mission) helicopters exercising control of multiple UAVs, offering advanced reconnaissance and real-time intelligence of flight routes and landing zones. This is indicative of the manner in which the future systems are likely to operate in a high threat environment, especially in a contested air space.

On the other end of the spectrum are the efforts to use extremely simple and cheap to manufacture VTOL platforms capable of performing complex military tasks in a collaborative manner. Drawing inspiration from the animal kingdom, studies are being conducted of swarms of ants in which millions combine together to perform the tasks of the colony as one. Perceived to be inherently unintelligent individually, the members perform complicated tasks in a cohesive manner to ensure their survival. The incorporation of similar systems would significantly enhance the chances of success of a military mission.

## COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS

The effort in the paper was to understand the evolution of the RUAV as a platform for military applications. The successful RUAVs which have seen active deployment in the field are a result of a time consuming and resource intensive effort. The US has been in the forefront of these developments but there have been successful platforms manufactured by other countries too, such as the Austrian S-100, capable of completely autonomous operation.

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18. Samuel J. Levulis, Patricia R. DeLucia, So Young Kim, “Effects of Touch, Voice, and Multimodal Input, and Task Load on Multiple-UAV Monitoring Performance During Simulated Manned-Unmanned Teaming in a Military Helicopter”, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0018720818788995>. Accessed on August 18, 2018.

The emergence of human manufactured intelligent systems intended to ease the workload of the war-fighter and the technology combined with tactics will be a decisive factor in winning future battles. Use of the RUAV in high risk zones is likely to reduce casualties while undertaking the assigned tasks. The advanced tactical systems such as the MUM-T, in which a command post aboard the task force intending to induct a heliborne force into a high threat zone is accompanied and led by multiple RUAVs. These RUAVs which are configured in both reconnaissance, targeting and attack roles sanitise the landing area prior to the arrival of the troops. This logistic support to the operation is thereafter provided by other RUAVs bringing in logistic support merely on a demand placed on a hand-held tablet computer. This is not science fiction but a demonstrated ability available since 2014.

# S-400 TRIUMF: ANALYSING STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS

SITAKANTA MISHRA

Amidst the opposition party's outcry over the Rafale deal, perceived "one-sided dealings" advantageous to the USA at the 2+2 dialogue, and negative twists in Indo-Pak future engagements, the Narendra Modi government has gone ahead for procuring the Russian S-400 Triumf air defence system, overlooking America's discontent.

The \$5.43 billion deal for five advanced S-400 Triumf air defence system with Russia in October 2018 intends to repulse India's long-felt missile threat and consequent strategic vulnerability emanating from the neighbourhood. Though details have not figured prominently in official pronouncements, the deal is perceived to be a 'game changer'<sup>1</sup> and a 'booster shot' for the Indian Air Force<sup>2</sup> and may prove to be another 'strategic masterstroke', of the Modi government, after the 'surgical strike' in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) in 2016.

While reasserting its non-alignment ideals at a time when Washington still fancies the Cold War alignment mentality, India, by signing the S-400 deal, has taken the risk of imposition of US sanctions

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1. P.K. Vasudeva, "A Game Changer for India", *Deccan Herald*, October 16, 2018, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/main-article/game-changer-india-698193.html>. Accessed on December 15, 2018.
2. "India Russia S-400 Missile Deal: All you Need to Know", *The Times of India*, October 5, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-russia-s-400-missile-deal-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/66066460.cms>. Accessed on December 14, 2018.

under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) which authorises the US president to impose sanctions on any entity that "engages in a significant transaction with...the defense or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation (Section 231)".<sup>3</sup> President Trump has taken serious note of such deals, expressing his displeasure and threatened punitive sanctions. Time will prove if the US will stir up a new controversy in Indo-US relations and jeopardise its larger objective of working with New Delhi in the broader Indo-Pacific theatre.

### THE VERSATILE SYSTEM

The S-400 deal underlines India's resolve to bolster its air defence capacity. This will have larger regional strategic implications, given the system is the world's most advanced operationally deployed long-range surface-to-air missile defence that stands apart from its closest rivals, especially the American Patriot PAC-3. According to experts, while the Patriot/PAC-3 could interdict a target moving with 8 km/hour, the S-400 can achieve the same: moving at double the speed (17 km/hour). The S-400 can engage with 72 targets simultaneously and track 160 targets—the same parameters for the Patriot are 36 and 125 targets. The S-400 locates a target at 600 km distance and can destroy at 400 km range, but the Patriot achieves the same at 180 km and an enemy's missile at 100 km; the S-400 is able to kill targets flying as low as 10 m and as high as 30 km, while the Patriot PAC-3 destroys its lowest target at a height of 50 m, with the highest at 25 km; more importantly, the deployment time for the S-400 and Patriot PAC-3 is 5 minutes and 25 minutes respectively.<sup>4</sup>

With an integrated, highly-mobile system of radars and missiles of different ranges, the S-400 is capable of engaging multiple threats. Its biggest attraction is that it can spot and acquire both enemy aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles, and even drones. The S-400 system comprises a combat control post, a three-coordinate jam-

3. "Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act", *The Times of India*, October 05, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-russia-s-400-missile-deal-all-you-need-to-know/articleshow/66066460.cms>. Accessed on December 14, 2018.
4. "Battle of the Air Defense Systems: S-400 Vs Patriot And THAAD", *DEFENCEWORLD.NET*, August 16, 2018, [http://www.defenseworld.net/feature/20/Battle\\_of\\_the\\_Air\\_Defense\\_Systems\\_S\\_400\\_Vs\\_Patriot\\_and\\_THAAD#.W8HZKtczbcc](http://www.defenseworld.net/feature/20/Battle_of_the_Air_Defense_Systems_S_400_Vs_Patriot_and_THAAD#.W8HZKtczbcc). Accessed on December 13, 2018.

resistant phased array radar to detect aerial targets, 6-8 air-defence missile complexes (with up to 12 transporter-launchers, and also a multi-functional four-coordinate illumination and detection radar), a technical support system, a missile transporting vehicle and a training simulator. It can also additionally include an all-altitude radar (detector) and movable towers for an antenna post.

### **IMPERATIVES FOR INDIA**

The Southern Asian strategic environment is under severe stress, with the introduction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), nuclear capable cruise missiles, and the nuclear brinkmanship of Pakistan. Surrounded by hostile neighbours, with a lowered nuclear threshold and an opaque and first-use nuclear weapons policy by Pakistan, India is left with no option except preparing for a robust missile defence system. For India's stated No First Use (NFU) position, and its resolve of 'second strike' or assured retaliation should deterrence fail, a robust defence against first-strike is an imperative. Given India's strategic depth and dispersal of its strategic assets along, with survivable sea-based platforms, selective deployment of missile defence would suffice.

The indigenously developed Prithvi-based missile defence system or the integrated air defence system codenamed Programme AD that comprises several types of radars, command-control network and missiles, is planned to be deployed around major cities and other strategic assets. The two-tier Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system intends to provide a multi-layered shield against ballistic missile attacks.

The ballistic missile threat does indeed remain a great concern but it is not the only form of missile contingency in which entities might threaten India. The missile inventory and capability build-up by China, Pakistan and the nexus between them suggests that though the threat of ballistic missiles remains credible, their rapidly increasing cruise missile inventory also necessitates that India revisit its missile defence strategy. Though India has achieved substantial headway in BMD preparedness, a combination of the ballistic and cruise missile threat could severely complicate and stress its BMD-only strategy. Unless its missile defence functions more effectively



to address ballistic, cruise, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) threats alike—a concept formally called “integrated air and missile defence”—India will fall prey to a the critical combination of missile threats. To bridge the gap in defending against multiple threats, and to put in place a back-up to the BMD structure, an overarching missile defence architecture is an imperative for India.

The S-400 system aptly fits into India’s air defence scheme due to its open architecture modular, allowing the Indian Air Force (IAF) to integrate other extremely capable short and medium range aerial defence systems like the MR-SAM, Akash and QR-SAM under a single aerial defence architecture. Especially, the Programme AD “will find a connect with the S-400 system...,” says V.K. Saraswat, former head of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and father of the Indian ballistic missile defence programme. He further says, “Besides air defence, the S-400 is also an anti-missile system and will, therefore, complement the indigenous capability as contained in the Programme AD.... The fire units of the Programme AD system and S-400 system could be deployed complementing each other.”<sup>5</sup> According to Lt Gen V.K. Saxena, both the S-400 and Progamme AD will have to have an integrated command and control and battle management system which will integrate multifarious sensors and shooters of the air defence and anti-missiles system into one seamless loop.<sup>6</sup>

### THE “MILITARY CRITICALITY”

The deal has sparked off a debate over the ‘military criticality’ of the system for India and its regional strategic implications. Will the system be cost-effective for battlefield utilisation? If the system is meant for the ‘offensive air defence’ role, rather than the defensive, will it impact India’s nuclear use posture that is currently based on the NFU doctrine? Will the S-400 system meet India’s 360° air defence requirements, or will India need to look for other systems for the protection of its high-value targets? Will Russia fulfill the offsets requirements through the transfer of technology? Pravin Sawhney, while terming the S-400 deal as “good news for India and its military”,

5. R Prasannan, “Why is India Eyeing Putin’s S-400?”, *The Week*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2018/09/27/Why-is-India-eyeing-Putin-S-400.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

6. Ibid.

enquires into the 'military criticality' of the system.<sup>7</sup>

First, "India plans to buy five regiments/units or 40 launchers (each regiment/ unit will have two batteries with four launchers each), and about 1,000 missiles. Interestingly, 70% of the purchased missiles are of very long range (400 km) and long range (350 km) category and the rest have lower ranges of 300 km and 250 km. The S-400 surveillance radar with the range of 600 km and 360 degree coverage can track 70 targets." Second, "The S-400 will have no transfer of technology or defence offsets, but Russia has agreed to set up maintenance facilities in India." Third, as the IAF intends to use the S-400 in the 'offensive air defence' role, India might need to purchase the United States' National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) for the protection of high-value targets. Fourth, the S-400, along with Rafael India, can effectively plug the gaps of fighter aircraft deficiencies. But destruction of enemy aircraft with expensive S-400 missiles would not be its cost-effective battlefield utilisation.

Lastly, through 'offensive air-defence', the IAF, with the S-400, can take out enemy Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS), and as viewed by many, it would work as the "Cold Start Enabler. ... The S-400 which can engage all types of aerodynamic targets like aircraft cruise missiles, including short-range, ballistic missiles, will give India strategic advantage that would raise the nuclear threshold and diminish the nuclear threats to India ... against the first strike by the enemies."<sup>8</sup> It would be interesting to introspect if "deployment of the S-400 system will also reduce the pressure on the Indian leadership to backtrack on its doctrinal NFU commitment and resort to a first strike if faced with complete deterrence erosion?"<sup>9</sup> Given the persisting speculation over India's nuclear doctrine revision and update, and the political party (BJP) that pledged to undertake this is in power,<sup>10</sup> the deployment of the S-400

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7. Pravin Sawhney, "How India Walked a Tightrope to Ink the S-400 Missiles Deal with Russia", *The Wire*, October 5, 2018, <https://thewire.in/security/india-s-400-missiles-deal-russia-us-caatsa>. Accessed on December 10, 2018.

8. Prasad Chawan, "Why India Needs S-400 Air Defence System?", *Indian Defence Research Wing*, March 4, 2017, <http://idrww.org/why-indian-needs-s-400-air-defence-system/>. Accessed on December 14, 2018.

9. *Ibid.*

10. BJP, "Election Manifesto 2014", Bharatiya Janata Party, April 7, 2014, [https://www.bjp.org/images/pdf\\_2014/full\\_manifesto\\_english\\_07.04.2014.pdf](https://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2014/full_manifesto_english_07.04.2014.pdf), p. 39. Accessed on December 10, 2018.

is bound to strengthen the sceptics' arguments on India's intention on its doctrinal shift from NFU to reserving the option of first use. Undoubtedly, this would spark a strategic chain reaction in the subcontinent.

### **DEALING WITH THE US' WRATH**

India has joined the list of a handful of countries to avail the most versatile S-400 Triumf air defence system from Russia. While China has already placed the orders, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Vietnam, and Iraq, among 16 interested countries, are currently negotiating with Russia.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to ponder on why all these countries are hell-bent on purchasing it, defying the US CAATSA Act! China has already had punitive sanctions imposed by the USA. Washington has blocked a few Chinese agencies and individuals from applying for export licences and participating in the US financial system. It has also added them to the US Treasury Department's list of specially designated individuals with whom Americans are barred from doing business. Turkey, on the other hand, is in the process of constructing a site for the missile system, despite warnings and threat of sanctions from the United States.<sup>12</sup>

President Trump has said that "India will soon find out" if it would be hit by punitive sanctions stemming from the CAATSA Act.<sup>13</sup> Almost three months have passed but no such measures have been taken by the US yet. The US Embassy in New Delhi had reportedly said that CAATSA was aimed at Moscow and

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11. "At Least 13 Countries are Interested in Buying a Russian Missile System Instead of Platforms Made by US Companies, Despite the Threat of Sanctions", *CNBC*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/11/14/countries-interested-in-buying-russian-missile-system-despite-us-sanction-threats.html>. Accessed on December 10, 2018.
  12. "Turkey Begins Constructing Site for Russian Missile System—Despite US Warnings", *CNBC*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/06/turkey-begins-constructing-site-for-russian-missile-system.html>. Accessed on December 10, 2018; Harvey Gavin, "Russia missile THREAT: USA eyes up more Turkey sanctions as Ankara IGNORES warnings", *Express*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1045982/turkey-usa-sanctions-russia-missile-s400-erdogan-donald-trump>. Accessed on December 10, 2018.
  13. "India will Soon Find Out': Trump on US Sanctions for S-400 Deal with Russia", *The Times of India*, October 11, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-will-soon-find-out-trump-on-us-sanctions-for-s-400-deal-with-russia/articleshow/66157531.cms>. Accessed on December 14, 2018.

not intended to damage the military capabilities of its “allies and partners”.<sup>14</sup> India’s plan to buy the S-400 was not a surprise for the US. India started negotiating its purchase of this system many years earlier, going back to the Obama Administration. Also, India had discussed the issue and the possibility of a waiver from sanctions with Washington during the India-US ‘2+2 dialogue’ on September 6, 2018, in New Delhi. Responding to a query, the US Embassy spokesperson reportedly said, “Waivers of the CAATSA section 231 will be considered on a transaction-by-transaction basis. We cannot prejudge any sanctions decisions.”<sup>15</sup>

Many believe that US imposition of sanctions on India would “send out a negative signal” vis-à-vis Indo-US ties that have grown steadily in the past two decades. The ascending strategic partnership between the two would get affected severely. India’s growing military ties and specialised equipment/hardware supply from, US under the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) would also get jeopardised. Since 2008, India has roughly bought \$ 18 billion worth of defence items from the US—11-13 percent of its total defence equipment procurement from outside.<sup>16</sup> Many US officials also view India as a “key pillar” of the Indo-Pacific strategy in the face of the China-US rivalry and one which the US would not like to lose. Sanctioning India would put it in the same category as China with which the US has a full-blown trade war going.<sup>17</sup> But can the US “make an exception for exactly the same ‘offence’ even if the US President has the authority to grant a waiver?”<sup>18</sup>

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14. Ibid.

15. “First US Reaction after India Signs S-400 Missile Deal with Russia”, NDTV, October 05, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/first-us-reaction-after-india-signs-s-400-missile-deal-with-russia-1927465>. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

16. Pranab Dhal Samanta, “S-400 Deal Gives US a Unique Chance to Spell Out Special Relations with India”, *The Times of India*, October 8, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/s-400-deal-gives-us-a-unique-chance-to-spell-out-special-relations-with-india/articleshow/66111287.cms>. Accessed on December 13, 2018.

17. Elizabeth Roche, “India Takes ‘Note’ of Trump Hint at Curbs over Russian Arms Deal”, *livemint*, October 12, 2018, <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/OE2Yi2G9Xm8ixw7aPV6wYP/India-will-soon-find-out-Trump-on-US-sanctions-over-S400-d.html>. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

18. Samanta, n. 16.

India needs to allay the concerns of the US through constructive engagements. First, India must flag loudly that the Indo-Russian relationship is not targeted against the US. During the last two decades, India has accelerated the diversification of its arms acquisitions away from Russia; even cancelled its high-profile involvement in the co-development of Russia's fifth-generation fighter; therefore, New Delhi will consider US sanctions both as fundamentally unfair and as a real constraint on its ability to maintain the diverse international partnerships of its choice.<sup>19</sup> Second, India has always sought exceptions from the US to catch up with China and the sanctions waiver would provide a "strategic dividend for Washington".<sup>20</sup> Third, India must assure the US that it will not compromise on "operating protocols and technical solutions" and will prevent exposing high-end American weapons in use or supplied in the future, to Russian systems.

### **STRATEGIC MASTER STROKE?**

There are many ways to look at the S-400 air-defence procurement deal with Russia. At the outset, it warrants a fine balancing of India's relationship with Russia and America, on the one hand, and calculating the repercussions at the regional level, involving China and Pakistan, on the other. In fact, India has put to test America's willingness to build strategic partnerships going beyond buyer-seller relations. According to Ashley Tellis, "Concertedly targeting India by attempting to obstruct the S-400 deal, however, threatens to undermine the administration's larger objective of working with New Delhi in the broader Indo-Pacific space—a strategic goal that is of particular importance to the U.S. Department of Defense and one that even Congress' most resolute opponents of Russian misbehavior can sympathize with."<sup>21</sup>

The Department of Defence (DoD) and the current Secretary of Defence James Mattis have advocated for sanctions relief for India.

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19. Ashley J Tellis, "How Can U.S.-India Relations Survive the S-400 Deal?", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 29, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/29/how-can-u.s.-india-relations-survive-s-400-deal-pub-77131>. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

Mattis took the lead in urging Congress to exempt some US partners like India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The Congress responded in Section 1294 of the John S. McCain National Defence Authorisation Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (NDAA) by permitting the president to exercise the waiver authority established in CAATSA if he can certify that the waiver is fundamentally in US national security interests.<sup>22</sup> However, India cannot simply expect a straightforward waiver, given the strategic nature of the deal. There have been reports that the US is willing to offer the American Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system which is a sophisticated missile defence system effective against long-range missiles, to India.<sup>23</sup> However, the US authorities must introspect on whether they should allow the S-400 deal to pose a serious risk to the hard-won and evolving U.S.-India strategic relationship.

As far as Russia is concerned, India has proved that its dealings with its trusted friend are devoid of third party influence. It may prove India's success in keeping Russia's strategic engagement in the subcontinent confined to India at a time when Russia is inching towards Pakistan. For the domestic consumption, the Modi government has demonstrated that India's 'strategic autonomy' which India so prizes, is intact. At the regional level, the S-400 Triumph would instil more confusion and nervousness in Pakistan's strategic calculations, compelling it to think, and waste its resources exploring an alternative strategy to maintain parity with India's upper hand. Also, Islamabad's frustration would escalate due to America's preferential attitude towards India vis-à-vis Pakistan.

For the above reasons, the S-400 Triumph deal with Russia seems to be a strategically advantageous for India. While the deal culminates in actual transfer of the system by 2020, Indian diplomacy needs to be proactive in engaging all concerned. As the national election is round the corner in India, all procedural work must be expedited,

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22. "H.R.5515 - John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019", CONGRESS.GOV, January 03, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5515/text>. Accessed on December 14, 2018.

23. Pranab Dhal Samanta, "US May Offer Air Defence System to Block S-400 Missile Deal with Russia", *The Economic Times*, June 27, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-may-offer-air-defence-system-to-block-s-400-deal-with-russia/articleshow/64753870.cms>. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

lest the final supply of the system gets delayed, proving to be a pipe dream for the complex nature of the deal and critical role of multiple stakeholders.

# CONSIDERING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-NEGOTIATIONS: A CASE OF THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

**SHRABANA BARUA**

## INTRODUCTION

Negotiation is a vital, rational and effective means of finding solutions to many problems and conflicts between varied actors in the interconnected world. It leads to a mid-way between two conflicting sides, involving some give and take, depending on the willingness of the parties. As Zartman puts it, parties decide to negotiate when they perceive the distribution of power between them moving towards equality.<sup>1</sup> When the cost of swords outweighs that of words, two parties realise the scope that negotiation could provide to resolve matters. Given that negotiation is rational and viable, it still leaves issues unresolved, parties dissatisfied and agreements derailed, taking parties back to the use of swords. It cannot be taken for granted that willingness and virtue of formal words alone are adequate for negotiations to be successful. It is in such cases that the essence of

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1. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.234.



pre-negotiation and the worth of informal talks come to the surface. In this paper, it is argued that besides the formal processes involved in negotiation, the process of pre-negotiation and the informal means of dealing with the opposite side create greater scope of success for negotiations. The *first* section defines pre-negotiation as a rather informal 'stage' that decides the course of the following formal negotiation. The *second* section aims to bring out the virtues and importance of pre-negotiation as an essential stage. It is along the lines of Saunders' claims that a broader theory of pre-negotiation has been demanded. The *third* section highlights the importance of pre-negotiation and informal talks through the case of the Open Skies Treaty where it enabled the success of the negotiation. The success of the treaty has been attributed to the progress the parties made during the informal meetings between the formal conferences and the pre-negotiations that took place for years. Focussing beyond formal negotiations has much in store that needs to be brought to light.

#### **PRE-NEGOTIATION: WHAT IT TAKES TO REACH THE NEGOTIATING TABLE**

Fred Charles Ikle, in his book *How Nations Negotiate* points out that two elements are essential if nations have to get to the negotiating table: common interest and common conflict. Without the former, there is nothing to negotiate for, and without the latter, nothing to negotiate about.<sup>2</sup> Once common issues are present, negotiation can come to play. He defines negotiation as "a process in which explicit proposals are put forward ostensibly for the purpose of reaching an agreement on an exchange or on the realization of a common interest where conflicting interests are present".<sup>3</sup> It is this explicit nature of the proposal that distinguishes the formal stage of negotiation from the preceding stage that has come to be conceptualised as pre-negotiation.

Pre-negotiation has no defined proposal in hand. In simple words it is the stage that indicates the desire to find a solution through cooperation. Pre-negotiation is a "negotiation about negotiation".<sup>4</sup> Yet it has immense relevance. It is a route that takes parties to the

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2. Fred C. Ikle, *How Nations Negotiate* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

4. Janice G. Stein, "Getting to the Table: Process of International Pre-negotiation", *International Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1989, p. 232.

negotiating table. Janice Gross Stein states that if pre-negotiation does not take place, it could be that the negotiation does not occur at all. If it fails, even then, it has an essential bearing on the relationship between the parties and what they conceive of each other, leaving behind some lessons for the future. If the pre-negotiation takes place successfully, it enables to setting of the limits, agenda and outcome of the whole negotiation process thereafter.<sup>5</sup>

When the pre-negotiation stage precedes formal agreements, the flow of events that come about becomes smoother than without it. Of course, there can be glitches that can cause termination or backtracking of the regular chronology of events. Yet, as Stein notes, "Getting to the table is more important than the table itself".<sup>6</sup> This statement holds true in cases especially where protracted conflicts are involved. The Arab-Israel-Palestine peace process can be cited as an example. Harold Saunders in his article "We Need a Larger Theory of Negotiation" has noted his experience about the importance of pre-negotiations leading to the Camp David Treaty and the negotiations that went on<sup>7</sup>. It is when parties realise the benefit of negotiation and acknowledge the desire to get into talks that the stage is set for the pre-negotiations. It is noted that pre-negotiations begin when the parties consider negotiations as an option and communicate this to the relevant parties. It ends when the parties agree to the formal negotiation as an option.<sup>8</sup> The actual event of sitting down for talks at the table only follows thereafter.

#### **IMPERATIVE STAGE OR PART OF FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS?**

Whether the pre-negotiation is seen as a prelude and part of the formal negotiation itself or treated as a separate stage is a matter that is often discussed. Daniel Druckman considers both concepts as related but having analytical distinctions. The pre-negotiation is conceived more as a process than as a context.<sup>9</sup> William Zartman writes that

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5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., p. 235.

7. Harold Saunders, "We Need a Larger Theory of Negotiation: The Importance of Pre-Negotiating Phases", *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 1, 1985, pp. 249-262.

8. Janice G. Stein, "Getting to the Table: Process of International Pre-negotiation", *International Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1989, p. 232.

9. Daniel Druckman, "Pre-negotiation Experience and Dyadic Conflict Resolution in a Bargaining Situation", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 1968, pp. 367-83.

the distinction between pre-negotiation and formal negotiation is less clear and “whether there is a difference in nature between the two, how sharp the boundaries are and how reversible the flows, or what the relation is to other contextual events in a crisis and regimes” need to be delved into.<sup>10</sup> Harold Saunders illustrates various phases of the process of negotiation and enumerates three stages as occurring before the actual negotiation process begins: “defining the problem”, “producing a commitment to a negotiated settlement” and “arranging negotiation”.<sup>11</sup> He does not clearly distinguish between the discrete successive stages, where one follows when the other is completed, because for him, the chronology or progression cannot be absolute. Yet, he highlights the need for an exclusive phase of pre-negotiation to better allow the parties to understand the adversary, define its goals and limits and remove the obstacles to the “peace process”<sup>12</sup>. Whether one terms this pre-negotiation phase explicitly as a stage of the negotiation or not, its importance cannot be denied. At times, the two processes of the informal pre-negotiation and formal negotiation may overlap, giving scope for going back and forth to the process without annulling it.

It is not to say, however, that no pre-negotiation is formal in nature. Formality here refers to the degree of rigid commitments and documentation of written agreements rather than their literal arrangement. Any pre-negotiation phase can be as formal in arrangement as the final negotiation itself. Protocols can be adhered to at all stages but the ease with which a party can discuss during this phase is markedly different from what it can do during the formal conferences of the negotiation. It is a stage to get over “psychological barriers”<sup>13</sup> and bring about the transition from seeing the other side as an adversary to searching for commonality to agree about.

William Zartman and Maureen Berman too identify a phase much before the formal negotiation occurs as the “diagnostic stage”, a stage of “bringing about negotiation”.<sup>14</sup> Brian Tomlim further enumerates

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10. Zartman, n. 1.

11. Saunders, n. 7.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Zartman and Berman, *The Practical Negotiator*, (New York and London: Yale University Press), 1982.

five stages of pre-negotiations between the USA and Canada on the free trade agreement.<sup>15</sup> There is a recognition that the pre-negotiation is as important a phase, perhaps more important than what follows and, hence, needs to be detailed out from the succeeding stages. Various writers have indeed brought out the importance of the pre-negotiation stage in various cases. Gilbert Winham has worked on a multilateral process of the pre-negotiation during the discussion for the General Agreement for Tariffs and Trade (GATT) within a structured regime.<sup>16</sup> Franklyn Griffiths brings out the actions of the Soviet Union during the arms control negotiations with the USA, breaking these up into four processes of pre-negotiation. It is this point that is being scrutinised here and argued that pre-negotiation essentially needs to be treated as not just a phase of the formal negotiating process but a separate stage in its entirety. It is only wise that pre-negotiation is treated as a separate stage and the parties made to meet as an imperative before indulging in the formal foray of talks. As Harold Saunders puts it, "We need a larger theory of negotiation" that bring out the importance of the pre-negotiating phase.<sup>17</sup> Thus, there is scope to work on a theory of pre-negotiation as a separate stage itself. The minute details and essence of pre-negotiation can be brought out if it is considered as the backbone of negotiations and given the attention it needs.

### VIRTUES OF PRE-NEGOTIATION

There are immense benefits of an elaborate stage of pre-negotiation. Some can be enumerated under the following headings:

**Establishing a Common Ground in Good Faith:** As Janice Stein points out, it is with the judgement that a fair settlement is possible, that two parties agree to come to the negotiating table. The fairness of the settlement is expected only if one stops perceiving the other party as an adversary and sees it as a potential negotiator. This transition can be brought about if the psychological barrier is removed and

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15. Brian Toumlin, "The Stages of Prenegotiation: The Decision to Negotiate North American Free Trade", *International Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2, Spring 1989, pp. 254-279.

16. Gilbert R. Winham, "GATT and the International Trade Regime", *International Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4, Autumn, pp. 796-822; also see Gilbert R. Winham, "Explanations of Developing Country Behaviour in the GATT Uruguay Round Negotiation", 1997-1998 at <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.kluwer/wcl0043&div=25&id=&page=>.

17. Saunders, n. 7, pp. 249-262.

good faith established. Ronald Fisher emphasises the essence of building trust in this phase of pre-negotiation.<sup>18</sup> If no trust is built, no progress can be made.

**Understanding the Situation and Broadening the Base:** Understanding the other party, one's own stakes and the situation at large is a function of the pre-negotiation stage. Zartman explains seven functions of pre-negotiations.<sup>19</sup> He clearly states that it is during this phase that parties are able to assess the risks, costs, real interest, requirements and participation that would be essential for successful negotiations.<sup>20</sup> A clearer picture then allows each side to search for alternatives before firm commitments are made. It further allows each party to figure out and consolidate its own policy in the domestic front. Many a times, public debates can be conducted to find out the acceptability of policies at home before making formal statements. It is an accommodative stage which strengthens the stakes, both at home and abroad. Griffiths terms this as a phase of "informal coalition building".<sup>21</sup>

**Developing a Ground Beyond the Limelight:** It is important that diplomatic practitioners know each other beyond the space of the conference room. It is during the pre-negotiation phases that such an opportunity is best available. Informal behind-the-scene meetings where each party interacts with its counterparts over high tea and dinner sessions to develop a bond have more to their credit than is apparent. Without doubting the fact that such meetings could occur during the course of formal negotiations as well, it is to be kept in mind that at the later stages, a negotiator is more restricted by rules and protocols, much like a party whip that one is bound to adhere to. Moreover, even a casual statement gets read under a formal light by the onlookers and media that can then be trapped into misinterpretations. Escaping such restrictions allows the building of a transparent base during the pre-negotiation phase alone.

**Outlining the Framework:** Pre-negotiations outline the framework along which formal negotiations take place. It reduces

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18. Ronald J. Fisher, "Pre-negotiation Problem-Solving Discussions: Enhancing the Potential for Successful Negotiation", *International Journal*, vol 44, Spring, 1989, p. 443.

19. William Zartman, "Pre-negotiation: Phases and Functions", *International Journal*, vol. 44, no. 2, p. 242.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 246.

the callousness of the process and sets the agenda, routine, time-frame, venue and even the sitting arrangements that are to follow. Disagreements and doubts can be sieved out at this stage itself to leave only the important and pertinent matters of conflict to be resolved and agreements finalised upon at the later stages. It is the common practice that secretary level persons and diplomats visit a country first to prepare the ground for the arrival of a head of the state who is to visit soon after. A lot of time is saved due to such a pre-negotiation phase.

**Scope for Stepping Backward without Derailing the Whole Process:** One cannot place a bet on the chronology of any negotiation process. There may be overlaps of the phases of pre-negotiations with those of formal agreements. As such, this informal phase provides an outlet to get back on working out disagreements even after the formal proceedings have begun. It allows an area where alternatives can be worked out, without creating bitter effects or derailing the process. The pre-negotiation phase is seen as one where problems are turned into manageable issues by eliminating alternatives. Thus, "formal negotiation can be considered more the selection phase and pre-negotiation the elimination phase".<sup>22</sup>

### THE CASE OF THE OPEN SKIES TREATY

The idea of cooperative aerial monitoring<sup>23</sup> was first mooted due to concerns of a surprise nuclear attack element, with the Cold War at the backdrop. During a time when there was so much mistrust between the two power blocs in the 1950s, a proposal was made by the USA to have an open skies policy. This proposal was announced in July 1955 by President Eisenhower as a start of an Open Skies Treaty. The motive of mutual reassurance was viewed with suspicion by the Soviet Union that rejected the idea of such a treaty. Clearly, for the US, it was a win-win situation. The Soviets failed the trust test in the eyes of the West at large, while, at the same time, despite its

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22. Ibid.

23. Max Mililkan first suggested the idea of cooperative aerial inspection to a small group of strategists who were part of the Quantico Panel formed in 1955 to help advise the US president before the Geneva Summit. The Quantico Panel found the idea useful. This was then forwarded through Nelson Rockefeller to President Eisenhower. See also, J. Boulden, "Open Skies: The 1955 Proposal and Its Current Revival", *Dalhousie Law Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1990, pp. 611-649.

proposal being dismissed, it enabled the US to maintain the secrecy that already existed in its policies towards the Soviet led bloc. In this situation, the adversaries failed to reach an equal ground on the idea of a treaty on open skies and did not see any loss outweighing the gains even without such a treaty. The ground for negotiation was not "ripe", as Zartman would put it. Further, this attempt was marked by a rather top-down approach within the USA. The proposal itself was characterised by a very structured regime that left little scope for the USSR to manoeuvre it. To some extent, there was an acceptance of the open skies proposal in principle among some Soviet leaders and strategists, yet there were problems with the terms of the proposal being too secretive. For example, while Nikolai Bulganin saw merit in the US proposal, Nikita Krushchev believed President Eisenhower was bluffing and that the US would never allow Soviet flights to overlook American territory.

At the Paris Summit in 1960, another attempt was made to push forward the proposal of having a treaty on open skies. However, the Soviet knock-down of the U2 high altitude reconnaissance plane put an end to the talks over having such a treaty. Yet, it is to be noted that until this point, all the talks about negotiating the terms of an open skies treaty occurred within a formally structured domain. There were hardly any informal talks or Track 2 discussions on the benefits of such a treaty. The two parties had not even arrived at a pre-negotiating table, leave alone a formal negotiating one.

A significant alteration of views, however, could be noted during the mid-1980s when the tide of European confidence-building in Stockholm rose high. By then, Mikhail Gorbachev had come to power in the USSR, with his ideas about *glasnost*, while George H.W. Bush ordered a review of the strategic environment by early 1989. The changed milieu saw the Open Skies Treaty being re-introduced in May 1989 by President Bush. This time, the scope of getting to the table was seen as riper than before. The treaty had further moved from a bilateral level to a multilateral one, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO's) acceptance of the proposal in Brussels in May 1989. It was also thrown open to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) alliance. Further, once the US had resolved its own internal inconsistencies, the American ambassador to Moscow

met with Soviet officials in September 11, 1989.<sup>24</sup> He briefed them on the outline of the treaty proposal and invited them to the negotiation table. However, he failed to ask his counterparts to outline their views, something that is essential in a negotiating environment. On the other hand, Soviet Foreign Minister Sheverdnadze handed over a letter from Gorbachev stating the Soviet scope for participation but highlighted three concerns which, however, were not taken up for discussion. This discordance is well explicated in Peter Jones' book *The Open Skies*. Jones writes:

Virtually no pre-negotiation had taken place on substance. It is often during this phase of pre-negotiation that the sides explore the idea in sufficient depth to determine whether a successful negotiation is possible. The Gorbachev letter indicated that significant differences existed between the nascent positions of the two superpowers but no effort had been made to explore these differences.<sup>25</sup>

This vital step during the process of negotiation is something that often gets hidden behind the glory and show biz of formal negotiations or is altogether skipped to fast-forward the process. Nevertheless, the virtues of having elaborate pre-negotiations do manifest themselves in many ways in the success of the negotiation process.

The Ottawa Conference between the alliances was scheduled for February 1990. Talks began to take place between the two parties and the NATO readied its Basic Element Paper (BEP) by December 1989, after many internal discussions on technical and political issues were facilitated, with Canadian and Hungarian assistance. But this too, did not help much. It has been argued that the eventual failure of the negotiations that ensued at Ottawa had much to do with the fact that the NATO countries were too engrossed in their own deliberations. They looked at Soviet concerns only as tactical and, thus, failed to use the opportunity of pre-negotiations that had finally arrived, to its fullest. Rather, the pre-negotiation phase went ahead with much haste

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24. Peter Jones, *Open Skies: Transparency, Confidence Building and the end of the Cold War*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); See also J. Tucker, "Negotiating Open Skies: A Diplomatic History" in M. Krepon, and A. Smithson, eds., *Open Skies, Open Control and Cooperative Security* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

25. Jones, *Ibid.*, p. 34.



which led to protocols being skipped in order to wrap up discussions quickly. A lot of technicalities were left to be sorted out during the formal phases of the negotiations. Unfortunately, that did not work well. This brings out well the point being argued in this paper i.e. looking beyond formal negotiation and giving due importance to the stage of pre-negotiation determines, to a great extent, the success or failure at the negotiating table.

At Ottawa, another matter that came to the fore was the inconsistency between the WTO-BEP which was viewed as evidence of the erosion of Soviet dominance. Here again, the importance of internal deliberations and informal discussions, before coming to the formal table, can be highlighted. The lack of pre-negotiation within the WTO alliance can be contrasted with the intensive discussions during the pre-negotiation phase within NATO. This then can be cited as one of the reasons for the inconsistency of the former, and the consistency of the latter once the parties were at the table. On the bigger front, the talks on open skies saw the organisation of a communiqué on February 12 wherein NATO hoped to resolve disagreements with the WTO at a formal session that went on till 3a.m the next morning, without much gained. Thus, as we shall see further, the efficiency during the informal sessions can be differentiated from the deterioration of it during the formal meetings.

The next step was that of forming working groups to deliberate on various matters. One fault of this process pointed out by Jones has relevance in the context being discussed. He writes:

The schedule [of the working group] restricted the amount of time available for informal consultations. With such a wide gap between the basic viewpoints of the USSR and the rest, it was vital that time be spent exploring issues in a non-competitive atmosphere. The schedule militated against this, however, by forcing the delegations to spend the majority of their time in the formal atmosphere of the working groups. This put a premium on the informal sessions that did occur. Indeed, it was during these few informal sessions that the basic structure of a compromise was eventually articulated.<sup>26</sup>

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26. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

The first of such informal sessions took place at Meech Lake outside Ottawa where the group discussions went on for long and more open deliberations were made regarding concerns over equal give and take. The second informal session took place in the Ottawa Conference Centre on February 24. It was because of these sessions in particular that a “Grand Compromise” was immediately endorsed by all which took the Open Skies Treaty a step nearer to success.

The Budapest Conference by April 1990 suffered the same structural faults of formality and speed as that of Ottawa. At the one informal session that took place, it became easier for everyone to speak up but the deadline of May 12 for signing the treaty could not be achieved. A hiatus followed thereafter until the issue of open skies was next taken up in September 1991. The interim negotiation that took place saw a breakthrough again during the informal consultations on the issue where the two alliances agreed on the ‘Irkutsk Formula’. This enabled another step towards success. Yet, this was no longer a pre-negotiation phase, as understood commonly as each party was dealing with the issues not for the first time and, hence, was familiar by now with the core of every matter. Nevertheless, when formal negotiations resumed at Vienna in November 1991 a basic understanding and compromise had been reached, with reinvigorated new stances on each side. A deadline was set as March 24 for the signing of the treaty and formal commitments were made towards it. Here again, formality for the plenary rounds had to give way for informal contact groups that had to put together the scattered texts that had undergone multiple revisions. In fact, as Jones put it:

The formality of the plenary structure was an impediment to progress. The plenary structure meant that the real experts could not discuss the issues, but had to communicate through their senior representatives, thus, preventing a free-flowing discussion.<sup>27</sup>

The Open Skies Treaty went ahead with a few more phases of negotiations and was finally able to meet the March deadline when signatures were put down and the treaty became a theoretical reality in 1992 (though some issues were still deferred for deliberations

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27. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

during implementation that would take another 10 years to come into enforcement!). The larger context of discussing this case, however, is to highlight the crucial role that informal discussions played in the success of the negotiation on a treaty that was hardly imagined to be a reality some day. The various phases of pre-negotiation played a vital role in familiarising the parties with the concerns before they came to formal talks. As shown through this case, the more detailed a pre-negotiation phase is, the greater is the scope of resolving issues at an early stage which, indeed, is the most critical aspect of negotiation between two or more parties.

### **CONCLUSION**

Swords and words have equal weight between adversaries, when one fails, the other takes over. It is a statement that has a resonating impact worldwide. It is civilisation that has taught man to make greater use of words today and give way to non-arbitrary means of resolving conflicts. Negotiation in this context becomes a vital, rational and effective means of finding solutions to many problems and conflicts between varied actors of the globalised world. In the complicated world of the 21st century, pre-negotiation even more so. Pre-negotiation looks like a small door for bringing adversaries closer, but if opened wide, it gives great scope for all to come through to reach success in international negotiations. It has immense advantages if seen as an essential stage and, thus, should be analysed in detail. The pre-negotiation stage allows negotiators to understand and discuss issues that cannot be taken up at the formal table. Besides, it helps in outlining the framework of the negotiations and allows scope for bargaining without derailing the process of the negotiations as a whole. It is in fact a stage that leads to formal negotiations. Pre-negotiation can ideally be considered a stage that needs to be seen as much more than just a phase of the negotiation, though no irreversible chronology exists. The informal nature that it can take further adds to its virtues. Its relevance holds true not only in cases of resolving protracted wars—it can also add to international cooperation by making treaties like the Open Skies Treaty successful.

# ETHIOPIA'S NEW CHAPTER: A NEW DAWN FOR LEADERSHIP

**SARVSURESHTH DHAMMI**

The drastic winds of change in Ethiopia on April 2, 2018, not only stunned the country but also the African continent and the world at large. Hailemariam Desalegn resigned and left his post of the chair of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the prime ministership of Ethiopia. A number of anti-government protests demanding economic and political rights, and freedom for political prisoners led Desalegn to leave office. The Ethiopian Parliament gave the command to 42-year-old Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia. He is one of the youngest leaders in Ethiopia. After Abiy Ahmed took charge as the the prime minister, Ethiopia has seen fundamental reforms which were unlikely during the previous governments. Within six months in office, Ahmed lifted the state of emergency, liberalised the economy, signed an agreement with Eritrea, marking an end to the 20-year-long state of war, freed the political prisoners, and broadened the space for political participation.

Ahmed also persuaded his Parliament to elect a women president for the first time in the history of Ethiopia and reserved 50 percent seats for women in the Parliament, which is seen as a huge step in the country's political system. However, amidst these reforms, Prime Minister Abiy

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faces the challenge to maintain gender equality, an annual 10 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, reforming institutions of national importance, boosting the lagging agricultural industry, and most importantly, uniting the divided ethnic groups which can lead the country into a chaotic situation. Moreover, unemployment, dealing with the debt trap, handling the menace of terrorism by Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda, and efforts for regional peace and development need continuous cooperation among the president, prime minister, local government offices and regional leaders. The present paper attempts to examine and analyse the developments since Abiy Ahmed took over the as the new prime minister of Ethiopia. It will also look at the major reforms brought about in the country and their sustainability.

## REFORMS AND CHALLENGES

### *Political Challenges*

In 1991, when the EPRDF took over political power by overthrowing the Marxist military government, Ethiopia adopted ethnic federalism and reconstructed the regions of the country on ethnic lines; which later led the country to division on the basis of ethnicity. Ethiopia is traditionally ruled by the Tigrayan ethnic group which comprises economically, politically and culturally marginalised people, dominated by other ethnic groups. As Prime Minister Abiy's father Ahmed Ali is a Muslim Oromo and mother was an Amhara Orthodox Christian, he has the support of the other ethnic groups. Abiy is the country's first Oromo leader to become the prime minister of Ethiopia.

The Oromo ethnic group was the group which led an anti-government protest for three years before Abiy became the prime minister of the country. Many protesters died during the clashes with the security forces, and thousands were arrested.<sup>1</sup> After coming to power, he initiated the changes in the political and economic system of the country. As he is a leader of the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) one of the four ethnic parties and the EPRDF, he has huge support among the Oromo

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1. BBC News, "Abiy Ahmed: Ethiopia's Prime Minister", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43567007>, Accessed on November 30, 2018.

youth as well as other ethnic groups, which helped in the successful implementation of his plans and policies.

Abiy's bold decision of reshuffling the Cabinet and the Parliament, with the half of the posts in Parliament filled by women were some of the major reforms, which got a positive response within the country and beyond. In a remarkable step, the Ethiopian prime minister appointed women ministers at par with male members in numbers; and the election of a new woman president shall provide a boost to the present leadership.<sup>2</sup> Ms Sahle-Work comes with tremendous experience—she has served in various administrative positions at both national and international levels. Her experience as the United Nations representative in the African Union will certainly help Ethiopia in establishing cooperation with international organisations, based on its national needs.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, under the leadership of Abiy, the Ethiopian Parliament also passed a law to free political prisoners who were jailed by the previous governments in the country. His administration released around 30,000 people detained (including opposition leaders, students, journalists and bloggers) during the Hailemariam Desalegn period under anti-terrorism laws.<sup>4</sup> The political reforms by the prime minister, however, came under criticism by the opposition as he changed the social-political status quo that had existed in the country for the last 27 years. Ethiopian opposition leaders demanded an explanation from him in the Parliament. His decision on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border agreement came in for criticism with articles claiming that the Ethiopian people should be the ones to determine it. Moreover, the opposition leaders and critics claim that Ethiopia does not yet have peace. There is a different opinion on socio-political issues, as stated by Kifleyohanes Anberbit, a renowned political reporter

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2. BBC News, "Sahle-Work Zewde Becomes Ethiopia's First Female President 2018," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45976620>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.
  3. Hadra Ahmed and Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura. "Ethiopia Appoints Its First Female President," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/world/africa/sahlework-zewde-ethiopia-president.html>. Accessed on October 27, 2018.
  4. Maggie Fick, "Ethiopia Offers Amnesty to Recently Freed Political Prisoners," *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-prisoners/ethiopia-offers-amnesty-to-recently-freed-political-prisoners-idUSKBN1KA1U0>. Accessed on November 15, 2018.

in Ethiopia statement on national television: "Why haven't we seen millions of people displaced in the past 20 or so years? Why now? This shows that people are not happy with the reform. They want to show that Prime Minister Abiy is incapable."<sup>5</sup>

Hate speeches due to ethnic conflicts are widely circulated on the social media. This cyber scuffling has led to differences between the Tigray People's Liberation Front hardliners and the administration of the Ethiopian prime minister which need to be addressed in order to unite the people of the country on the agenda of peace and development.

### *Economic Reforms*

Prime Minister Abiy's bold approach to liberalise the economy for the development of the state and ongoing work towards a future strategy will transform the socio-political structure of the country. In his views, Ethiopia cannot risk operating under the monopoly of a few business enterprises. As a result, the Ethiopian government announced a plan to sell the stakes of Ethiopian Shipping Lines and Logistics, Ethiopian Electric Power and the shares of Ethiopian Airlines, and Ethio Telecom. The selling out is expected help the country attract investors who will improve the foreign currency shortage and the working efficiency of the government. More importantly, this also signalled the beginning of the end of China's growth model in the country.<sup>6</sup>

Presently, the Ethiopian GDP is growing at 10 percent, but there is a struggle to create sufficient employment for the people of the country which may result in increase in violence due to the lack of opportunities. To overcome the challenge of violence to bring peace and development in the country, Abiy has dismissed charges against the diaspora-based media outlets, released political prisoners, started land reforms, engaged with exiled opposition groups and also mended Ethiopia's relations with Eritrea. These reforms helped the Ethiopian

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5. Andualem Sisay, "Will Prime Minister Abiy Ably Sail Ethiopia's Reform Ship Through the Waves?", *The East African*, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Prime-Minister-Abiy-Ahmed-challenges-Ethiopia-reforms/4552908-4804140-eea89z/index.html>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.

6. Ibid.

government to obtain \$ 1 billion as direct budgetary support from the World Bank.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in efforts to create jobs, the Ethiopian prime minister also met the US Congress delegation and discussed a wide range of bilateral and regional issues to help address the economic challenges in the country and the region.<sup>8</sup>

Most importantly, the increasing loan dependency of the government on China provides space for international actors to influence the internal politics and decision-making policies of Ethiopia. The International Monetary Fund has warned Ethiopia about its massive debt to China which may soon lead the country to an economic crisis. To overcome these challenges, Ethiopia requires inclusive and viable efforts to transform the rural areas which remain the backbone of the economy, and needs to develop a system to be able to generate revenue. Hence, to attain these goals, the prime minister, along with the new president, will need to push for establishing urban-rural economic linkages which will help Ethiopia to uplift the social, industrial and agricultural structures of the country.<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, the main occupation in Ethiopia is agriculture (Fig 1). It contributes more than 45 percent in the country's GDP, which generates 85 percent of foreign currency and provides employment to 83 percent of Ethiopians. Approximately 74 million hectares land of the country is cultivable out of which 15.4 million hectares is cultivated, and only one per cent land is irrigated by the farmers.<sup>10</sup>

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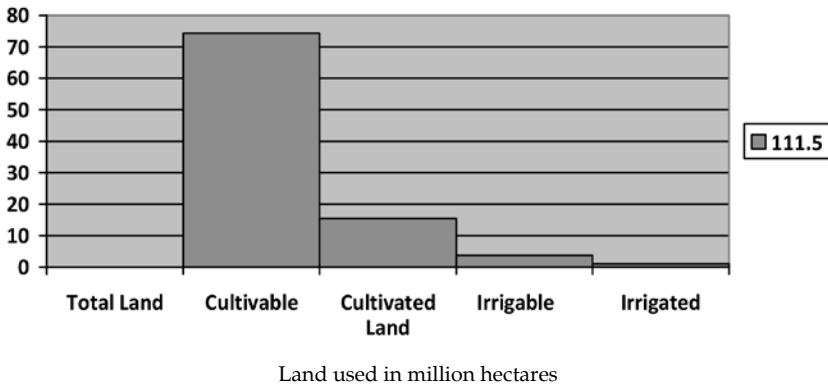
7. Abdi Latif Dahir, "Abiy Ahmed's Reforms are Emboldening Donors to Return to Ethiopia", *Quartz Africa*, <https://qz.com/africa/1371863/under-abiy-ahmed-the-world-bank-will-give-ethiopia-1-billion/>. Accessed on October 26, 2018

8. Abdur Rahman Alfa Shaban, "Ethiopia PM Talks Political and Economic Reforms with U.S. Lawmakers", *Africa News*, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/24/ethiopia-pm-talks-political-and-economic-reforms-with-us-lawmakers//>, Accessed on October 26, 2018.

9. Kwasi Kpodo, "IMF Warns of Rising African Debt Despite Faster Economic Growth," *Reuters*, May 8, 2018, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-imf/imf-warns-of-rising-african-debt-despite-faster-economic-growth-idUSKBN1I9114>. Accessed on November 18, 2018.

10. Abera Deresa, "Achievements and Challenges in Ethiopian Agriculture," Presentation at 'Dialogue on Ethiopia's Agricultural Development', <https://www.slideshare.net/ILRI/achievements-and-challenges-in-ethiopian-agriculture>, Accessed on November 20, 2018.



**Fig 1: Agricultural Land in Ethiopia**

Source: Presentation of former Agriculture and Rural Development State Minister of Ethiopia  
 URL: <https://www.slideshare.net/ILRI/achievements-and-challenges-in-ethiopian-agriculture>.

There is a need to develop an agricultural institution at the regional level and give more economic and administrative powers to the local governments to formulate policies to be able to promote scientific farming.<sup>11</sup> Ethiopia, rich with fertile land and water resources, can change the course of the food deficit region. Prime Minister Abiy also needs to relook into the previous policies adopted by the past governments.

## Security

### Domestic Issues

Internal security has been one of the biggest challenges in Ethiopia which led the country into a state of emergency a few months ago. Abiy's administration has lifted the emergency and released the political prisoners, but there are chances that the state may regress into the same situation. Violence erupted between September 12-17, 2018, including in East Oromia and Somali and led to mass migration and humanitarian crises. This was a blow to the efforts of the reformist prime minister.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, different ethnic groups

11. Zemelak Ayitenew Ayele and Yonatan Tesfaye Fessha, "The Constitutional Status of Local Government in Federal Systems: The Case of Ethiopia", *Africa Today*, vol. 58, no. 4, Summer 2012, pp. 89-109.

12. Eyewitness news, "More than 1200 Detained over Deadly Ethiopia Violence Police," <https://ewn.co.za/2018/09/25/more-than-1-200-detained-over-deadly-ethiopia-violence-police>. Accessed on November 21, 2018.

held illegal rallies, leading to escalating unrest in different parts of the country. The minorities were attacked, and the prime minister's ethnic groups targeted businesses, homes and shops in Burayu.

There is a race for domination, and the Ethiopian prime minister is trying hard for a balance among the social, economic, and political structures. In general, 6 percent Tigrayans in Ethiopia are considered to be the most dominating force in politics and business which has resulted in clashes between the different communities due to the marginalisation of others from economic, cultural and political opportunities.<sup>13</sup> Abiy becomes the first Oromo; a non-Tigrayan leader of one of the largest ethnic communities and a fraction with traditionally dominating people in the country. He was attacked by a grenade while addressing a rally at Meskel Square in the capital. In addressing the state television, Abiy condemned the attack and said the blast was organised by those who wanted to undermine the rally:

The people who did this are anti-peace forces. You need to stop doing this. You weren't successful in the past, and you won't be successful in the future.<sup>14</sup>

He also added:

Love always wins. Killing others is a defeat. To those who tried to divide us, I want to tell you that you have not succeeded.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, while discussing domestic security challenges in Ethiopia, it is important to analyse the political instability. The EPRDF which has ruled the country for many years, landed into a political crisis due to bad governance, alleged violations of human rights and lack of freedom

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13. Jason Burke, "Ethiopian Prime Minister Vows to Stick to Reforms after Explosion at Rally," *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/23/explosion-rally-new-ethiopian-prime-minister-abiy-ahmed>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.

14. Al Jazeera and News Agencies, "Ethiopia: Grenade Attack Caused Blast at Rally for PM Abiy Ahmed," <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/ethiopia-pm-abiy-ahmed-killed-addis-ababa-blast-rally-180623075418193.html>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.

15. Jason Burke, "'These Changes are Unprecedented': How Abiy is Upending Ethiopian Politics," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/08/abiy-ahmed-upending-ethiopian-politics>. Accessed on November 11, 2018.

of the press. The selection of Abiy, a non-Tigrayan leader, gave new hope to the party by projecting major changes in the country's political system. Abiy understood the importance of being the governing head of the country. He knew that political unrest in the country might also lead to replacement of the EPRDF by another political group, and being the party leader, would finish his political career. As a result, during his address to the Congress of the ruling coalition at Hawassa city, he clearly said:

When an egg is broken from inside, it is life; but when an egg is broken from outside, it is death.<sup>16</sup>

He wanted to make it clear that if he was going to be given the responsibility to run the country, it would have to be on his terms. While analysing Abiy's way of governance, political analyst Mekki Elmogabi observes:

Restoring peace in the country should be the priority of Prime Minister Abiy. But there should be some kind of if transitional justice. He should also be smart when dealing with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Because of the ethnic politics of their country, it will not be difficult for those two groups to bring their tribes against the reform.<sup>17</sup>

### *Regional Issues*

The Ethiopian situation is highly volatile due to the border disputes with the neighbouring countries. Thousands of civilians have been displaced due to the Ethiopia-Eritrea and Ethiopia-Somalia border disputes. In 1952, the United Nations merged the small Italian colony with the Ethiopian dominated federation which was liberated in 1991, after a long struggle for independence. In 1993, Eritrea officially got independence, and from that point, both countries have had border disputes in which thousands were killed during the 1998

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16. Andualem Sisay, "Will Prime Minister Abiy Ably Sail Ethiopia's Reform Ship Through the Waves?," *The East African*, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Prime-Minister-Abiy-Ahmed-challenges-Ethiopia-reforms/4552908-4804140-eea89z/index.html>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.

17. *Ibid.*

border war.<sup>18</sup> Both countries signed an agreement on December 12, 2000, which, however, remained pending because, though Ethiopia signed the border agreement, it never agreed on its terms, which led to insurgency and funding of terror outfits in each other's country. Finally, on July 9, 2018, both countries declared that their war was over, and leaders of both countries agreed on a landmark agreement. After the landmark declaration, Abiy said:

The people of our region are joined in common purpose...we agreed that the airlines would start operating, the port will be accessible, people can move between the two countries and the embassies will be opened...we will demolish the wall and, with love, build a bridge between the two countries.<sup>19</sup>

He added:

We want our brothers and sisters to come here and visit us as soon as possible.<sup>20</sup>

This agreement came as a surprise not only in the regional politics but also for the the international community. Bronwyn Bruton, deputy Africa director for the Atlantic Council think-tank in Washington DC commented:

It's long, long, long overdue...but the speed with which it ends, it's shocking. It's shocking.<sup>21</sup>

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18. Richard Poplak, "How a Warrior Poindexter Helped Ethiopia and Eritrea Make Peace," *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/ethiopia-eritrea-davos-liberal-economy/567161/>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.
  19. AlJazeera and News Agencies, "Ethiopia and Eritrea War 'Has Come to an End,'" *Aljazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/ethiopia-eritrea-sign-declaration-peace-friendship-180709101214478.html>. Accessed on October 26, 2018.
  20. Elias Meseret, "Ethiopia and Eritrea Leaders Officially Open Border to End Decades of War and Tension," *Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/ethiopia-eritrea-border-leaders-abiy-ahmed-isaias-afwerki-reconciliation-peace-a8532516.html>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.
  21. Alexia Underwood, "The Sudden End of the Ethiopia-Eritrea War, Explained," *Voice of America*, <https://www.vox.com/2018/7/31/17595988/ethiopia-eritrea-peace-abiy-ahmed>. Accessed on November 27, 2018.

The Ethiopian illegal intervention in Somalian 2006 also triggered terrorism in the region. It created the big powerful movement of Al-Shabab. Before the Ethiopian intervention Al-Shabab was a small outfit, it was not powerful politically, and was a subset of the Islamic Court Union (ICU), which was an organic response to the conflict and civil war in Somalia. The Ethiopian intervention gave space for the growth of terror organisations. This can also be seen as a contributing reason for the rise of piracy at sea. Somalia is still in a state of civil war, and Al-Shabab is still fighting at the Ethiopian border.

### *Global Competition*

Since the Ethiopian military intervention in 2007, there has been constant threat from Al-Shabab, and Al Qaeda near the Somalian border which has profoundly affected peace and security in the country. In addition, armed rebel groups within the country, piracy and the indirect challenge of international power politics are yet other critical factors for Ethiopia's economic, political, and strategic independence. Notably, Ethiopia has/had never been under colonial rule except for a few years of Italian administration. In the later years, during the 1950s, Ethiopia witnessed the influence of the US, the Soviet Union and France. At present, in the globalised world where every dominant power is trying to pursue its national objectives, the Ethiopian government is witnessing the international influence. The growing influence of China is creating a hostile environment in the Horn of Africa (HoA) and a contest between the traditional powers which dominated the region is hampering the overall growth. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative and its debt trap strategy, parallel with the US' ongoing trade war with China and its ally, is a challenge for the Ethiopian prime minister. China's development loan to Ethiopia was of over \$ 20 billion.<sup>22</sup> As is evident from the examples of many African countries, the Chinese investment and philanthropic practices may lead to overexploitation of the Ethiopian resources and strategic position at both regional and international levels.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Kwasi Kpodo, "IMF Warns of Rising African Debt Despite Faster Economic Growth," *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-imf/imf-warns-of-rising-african-debt-despite-faster-economic-growth-idUSKBN1I9114>. Accessed on November 15, 2018.

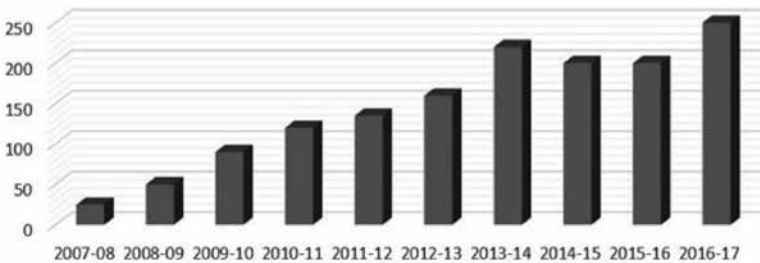
23. *Ibid.*

## OPTIONS BEFORE INDIA

In this challenging political environment, India can help Ethiopia without getting into the power politics. India can offer assistance through its experience in agriculture, education, the health sector and information technology, especially through the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for the remote sensing information which is Ethiopia's basic requirement. India's diplomatic ties with Ethiopia were initiated in the early 1950s and the past decade has witnessed efforts to enhance and strengthen the economic and strategic partnerships. Both countries acknowledged the long-standing bilateral relations and desire to strengthen commercial, industrial, educational, technical, scientific and cultural cooperation as evident during the visit of India's president in October 2017.<sup>24</sup>

Ethiopia has become the largest recipient of India's Line of Credit in the African continent. Since 1969, the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme has helped Ethiopia in capacity building, leading to building of goodwill between the defence personal and civilians of the two countries. There has been a ten-fold increase in ITEC projects in Ethiopia (Fig 3).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, India had committed to provide US\$ 1 billion aid in 2015.

**Fig 2: Number of ITEC Slots Allocated to Ethiopia**



Source: India's "Economic Diplomacy with Ethiopia", URL: <https://idsa.in/africatrends/indias-economic-diplomacy-with-ethiopia>.

24. MEA Media Centre Document, "India-Ethiopia Joint Statement during the State Visit of President to Ethiopia", [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29132/IndiaEthiopia\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_during\\_the\\_State\\_Visit\\_of\\_President\\_to\\_Ethiopia\\_46\\_October\\_2017](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29132/IndiaEthiopia_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_Visit_of_President_to_Ethiopia_46_October_2017). Accessed on November 1, 2018.

25. ITEC programme provides grants in education, agricultural assistance, capacity-building and energy generation and supply in Ethiopia.

However, there was a delay in the development of the Tehndaho integrated sugar project, including a major setback as Ethiopia preferred China's funding for the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway line. Ethiopia then requested to utilise the same money for infrastructure projects and power transmission lines. India's support in various development projects can help Prime Minister Abye to achieve the country's developmental goals.

## CONCLUSION

Africa's youngest national leader has a great desire to change Ethiopia into a peaceful and developing country. However, his rapid reforms have raised a number of doubts among the national and international communities about his political and strategic ambitions. Despite these doubts, his initiatives have overall been welcomed by most of the factions in the country. His remarkable steps to appoint women ministers at par with male members in numbers and the election of a new woman president shall provide a boost to his leadership. The newly appointed President Ms Sahle-Work comes with tremendous experience having served in various administrative positions at both national and international levels. This level of political power symbolises the changing dynamics of Ethiopia and the African continent because women have hardly been part of the active and robust political establishment. Her experience as the United Nations representative in the African Union will certainly help Ethiopia in establishing cooperation with international organisations in protecting its interests based on national needs.

A massive shift in the political system comprises a significant dawn for African politics, where child marriage, harassment, high rates of rape and illiteracy among women are common. If Prime Minister Abiy succeeds in achieving unity in the country, providing employment, decreasing the loan dependency and keeping the country away from the Chinese debt trap diplomacy, he would revolutionise, and set an example of, significant reforms in Africa. For socio-economic development, the prime minister requires an inclusive and viable effort for transforming rural Ethiopia, which has played a critical role in sustaining and boosting the Ethiopian economy and has remained a major source of generating revenue to keep the progress intact. Hence, to attain these goals, Abiy needs to push for establishing urban-rural economic linkages which will help Ethiopia to uplift the social, industrial and agricultural structures of the country.

# ANALYSING SAARC AND BIMSTEC: CAN INDIA ATTAIN A BALANCE?

JAYESH KHATU

There is an old African proverb that says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” This proverb underpins the success of regional integration and spirit of collectively addressing challenges in a regional set-up by the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to a large extent. It finds reflection in the Indian subcontinent as well. The countries in the South Asian region face varied challenges, including non-traditional security threats like terrorism, climate change, poverty, water scarcity and energy security issues which are not just country specific but have larger regional connotations. Addressing the same requires devising regional strategies and, thus, groupings like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) come to prominence.

With the signing of the SAARC Charter on December 8, 1985, in Dhaka, the SAARC was established. It was set up on a solid platform of objectives ranging from accelerating economic growth and promoting collaborative and mutual growth to strengthening

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cooperation in international fora and collective self-reliance. But, even after 33 years of its existence, SAARC has been unable to facilitate a robust mechanism for the economic, political and regional integration of the South Asian region. On the contrary, BIMSTEC has seen a progressive trend in institutionalisation, with the establishment of its Secretariat in 2016 and capacity enhancement with increased areas of cooperation. But it has been unable to achieve the basic target of economic integration through Free Trade Area (FTA) agreements and, thus, progress has remained at a snail's pace. India remains a major actor in both the regional groupings owing to multiple factors like its size, geography and economy; and their laggard progress questions India's leadership role and potential. This paper analyses the prospects and challenges which the fora face in regional integration and further dwells on India's response towards these groupings.

#### **POTENTIAL AND PROSPECTS OF SAARC**

Apart from economies of scale, benefits of free trade, common security architecture and democratisation in the region, regionalism leads to increased bargaining power in international politics and economic platforms. The SAARC Charter addresses these areas in varied capacities. It underlines the importance of promoting active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, a number of regional centres with specific mandates were established within South Asia. For instance, the SAARC Disaster Management Centre, India, focusses on disaster management and disaster risk reduction, as the South Asian region is prone to multiple disasters due to its geographical and climatic conditions. On the same lines, the SAARC Cultural Centre and the SAARC Agriculture Centre play crucial roles in promoting cultural integration and capacity building.

If the South Asian region marches faster towards regional integration, the biggest winner would be trade. While intra-regional trade accounts for 50 percent of total trade in East Asia

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1. "SAARC Charter", Charter of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, <http://saarc-sec.org/saarc-charter/5/>. Accessed on November 10, 2018.

and the Pacific; and 22 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, it forms only 5 percent of South Asia's total trade.<sup>2</sup> Booming intra-regional trade will benefit India as its potential trade in goods with South Asia is at US\$ 62 billion against its actual trade of US\$ 19 billion, which is a mere 3 percent of its global trade, and about US\$ 43 billion below its potential.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, according to 2014 statistics provided by the SAARC Secretariat, South Asia is home to 1.749 billion people: 67 percent of them are living in the rural areas, with almost half of the workforce being employed in the agriculture sector, with 42 percent of South Asia's landmass being under agricultural operation.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, giving momentum to agriculture research, providing inputs for policy-making, collaborative studies and capacity-building programmes can be achieved through SAARC for addressing low agricultural productivity and food security.

In addition to this, SAARC can be visualised as a platform for integrated human capital development in the South Asian region. The region is confronted with challenges like poverty, hunger, illiteracy and food security. It is to be noted that South Asia's share of the global poor increased from 27.3 percent to 33.4 percent during the period 1990-2013, with only Sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for the largest share (50.7 percent) of the global poor behind it.<sup>5</sup> Thus, collective programmes for poverty eradication, research, information and data sharing are crucial for getting the region out of the dark shadow of poverty and hunger. Intervention in the education sector is also desirable as South Asia alone is home to almost half of the global illiterate population (49 percent).<sup>6</sup> The SAARC principles

2. Sanjay Kathuria, *A Glass Half Full: The Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), p. 7.

3. Ibid.

4. "Areas of Cooperation: Agriculture and Rural Development", SAARC, [http://saarc-sec.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation/area\\_detail/agriculture-and-rural-development/click-for-details\\_4](http://saarc-sec.org/areas_of_cooperation/area_detail/agriculture-and-rural-development/click-for-details_4). Accessed on November 20, 2018.

5. N.R.Ravindra Deyshappriya, "Examining Poverty Trends in South Asian Countries: Where is Sri Lanka Among its South Asian Counterparts?", The London School of Economics and Political Science, The London School of Economics, July 31, 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/07/31/examining-poverty-trends-in-south-asian-countries-where-is-sri-lanka-among-its-south-asian-counterparts/>. Accessed on November 30, 2018.

6. "Literacy Rates Rise from one Generation to Next, but Challenges Remain in Region", *UNESCO Bangkok*, September 08, 2017, <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/literacy-rates-rise-one-generation-next-challenges-remain-region>. Accessed on December 3, 2018.

have recognised that literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning can be adopted through education.<sup>7</sup> Thus, regional cooperation in the fields of vocational training, skill development, institutional and infrastructure capacity-building needs to be undertaken.

The South Asian region struggles with the challenge of terrorism which has increasingly become trans-national in nature. For instance, the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, the 2016 Dhaka attacks, the 2016 Uri and Pathankot attacks remain cases in point. This necessitates promoting regional security in the region. For facilitating the same, there exists a framework for addressing this grave concern, namely the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism<sup>8</sup>, but little has been done to achieve its objectives. Therefore, 'what exactly mars cooperation in SAARC?' is the question to be looked into.

### CHALLENGES IN SAARC

SAARC has witnessed more hindrances than cooperation since its formation. It was actualised in the year 1985, after five years of its conceptualisation in 1980 and the problem of inertia has continued since then. Despite their initial reservations, India and Pakistan accepted the association along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, making SAARC a forum of countries with varying regime features, strategic perceptions and at different stages of economic development.<sup>9</sup> The grouping's functioning is hampered by bilateral adversarial relations. India-Pakistan adversities are considered to be the elephant in the room, affecting the timely and smooth functioning of the regional grouping. Similar instances of bilateral disputes between Nepal and Bhutan, and Afghanistan and Pakistan find no room for resolution within the SAARC set-up, raising doubts about the prevalence of peace in the South Asian region.

SAARC was formed on the premise that economic integration would have a positive spillover effect in regional politics, thereby

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7. "Areas of Cooperation: Education, Security and Culture", SAARC, [http://saarc-sec.org/areas\\_of\\_cooperation/area\\_detail/education-security-and-culture/click-for-details\\_11](http://saarc-sec.org/areas_of_cooperation/area_detail/education-security-and-culture/click-for-details_11). Accessed on November 30, 2018.
  8. "SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism", SAARC, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/Terrorism/Conv18-english.pdf>. Accessed on November 29, 2018.
  9. Lok Raj Baral, "SARC, But No 'SHARK': South Asian Regional Cooperation in Perspective", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1985, pp. 411-426.

blunting political differences between the member countries. But the dream of economic integration looks far from reality. Despite the existence of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA),<sup>10</sup> trading with neighbours is not 'free' mainly due to the long list of products that are not included under the concessional tariff of SAFTA.<sup>11</sup> Intra-regional trade accounts for only 5 percent of South Asia's total trade, compared to 25 percent in ASEAN, and intra-regional investment is less than one percent of overall investment.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions at present.

The South Asian region suffers from the Big Brother Syndrome characterised by the apparent ascendancy of India over the smaller neighbours. Countries like Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka have been supportive of China's full membership of SAARC.<sup>13</sup> China remains an ascending economic power in the region, evident from its investment projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's investment flows to the region are being augmented at a steady pace with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) being the flagship project of the BRI. These investments possess strategic significance for Beijing as it marches ahead to boost its access and increase its footprint in the Indian Ocean, along with outweighing India's influence in the region.

Terrorism has made cooperation in SAARC an arduous task. The issue of terrorism has even led to the cancellation of the 19th SAARC Summit that was to be held in Islamabad in 2016 when India had voiced its alarming concern over state-sponsored terrorism originating from the Pakistani soil. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka supported India's concerns and

10. The South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) is the free trade arrangement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The agreement came into place in 2006, succeeding the 1993 SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement. SAFTA signatory countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

11. "Realizing the Promise of Regional Trade in South Asia", The World Bank, October 09, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2018/10/09/realizing-the-promise-of-regional-trade-in-south-asia>. Accessed on November 10, 2018.

12. "One South Asia", The World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/south-asia-regional-integration>. Accessed on November 9, 2018.

13. Tanvi Madan, "A Role for China in SAARC?", *Brookings Report*, November 20, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/reinvigorating-saarc-indias-opportunities-and-challenges-2/>. Accessed on November 10, 2018.

this led to a mass boycott of the 19th SAARC Summit. Similar apprehensions have surfaced now when talk of holding the 20th SAARC Summit has come up in Pakistan. The vexed issue of holding the next summit in Islamabad questions the workability of this regional forum.

### **IMPORTANCE OF BIMSTEC**

The Bangkok Declaration laid the foundation of BIMSTEC on June 6, 1997. Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four member states with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). Following the inclusion of Myanmar on December 22, 1997, during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the group was renamed 'BIMST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC).<sup>14</sup>

The Bay of Bengal region is home to around 1.5 billion people constituting around 22 percent of the global population, with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a US\$ 2.7 trillion economy.<sup>15</sup> In the last five years, BIMSTEC member states have been able to sustain an average 6.5 percent economic growth trajectory despite the global financial meltdown ([www.bimstec.org](http://www.bimstec.org)). Thus, the forum carries a lot of economic potential, favourable for fruitful engagement. Moreover, BIMSTEC has been viewed as a key pillar of India's Act East Policy, addressing infrastructure development and connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It forms an integral part of India's quest for developing its northeastern region by connecting it with the Southeast Asian economies. The role of Bangladesh and Myanmar, both BIMSTEC countries, remains crucial in this regard. The Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport project and the Asian Trilateral Highway are examples of regional connectivity initiatives, forming the bases of success of BIMSTEC.

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14. BIMSTEC, "About BIMSTEC", [https://bimstec.org/?page\\_id=189](https://bimstec.org/?page_id=189). Accessed on November 1, 2018.

15. *Ibid.*

Since its inception, BIMSTEC has expanded its areas of cooperation from just six to fourteen now,<sup>16</sup> addressing some very important contemporary challenges like terrorism, climate change, disaster management and poverty which affect the region on a large scale. Addressing the menace of non-traditional security threats, the organisation attempts to confront the new challenges emerging in the Bay of Bengal region. This makes the forum distinct from the old notions of regionalism, concentrating only on economic integration as the primary goal.

BIMSTEC remains free from the adversarial environment and undue obstructions due to the absence of Pakistan in the regional forum. Pakistan's reluctance about SAARC connectivity and use of terror as an instrument of state policy hinders progress in SAARC to a great extent. Furthermore, the existence of a big economic actor, Thailand in BIMSTEC, pacifies the negatively conceived Big Brother Syndrome in India's neighbourhood. Thus, the Bay of Bengal region comprises balanced actors working towards achieving economic, socio-political and security related goals concerning the region. Nonetheless, the question of BIMSTEC's efficacy needs to be analysed in some detail.

### **CHALLENGES IN BIMSTEC**

BIMSTEC is experiencing reduced interest of its members like Thailand and Nepal. It was primarily Thailand's initiative undertaken to address its 'Look West Policy'. But its non-participation in the first ever joint military exercise under BIMSTEC—'MILEX-2018'—remains questionable. Additionally, Nepal pulling out of the exercise raises doubt about the level of its engagement in the forum. These countries fail to match India's renewed interests in reviving the evolving BIMSTEC forum.

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16. Six priority sectors of cooperation identified at the 2nd Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka on November 19, 1998 were Trade and Investment, Transport and Communication, Energy, Tourism, Technology and Fisheries. After the 8th Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka on December 18-19, 2005, seven more areas of cooperation: Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Alleviation, Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Environment and Disaster Management, People-to-People Contact and Cultural Cooperation were included. Climate Change as the 14th area of cooperation was endorsed during the 11th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting.

The slow pace in institutionalisation is a concern for BIMSTEC which is affecting the realisation of its basic objectives of regional integration and cooperation. The forum has witnessed institutionalisation with the formation of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in the year 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, after a span of 17 years since its formation. Moreover, its first summit, as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) took place in June 1997 in Bangkok, following with the second one in India after more than 10 years in 2008 and the third in Myanmar in 2014. This slow progress continued with the conclusion of its fourth summit in 2018 in Nepal, with no major push with respect to the much desired BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) agreement.

Furthermore, the fact that China's influence in India's neighbourhood is expanding due to its economic might cannot be discarded. If that was the reality for SAARC, it remains an actuality for BIMSTEC as well. Talk about the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is getting a momentum with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the governments of Myanmar and China.<sup>17</sup> An estimated 1,700-km-long corridor connecting Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, to Myanmar's major economic checkpoints—to Mandalay in central Myanmar at first, and then east to Yangon and west to the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ)—opens a crucial gateway for Beijing through the Bay of Bengal to the Indian Ocean.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the case of the strategic Hambantota port in Sri Lanka being leased to Chinese companies exemplifies China's 'debt-trap' diplomacy model. China's footprint in the BIMSTEC countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar is augmenting with the expansion of Chinese President's ambitious BRI.

Sub-regionalism has not been a facile mechanism to be achieved in India's neighbourhood. The example of the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) stands clear in this regard. It was Bhutan, India's biggest ally in the neighbourhood,

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17. Nan Lwin, "Govt. Signs MoU with Beijing to Build China-Myanmar Economic Corridor", *The Irrawaddy*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/govt-signs-mou-beijing-build-china-myanmar-economic-corridor.html>. Accessed on November 15, 2018.

18. *Ibid.*

that preferred staying out of the connectivity initiative.<sup>19</sup> On the same lines, the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport project which was due to be commissioned in the year 2015 continues to progress at a snail's pace.<sup>20</sup>

### **ANALYSING INDIA'S OPTIONS**

Historically, India has been commended for its successful relations on bilateral basis. But, it is often argued by scholars that the 'Principle of Bilateralism' overshadowed India's commitment towards multilateralism and regionalism.<sup>21</sup> India is mostly viewed as a country of bilateral preferences. Therefore, it remains in India's interest to manifest its leadership potential by making the SAARC and BIMSTEC dreams a success story.

SAARC forms an integral element of India's Neighbourhood First policy which was evident in Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's outreach to the SAARC nations when leaders of these nations were invited for his swearing-in ceremony in May 2014. This zeal had continued even after that when the prime minister paid an unplanned visit to Lahore, Pakistan, to meet his Pakistani counterpart in December 2015. But, continuous cross-border firings, violations by the Pakistan Army; and the untoward terrorist attacks in Pathankot and Uri by Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups made cooperation difficult in the SAARC mechanism. This resulted in new zeal to invest diplomatic capital in BIMSTEC and talk about its revival resurfaced.

BIMSTEC remains a crucial link connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia and possesses its own distinct importance. The organisation needs a more empowering secretariat with augmentation in staff personnel and budgetary resources; and timely summits which aim towards more economic integration of the region. Thus, it is important to understand the different nuances of the resurgence of both the regional associations which have to be dealt with separately and with caution in a well-balanced manner by India.

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19. Suhasini Haider, "Bhutan Backs out of Motor Vehicle Pact", *The Hindu*, April 27, 2017, New Delhi.

20. Nava Thakurai, "Still Under Construction", *The Statesman*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.thestatesman.com/supplements/north/still-under-construction-1502635461.html>. Accessed on October 30, 2018.

21. Happymon Jacob, "Lonely and Disinterested", *The Hindu*, April 19, 2017.



To a certain extent, India has been unable to invoke confidence in its neighbours with respect to maintaining their territorial integrity and non-interference in their internal matters. There has been an atmosphere of growing mistrust between India and its neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal in the recent times. Political parties in India's neighbouring countries use India as a major issue of polarisation for opinion-building during the election season in their respective countries. As Prof. S. D. Muni remarks, "There exists lack of consensus between different political parties in India's smaller neighbours regarding the level of integration which they should have with India. There is no national consensus with respect to how much integration is good with the larger neighbour."<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is in New Delhi's interest to engage with the neighbours constructively for facilitating fruitful engagement. A genuine example of strong understanding can be carved out of the India-Bhutan ties, where, in Bhutan's parliamentary elections concluded in October 2018, the Election Commission of Bhutan had informed the contesting political parties not to use India as an election issue for receiving political gains.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to this, India can potentially work on deliverables and timely fulfilment of infrastructure projects in its neighbourhood which is useful in imbibing confidence in its neighbours with respect to India's commitment to their growth and development. Sub-regional connectivity projects like the BBIN MVA and India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway should receive a boost on a priority basis. The involvement of Japan can be considered a contributing factor for facilitating investments and technology deliverables in this regard as it stands out as a promising partner.

A comprehensive synchronisation of its domestic policies with its foreign policy objectives is certainly going to help India attain its regional objectives. For instance, New Delhi cannot think of continuous prolific engagements with Bangladesh where it aims at such collaboration on one hand; and not define the status of, and

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22. "Reprioritizing SAARC," India's World, Rajya Sabha TV, October 1, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-KGkMtiRBo>. Accessed on November 2, 2018.

23. Devirupa Mitra, "As Bhutan Goes to Polls, India is the Elephant in the Room", *The Wire*, October 17, 2018, <https://thewire.in/south-asia/as-bhutan-goes-to-polls-india-is-the-elephant-in-the-room>. Accessed on October 31, 2018.

action against, illegal Bangladeshi migrants in the state of Assam identified through the process of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), on the other. Thus, cohesion between domestic and foreign policy objectives becomes necessary to a certain extent to ensure the enduring trust of India's neighbours, thereby facilitating deeper regional integration in the South Asian as well as the Bay of Bengal region.

In the similar manner, new prospects of cooperation within the SAARC framework should receive stimulus as they are perceived in the BIMSTEC mechanism. India's efforts in this regards are laudable when it proposed a SAARC Energy Grid for intra-SAARC trading in energy as well as its initiative to launch the ambitious SAARC satellite. The BIMSTEC needs further institutionalisation, monetary resources and personnel. India, with its growing economy and development, should further contribute towards BIMSTEC's budget and personnel in the Secretariat for augmenting the capability and workability of the forum.

## CONCLUSION

The geopolitical position of India is a strategic boon to the nation as it provides direct connectivity with respect to engagement with all the members of SAARC. This attribute plays an important role in developing a hegemonic role for India amidst its neighbours. The neighbours should reciprocate positively in this regard. As Bhutan's former Prime Minister DashoTshering Tobgay had stated, India was not a big brother to Bhutan but an older sibling, similarly, the rest of the neighbours should come out of the negatively conceived 'Big Brother Syndrome'.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to this, it is important to recall that the first connectivity project in the South Asian region was proposed by India during the second meeting of SAARC Transport Ministers held in Colombo (July 24-25, 2009), with negotiations continuing during the sixteenth SAARC summit held in Thimphu, endorsing the

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24. Bikash Singh, "India is not Big Brother to us but it is Older Sibling while Bhutan is Younger Sibling: Bhutan PM", *The Economic Times*, February 3, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-is-not-big-brother-to-us-but-it-is-older-sibling-while-bhutan-is-younger-sibling-bhutan-pm/articleshow/62771033.cms>. Accessed on November 3, 2018.

recommendation to declare 2010-20 as the “Decade of Intra-regional Connectivity in SAARC”.<sup>25</sup> This was before Chinese President Xi Jinping’s launch of the ambitious BRI project and its flagship the CPEC project.<sup>26</sup> India’s noble vision of SAARC connectivity was put to a standstill when Pakistan decided not to join the initiative. Thus, the need for consensus-building is pivotal in the SAARC mechanism and members should act in the larger regional benefit, while disregarding bilateral contentious issues.

Similarly, one should not ignore the fact that the ten-member ASEAN grouping had failed to arrive at a consensus, and not issued a joint statement, for the first time in its history of 45 years during its 2012 summit in Cambodia.<sup>27</sup> Such a situation emerged out of the contentious territorial issue of the South China Sea where Cambodia still remains a supporter of China, an observer in ASEAN, against the claim of its ASEAN neighbours: Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam. This made ASEAN work under the shadow of its dominant neighbour, China. Therefore, the SAARC as well as BIMSTEC members should be cautious when they support China’s membership in the respective fora.

Since Independence, India has followed the policy of non-alignment in its foreign affairs, including in regional organisations. This helped India traverse the Cold War era without many scars. The same policy today has become crucial for India to maintain a balance with not only its own neighbours but also in the international arena while bidding for its own leadership role in the same.

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25. For further details, please see Focus Article, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18785/Brief+on+SAARC>.

26. For further details, please see [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c\\_134105435.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105435.htm).

27. Sovinda Po and Veasna Par, “Cambodia’s South China Sea Dilemma Between China and ASEAN”, *IPP Review*, May 3, 2017, <https://ippreview.com/index.php/Blog/single/id/425.html>. Accessed on November 2, 2018.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## **Constructing China: Clashing Perspectives of the People's Republic**

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## **BHAVNA SINGH**

Constructing narratives of history and knowledge remain difficult endeavours given the prolixity of arguments both in favour of constructivist paradigms and those negating them. The current book is an effort in this direction to fill the gap in narratives on understanding China's historical experiences and its current dilemmas through claiming for the Chinese their discursive right (*huanyu quan*). The author argues that contemporary Chinese intellectuals understand China's position from the coming of age of the Chinese people by enduring the three problems of *ai da*, *ai e* and *ai ma* that is 'to endure defeat in wars', 'to endure aggression' and 'to endure being lectured by the West'. Though their own narrativisation remains marred by the asymmetric relationship between power and the production of

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knowledge, they are attempting to present a view that is essentially driven by Chinese characteristics as opposed to the orientalist view of the West. China's angry young men (*fenqing*) argue that China should fight against the kind of reverse racism which advocates self-hatred and self-dwarfing (*ziwo aihua*) in expressing unhappiness with the current state of affairs, typically interpreted under nationalistic views.

State responses to developing Chinese literature have been varying, for instance, Wang Hui had diagnosed the strategy of "depoliticised politics" under Deng Xiaoping which manifested itself as Deng's two dictums of "no debates" and "development is the main principle", Hu Jintao propagated the idea of "harmonious development" to shift the emphasis on societal cohesion, and under Xi Jinping, there has been a drive towards balanced knowledge of China among the three traditions of traditional learning, the Maoist revolutionary tradition and the tradition of learning from the West under the canopy of the 'China Dream' narrative. The author argues that the previous attempts under the Beijing consensus (2004) and the "China model" have been insufficient to bolster China's epistemological quest as the West continues to exercise hegemony over the right to knowledge.

The author argues that Western conceptual paradigms such as empire, union, commonwealth, nation-state (*Guojia*) or civilisation state don't fit in with a China's historical trajectory and even the Sino-centric concept of *Tianxia* which upholds the Chinese as civilised versus the barbarians, is inadequate to represent contemporary China which is the reverse and holds Western values in high esteem. The book makes a curious case that China expanded not because there was an ethnic Chinese who invaded and expanded its empire, like the Romans, but because it was invaded and conquered by its surrounding neighbours. It also cites a survey done in 2017 to argue that Chinese nationalism does not necessarily boost government legitimacy as the victimisation narrative is not accepted readily by those who do not benefit from economic reforms.

The book points out that there is internal dissent on how the Nationality Identification Project (*minzu shibie*, 1953) was carried out at the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China

(PRC). The report shows that more than 400 different nationalities were named and self-identified, more than 260 in Yunnan alone. It was to deal with this issue that a large number of work teams consisting of linguists and anthropologists were sent all over the country to find out the real ethnic situation, guided by the Stalinist definition, but it proved less useful to Chinese conditions. The author argues that the Chinese government has been lax with Hong Kong while it could have easily assimilated it, with help from the PLA, despite the fact that Mao was against local nationalism.

The increasing salience of the term “greater China” results from the fact that the nation-state of China is still not a finite entity and that the PRC has successfully made use of resources from people of Chinese ethnic origin from other countries and regions. Even overseas Chinese prefer the usage of the term *huaqiao* to denote their association with the Chinese mainland—this is evident in China’s exercise of “racial sovereignty” in espousing the notion of greater China, for instance, the abduction in Hong Kong of book publishers critical of the Chinese government, the extradition of Taiwanese citizens from Kenya to China, and the Chinese government’s claim to protect Malaysian citizens of Chinese descent. The emphasis on the value of sacrifice is brought forward by the argument of Li Yining cited in the volume who argues that all welfare measures should be abolished so as to maintain the work enthusiasm under the neo-liberalist hegemony. According to this conceptualisation, a generation of Chinese are to be sacrificed, and the Chinese society could only progress if the gap between the rich and the poor is increased. The author highlights how this is completely in contrast to the ideals of Communism, and the *xin qimeng* narrative that emphasised survival of the fittest has exhausted its intellectual capacity and usefulness. The author brings to light that the second feature of the intellectual poverty of the Chinese enlightenment is its inherent anti-democratic elitism. The third feature of the intellectual poverty is its repetition of the May Fourth clichés and its inability to differentiate between liberty and formal institutional democracy. He also points to their refusal to be critical of modernity. However, the author does substantiate his objection to the Chinese standpoint and seems contradictory to the fact that the Chinese hold Confucius

values in high regard and, therefore, are inherently sceptical of modern views.

The criterion for selecting the Chinese political elite continues to be based on meritocracy and their attempts to balance complex issues like nationalism in the mainland with trans-nationalism in cities like Hong Kong and Macao. This also feeds into their endorsement of global capitalism. For instance, the *guan er dai* (princelings of the veteran revolutionaries) spend spectacularly from the Chinese state assets accumulated during the Mao era. The history of the Cultural Revolution has also been reconstructed to depict those who were victimised during the "Cultural Revolution" as the good guys, while denouncing Lin Biao, the Gang of Four and especially Jiang Qing and characters like Kang Sheng and Nie Yuanzi for the violence and disorder. On the social front, the author points out how China is still a gender discriminatory society in which women do more work but are less recognised, manifesting in traditional forms of gender discrimination. The author highlights how despite the fact that Xi Jinping's father was a victim of the Mao era, Xi himself does not complain about his experience as an educated youth sent down to a poor village during the Cultural Revolution (CR). In fact, he has defended the Mao era by saying that one should not use the second 30 years of the PRC to denounce the first 30 years. Even the historical accounts of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) are contested, as some policies led to disastrous consequences such as the mobilisation of neighbourhood and village farmers to produce iron and steel to fulfil production quotas; and the issue of the death toll number during the GLF remains unresolved. He concedes that Mao was also the ultimate arbitrator, interpreter and announcer of the narrative of the PRC's direction of development while the reason for the failure of the GLF was the establishment of large communes and the failure of the policy process. The author sums up by demonstrating how the fight against the epistemological hegemony of the American dominated Anglophone academia that privileges the disciplines as the sources of universal theory, gained very little ground in Chinese studies and China continues to be an authoritarian country under Xi Jinping whose reforms have been a body blow to the institutional reforms that Deng introduced in order to prevent the return of Maoist norms.

The book highlights the dilemma for the Chinese political and intellectual elite: a conundrum caught between national and trans-national interests. They are defensive of the Chinese state because only the Chinese state can provide them with the basis of their very existence. On the other hand, they want to join global capital and be part of the trans-national system. The author argues that China did not “liberate” Hong Kong by design as it wanted to use it as a window to the Western world of trade, business and technology. China is largely projected as a nation-state in the making with its foreign policies and international relationships largely consumed by border issues made better or worse by the burden of history.

The conundrum of the Chinese nation-state was compounded by the fact that the Qing dynasty run by the Manchus left a large but disintegrating territory. Its approach ever since has been strategically defensive but tactically concessional which means that while maintaining a Qing dynasty framework, China is willing to come to a compromised agreement on the basis of existing arrangements. The author also audaciously claims that the Chinese 1962 War with India was not Chinese aggression bent on occupying more disputed territory but rather sought a boundary settlement and launched the invasion in a desperate attempt to force India back to the negotiating table, which, from an Indian perspective, is difficult to buy. The author also suggests that TV programmes demonising the Japanese in the genre of narrating the Japanese invasion and occupation of China attributed to the massive production of anti-Japanese invasion TV programmes to state manipulated propaganda is outdated, which again is something that discounts the continuities in the overall policies of decision-making. However, the author rightly summarises that the West often uses legal ambiguities to evade China’s regimental behaviour, and to justify aggressiveness against China, it ends up constructing an aggressive China. The book is a good effort towards providing a large view of the debates and the literature on the subject concerning the discursive practices on China, but it lacks on insights or suggesting a new framework to construct China.

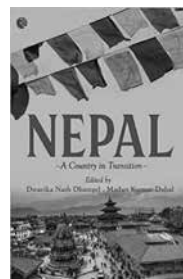


**Nepal: A County in Transition**

Dwarika Nath Dhungel and Madan Kumar Dahal,

Publisher: Rupa, India, 2018

Rs. 995



**RISHI GUPTA**

“A country between two boulders”, a loosely used ‘term’ by the historians, geostrategists, academia and policy-makers to define Nepal provides an insight of Nepal’s geostrategic location, its past and its politics. Modern-day Nepal’s history, on the other hand, begins with the conquest of the Kathmandu valley led by the Gorkha King Prithvi Narayan Shah in the 17th century, who has often been portrayed in the image of a strongman and a warrior. With each chapter having this element, the edited volume by Dwarika Nath Dhungel and Madan Kumar Dahal provides a comprehensive account of Nepal’s history, society, Constitution, economy, politics, foreign policy, national security and the challenges of governance and corruption, covered in a total of nine chapters.

Nepal’s political developments in the last 20 years have been an amalgamation of the armed struggle, unstable governments, diplomatic adventurism, and underdevelopment, coupled with poor governance and corruption. With a majority of chapters heavily based on the history of Nepal, the basic plot of the book revolves around the political transition in Nepal from an autocratic monarchy to present day democracy.

The chapter on national security almost captures the crux of the problems that have engulfed Nepal into a “non-performing state”.

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The authors succeed in describing the present structure of the security forces: the Nepal Army, Police, Armed Police Force, National Investigation Department, and charting several national security threats, including migration, trans-border crime and terrorism. Having failed to carve out its “national interests” (p.233), a country like Nepal, with immense geostrategic importance within, and for its two giant neighbours—India and Nepal—has failed twice to come up with a national security policy. The shortfall in this regard is due to “no unity of purpose amongst the various agencies that play a vital role in realising national security”.

Corruption is yet another “pernicious” problem for Nepal. In 2017, Transparency International ranked Nepal 131 amongst 181 countries, with Somalia being the last 181st country. The Nepali state’s current reputation in this regard is indeed a far cry from the past standards, spread over a wide spectrum of basic services bureaucracy, politics, and judiciary. Among these, most prominent and visible is in the sector of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and donors. The authors point that “NGOs in Nepal run a parallel government” and use heavy-handed financial irregularities as weight in influencing the socio-economic and political sectors to suit their purposes. With a large number of international donor agencies present in the country, involved in the development, infrastructure, and social upliftment of the country, the authors point out that foreign aid has/had opposite effects where the government and Nepali public have ended up paying more to the donors (p. 287).

The chapters on the “historical perspective” and “social structure of the Nepal society” engulf a wider note on the political history of the country, along with the ethnic, cultural, caste and traditions of the country. However, a commonly found blame-game on India in the majority of writings on Nepal finds another one in narrating the political history of the country. On the ethnic front, Dilli Ram Dahal points out that ethnicity plays a key role in understanding the basic features of Nepal’s social structures. Ethnicity is an inbuilt part of the sociopolitical system of Nepal, and also a parameter in defining the socioeconomic hierarchy within the country. A long history as a Hindu state due to its majoritarian Hindu population and its transition to a secular state in 2008 has been part of the political

transition in Nepal. While constitutionally, Nepal remains a secular state, the Hindu majority has become 'one of the avenues for social conflict between the so-called high and low caste groups and between Adibasi/Janjati.' The democratic transition of Nepal has failed to address the ethnic divide of the country, especially between the Terai and Pahadi and the emergence of the indigenous ethnic movement is a fine example in this regard. The author remains an optimist that a "functional democracy can lead towards the prosperity of all caste, language and religious groups of Nepal".

The Maoist insurgency, democratic transition and Constitution making are the crucial political phenomena of the last one decade. The ten-year-long Maoist insurgency resulted in the "loss of thousands of lives and serious damage to the national economy". However, despite the fact that the peace process was achieved with India's help along with the mainstreaming of the guerilla Maoist fighters in 2006, a Constitution based on democratic values could not be achieved. Having missed a good number of deadlines amidst political deadlocks, the present Constitution was achieved in 2015. Seen as a success by many, people from the Terai led agitations against the hurriedly completed Constitution. Events in the post-Constitution phase, including a blockade at the India-Nepal border, affected the people's lives. Meanwhile, the authors further allege that India was the *de-facto* player responsible for constitutional delays and internal ethnic problems in Nepal (p. 153). In the context of Constitution-making, Bipin Adhikari's conclusion is that "Nepal cannot even function within a democracy and the system of the rule of law". However, accusations on India for its "demands and pressure" on Nepal seem to limit the overall analysis of the constitutional crisis attempted by the author.

Chapter 6 on foreign policy covers Nepal's relationship with India, China, and its role in the United Nations Peace-Keeping Missions and other regional organisations. The chapter captures the very recent phenomenon in Nepal-India relations, including the developments that unfolded during and in the post-Constitution implementation. The authors choose to play safe by providing a general narrative on the troubled relationship with New Delhi. Meanwhile, citations in some sections, especially on India, seem to repeat the context instead

of offering a critical vision. Also, a discussion on Nepal-China is more like a political manifestation of the recent developments. Further, Nepal's relationship with the EU, UK and Canada is accounted for in bits in pieces. Major emphasis is given to the potential trilateral India-Nepal-China cooperation. The authors emphasise that Nepal "needs to focus on rising India and rising China and....how (Nepal) can benefit from their progress" (p. 193). However, "the foreign policy of a country is regarded as an extension of its domestic policy. It is for Nepal to sort out and settle its internal problems to the satisfaction of all concerned. In the absence of political stability, the economy is bound to be retarded. Only after a stable government has been installed, economic diplomacy becomes effective." The conclusion is yet another narration of repeated arguments found in other sections of the volume. However, the chapter on economic survival and growth by Madan Kumar Dahal captures the quantitative side of the downfalls in the Nepalese economy.

Overall, the edited volume is a timely additional on the socio-political and economic developments in Nepal including in its foreign relations. However, it seems to have been hurriedly completed, with least focus on the methodological underpinnings for such subjects which makes it more of a journalistic account on Nepal.

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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.

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

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

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

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