

# Quest for a Major Power Status: An Overview of the Challenges Facing India's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century

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## The Context

Ever since India attained its independence in August 1947 the makers of the foreign policy of the newly sovereign state-led by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister-were driven by two principal goals: retention of complete autonomy in the pursuit of its foreign policy to safeguard India's national interests and the determination to make a major impact on the course of post world war II international relations defined as it was by the cold war rivalry between the United States led 'western bloc' and the Soviet Union led bloc located primarily in Eastern Europe. This is not to say that the other objectives of India's foreign policy such as decolonisation, disarmament, strong moral and material support for the United Nations and peaceful co-existence in a nuclearised world were any less important. However, it was strongly felt that if the two. primary goals were not met India would not be able to make any effective contribution on the other issues which bedevilled the world at the time. As is well known the fundamental instrument chosen by Jawaharlal Nehru to pursue the basic goals of India's foreign policy, mentioned above, was non-alignment .which was meant to perform the essential functions of ensuring the autonomy of India's foreign policy as well as give it a significant voice in international relations as the heir to a great civilisational heritage. As has been recounted in numerous writings on India's foreign policy during the cold war years although non-alignment substantially served many of the basic goals of India the complexities of its regional environment-especially in relations to China and Pakistan-in the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s compelled New Delhi to substantially re-orient its foreign policy approach which need not be recounted here. This paper is concerned with the

trajectory of India's foreign policy in the 21st century taking on board the dramatic transformation of the world following the end of the Cold war and its consequent ramifications for India's foreign policy whose contours and character have acquired dimensions hardly imaginable even in the late 1980s. The scope of the subject is so vast that it is not possible to go into the details of the multiple dimensions and not just political and diplomatic-that contribute to the formulations of foreign policies in the 21st century. The paper will attempt to provide a broad overview of the principal challenges that confront Indian foreign policy in the present century. It will begin by briefly delineating the monumental transformation the world scenario underwent following the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. That will set the backdrop of the dramatically changed external milieu which posed fundamental challenges for the formulation of an Indian foreign policy which is anchored in the basic maxim of any sound foreign policy-namely continuity and change. As is well known the foreign policy of any state is a product of interplay of domestic as also of external factors. The paper will therefore examine the domestic challenges that India has faced and continues to face over the last two decades. It will then explore the external challenges India has to deal with in the present century. The discussion will be wrapped up with a concluding section that takes on board the current concerns of India's foreign policy makers and the prospects for the future. The post-cold war world scenario has been extensively covered in the vast literature on foreign policy. The collapse of the Soviet bloc led to the end of the bi polar world order and the emergence of the much talked about uni polar era dominated overwhelmingly by the United States. The Soviet

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collapse has been viewed not only as the final victory of capitalism over socialism but it also signalled the onset of a globalisation which seemed to herald the imposition of a market based era the world over. Along with the emergence of economics and finance capital as powerful factors the world entered a complex era which made it difficult to define the central trends, powers and forces that would seek to determine the course of international relations.

This is the backdrop India's policy makers had to contend with while determining and reorienting New Delhi's foreign policy in this new era. It had to contend with developments such as the emergence of the US as the sole military superpower, the evolution of trading blocs such as the 'North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, (NAFTA), the emergence of the European Union (EU) and the formation of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). New multilateral trading arrangements were set to be put in place under the auspices of the 'World Trade Organisation' (WTO) in which India has a large stake. Along with such constructive trends destructive trends such as the alarming growth of different forms of terrorism and international network of crime syndicates also manifested themselves. Other features of the present era are severe environmental degradation, an explosion of internal conflicts in many developing countries and the consequent displacement of a large number of people both internally and externally. (Hershe and Seethi: 2009:1-2). India was therefore called upon to deal with a radically different world than the one it was familiar with.

The changes in the world scenario also coincided with a dramatic turn around in the Indian economic and developmental strategy with the initiation of the liberalisation of the economy and the adoption of a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the early 1990s. This entailed a substantial reduction in the role of the state in the determination of economic and developmental policies making greater room for the private sector, maintenance of fiscal discipline through reduction of state expenditure on salaries and subsidies. Greater attention also needed to be paid to the social sector by mobilising additional resources. As has already been mentioned the challenges posed by globalisation also had to be met by devising suitable policies to deal with a shrinking world and the new forms of cooperation and conflict and the new sets of alliances and counter-alliances that had emerged in the new setting. While globalisation

brought new opportunities (India's information revolution and its emergence as an IT superpower) it also unleashed intensive competition on the productive units and the workforce in India's industrial and agrarian sectors. India needed to form international coalitions with other developing countries to modify the nature of international trade regimes through collective bargaining. (Hershe and Seethi: 2009:3).

In undertaking the efforts to contend with these challenges in the post-cold war era India's policy makers also had to, as has already been mentioned, combine elements of both continuity and change. It essentially meant in this context pursuit of specific national interests in an overall framework of geopolitical and geo-economic priorities. It also required the ability to respond to the evolving international environment. (Hershe and Seethi: 2009:4).

A review of India's foreign policy over the past two decades reveal the extent to which policy makers in New Delhi have been successful in dovetailing the elements of continuity and change in the conceptualisation, formulation and execution of policies.

There is a general consensus that any analysis of India's foreign policy in the 21st century has to take into account the dramatic transformation in the profile of India in the last two decades. In the late 1980s India had an economy barely one-third the size of Italy's. Today it is the fourth largest economy in the world in terms of purchase power parity and prior to the current slowdown of the Indian economy it had been estimated that in the not too distant future it would also overtake Japan, the third largest economy in the world. It is the 9th largest source of industrial output and 3rd largest pool of technical manpower. It is a modern sophisticated military power with one of the largest armies in the world, a well equipped combat ready air force and a navy which possesses aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and warships of all classes which make it a dominant force in the Indian Ocean region. The Indo-US civil nuclear agreement in 2006 and the subsequent endorsement and acceptance of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) of India as a legitimate partner in international nuclear trade has been interpreted by many analysts as the final inclusion of India as a legitimate member of the "nuclear club" which ended New Delhi's status as an international nuclear 'pariah' following its refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty (NPT) and its nuclear tests in 1974 and 1996. On the strategic front the disintegration of the Soviet Union signalled the end of Moscow's diplomatic, military and economic support during the later part of the cold war era which had enabled to balance New Delhi's vital bilateral relationships especially with the United States, China and Pakistan. India is today a rising power bracketed by many experts with China and poised, again in the opinion of many analysts, on the threshold of great power status. India's policy makers too make no secret of the national desire that the international community should acknowledge its potential to emerge as a great power in the not too distant future.

### **Principal Goals of Foreign Policy in the 21st Century**

It is worth our while to take note of the principal goals of India's foreign policy in the 21st century. As is well known to students of India's foreign policy while this country is not a pacifist it has always eschewed any aggressive designs against other states including its close neighbours. However, in the changed circumstances in the world material might and political influence are means and not ends to pursue interests and foreign policy objectives. According to policy makers in New Delhi the desire to attain great power status is primarily for 'defensive' reasons. It is meant to be a protection against external domination or intimidation. (John D. Ciorciari: 2011). Keeping this context in mind four broad goals for India's foreign policy in the 21st century can be identified. These are: 1. Increasing policy autonomy. 2. Securing the state from internal and external threats. 3. Raising the living standards of the people. 4. Winning diplomatic recognition as a leading nation. (Ciorciari: 2011). Experienced students of India's foreign policy will recognise that these are not new goals-especially the first, third and the fourth goals have been rooted in Indian thinking since the immediate post-independence period.

#### **1. Autonomy**

As has already been argued earlier this has remained the most important goal of India's foreign policy since independence. For that matter it has to be the vital objective of any state in today's world. Jawaharlal Nehru had made it clear as early as 1946 that an independent foreign policy free from any great power domination was the fundamental objective of independent India's foreign policy.

(Appadorai and Rajan: 1965: 34-35). Nehru made no bones about the fact that he believed that 'India is today among the four great powers of the world: (the) other three being America, Russia and China'. (Jawaharlal Nehru: 1984 & 1995). However these pronouncements were more rhetorical than realistic as in spite of having a large army and population India simply did not possess the material capabilities or political influence to fit under any reasonable definition of a great power. Since then India has acquired a great deal of military and technological power though it still has a long way to go to catch up with the established military powers of today such as the United States, Russia and China. Foreign policy autonomy still remains a central goal. The recent debate regarding the Indo-US Civil nuclear Agreement can be cited to demonstrate the sensitivity of the autonomy issue as the critics of the deal argued that it would compromise the country's hard earned sovereignty and independence. The memory of nearly 200 years of British rule still remains fresh in the psyche of the nation and any perceived or real encroachment on the country's sovereignty remains anathema to the people and the political establishment.

#### **2. Securing the State**

A second reason for India's governing elite to acquire greater national capabilities and influence is to ensure internal and external security. As is well known to all students of India's foreign policy the country is located in a dangerous neighbourhood with two hostile neighbours-China and Pakistan with whom India has fought wars during the last five decades. Its relations with these two countries have remained problematic since independence and the security scenario vis-a-vis Beijing and Islamabad turned so hostile in the 1960s and the early 1970s that India had to turn to the Soviet Union for strategic support to protect and preserve the country's fundamental national interests. The relations with China and Pakistan and India's security entwined therewith remains a cornerstone of New Delhi's current concerns and will be taken up in greater detail in a subsequent section. Besides confronting the external security dynamics India is also beset with internal security concerns. The independent India that emerged in 1947 is a mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional diversities. While the country has met with relative success in creating a credible democratic federal framework in defusing pressures from diverse and contending religious/linguistic and cultural groups

the effort, over the years, has become increasingly difficult to achieve the objectives in this regard. With demand for greater autonomy for states to restructure Union-State relations the Indian federation has been under pressure from diverse quarters. The onset of the coalition era and the consequent weakening of federal authority along with increasing ethnic and religious conflicts have considerably eroded the foreign policy capability of the government by sapping its attention and energy in managing these conflicts. India's hostile neighbours do not hesitate to exploit these turmoils. Other domestic constraints that preoccupy the government are narco-terrorism, crime-politics nexus, crisis of governance, erosion of values, rise in corruption and economic disparity regionally and among the people. (N.K. Jha: 2009).

### 3. Pursuing Economic Development

India has faced the challenge of mass poverty since independence. There is a close lineage between economic development and the ability of a state to pursue an effective foreign policy. It strikes some observers as unusual that India is a state which is approaching great power status while most of its population remains poor. (Ciorciari: 2011:7. These observers think that poverty can act as a significant constraint on military build up and economic liberalisation. For a modern welfare state safeguarding national interests in the pursuit of foreign policy also denotes ensuring the well-being and safeguarding the interests of its people. For a country like India it is vital that its policies are able to strike a balance between its quest for a major power status as well as eradicate mass poverty as it is incongruous for a state to be seen to play a major role in international relations while more than 400 million of its people (according to a 2009 Planning Commission, report) survive on less than \$ 1.25 a day. While there is a general consensus that India should have a major say in global affairs this will be difficult to achieve without eradication of mass poverty.

### 4. Achieving Status and Respect

Achieving social status and influence in international diplomacy has been a longstanding goal of India's foreign policy dating back to 1947. India's size, its heritage as a hub of a great world civilisation and its anti-imperialist credentials have always been considered by its foreign policy makers, especially Jawaharlal Nehru, to make it eminently worthy of regional leadership as also to a major role on the

world stage. (Stephen P.Cohen:2000). However, the governing elite has always felt that the country has not received the recognition on the international stage it deserves. It has never been a member of any of the groupings of the great powers that have dominated international relations since the end of the second world war. So far it has been denied a place in any of these groupings (such as the permanent membership of the UN Security Council, G8, a leading shareholder of the IMF or World Bank). According to Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul, India has suffered, as a result of this exclusion, from what they call 'status inconsistency'; (Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul:2003:1). In spite of their hard work even Indian diplomats have found it hard to earn recognition as representatives of a major power. The situation has however begun to change with India's impressive economic growth and military modernisation over the last two decades.

### External Challenges

As has been explained in the first section of this paper India faces a variegated plural and complex world order following the end of the cold war. All states have been confronted with the difficult choice of reorienting and adjusting to the multiple dimensions of the complexities the world presents today which have already been referred to earlier. It is in this context I propose to examine the principal external challenges India faces today. I will concentrate on six of them though this is by no means an exhaustive list as it has already been explained that the scope of the paper is confined to a brief overview which cannot incorporate every aspect of the complexities India faces today in its dealings with the world.

#### 1. Strategic Challenges from Pakistan and China

##### *Pakistan*

Forging a stable and normal relationship with Pakistan remains the toughest and the most difficult challenge for India. The history of the long drawn-out antagonism between India and Pakistan has been a familiar story to students of south Asian regional politics and has occupied front page for the best part of the history of the two states since their independence. The bitterness, acrimony and conflict that marked the partition of British India created a permanent divide between the two countries that fought four wars between 1947 and 1999. While India accepted the partition with reluctance and tried to work out a normal

relationship with Pakistan Islamabad projected a conviction that India was not reconciled to the creation of Pakistan and was bent upon its destruction. The Kashmir issue further bedevilled the relationship and Pakistan has consistently followed the stratagem that the internationalisation of the problem will work to its advantage. Hence, it has scuttled all efforts towards a bilateral solution as envisaged in the Simla agreement of 1972. The beginning of an insurgency in Kashmir since 1989 has given Pakistan a handle to harass India by actively patronising the Jihadi groups which primarily operate from the soil of Pakistan. This Pakistani sponsorship of terrorism and insurgency in Kashmir over the past twenty five years has not remained confined to the valley alone and has been extended to the rest of India as well the most telling example of which was the terrorist attack on Mumbai on 26 November 2008 which killed 166 people. The irony of the situation is that terrorism is currently taking a terrible toll on Pakistan as well and the challenge that India faces is to convince Islamabad that taking action against terrorists operating from Pakistan would be beneficial for both the countries. However the three power centres of Pakistan-the government, ISI and the army along with the endemic anti-India stance of the Pakistani army have frustrated all efforts of the government of India to convince Islamabad to rein in the Jihadi groups and take meaningful action against the masterminds of the Mumbai attack. The equation has been made far more complicated by the nuclearization of both countries in 1998. Under the circumstances the recalcitrance of Pakistan to take action against terrorism has made the job of beginning and sustaining a bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan which seems to be the only way out of the quagmire including a solution to the Kashmir tangle, a difficult proposition.

#### *China*

The attainment of independence by India in 1947 and the proclamation of the Peoples republic of China by Mao Tse Tung in 1949 radically transformed the landscape of Asia during the post-Second World war period. Jawaharlal Nehru had high hopes that an emergent Asia could be built on the foundation of a strong Sino-Indian friendship. However, things did not take shape according to Nehru's expectations and, as is well known, the India-China relationship went awry, primarily on the issues of Tibet and the disputed boundary between the two countries which culminated in a

border war in 1962 which India lost badly. For the rest of the twentieth century the two countries experienced anything but normal friendly relationship though the diplomatic relations were never ruptured and the two countries maintained regular exchange of visits at the official and leadership level during the 1980s and the 1990s.

Over the past six decades the world has assessed the progress of China and India in comparative terms- a competition and rivalry not only between two major Asian states but also between two systems - communism and democracy. This is not the place to get into a philosophical debate on the subject. However any impartial assessment would show that China has forged far ahead of India by almost every indicator of human and material advancement though India has scored over China on the issue of democracy and human rights. It however remains a fundamental fact of the early 21st century that China has emerged as the second power centre of the world after the United States which is viewed by many observers as a declining power. There simply has been massive change in the standing of China in the last 25 years. It is now the second largest economy of the world after the United States having overtaken Japan. Its GDP is three times that of India, has the largest car market, is the manufacturing hub of the world and possesses foreign exchange exceeding \$3 trillion.

As already mentioned India too has made considerable advancement on the economic, developmental and military fronts though these have not been as spectacular as that of China. India and China are viewed by the world as the symbol of the 'Rise of Asia' because of the impressive growth rates of these countries, particularly since the beginning of this century, resulting from the policy of economic liberalisation, the advances made by them in the field of education, science and technology, and the decline of the western economies, since the unfolding of the economic crisis that hit the US and Europe; there has been a gradual shift in the global balance of power, with India and China seeking to assume greater role in the shaping and management of the world order which was once the exclusive preserve of the western nations. (Arun Kumar Banerji: 2012:3).

However the simultaneous rise of India and China as pre-eminent Asian powers has pitched them into a sort of unannounced rivalry and competition. The hardliners in India view China as a threat to India's security; they point out that China seeks to contain

India through 'proxies' by arming Pakistan with conventional and nuclear weapons, by weaving a string of pearls around India, its convoluted stance on the status of Jammu and Kashmir. For instance it announced in January 1994 that it favoured a negotiated solution to the Kashmir problem and it was also opposed to any form of independence for the region which seemed to be a message for its long term ally Pakistan. (Partha Pratim Basu: 2009:56). However of late Beijing seems to have adopted an ambivalent stand by resorting to issuing (stapled visas) to residents of Jammu and Kashmir wishing to travel to China. This practice of issuing 'stapled visas' is also applied to the residents of Arunachal Pradesh which China considers to be a part of Tibet and therefore of China itself. The border issue remains unresolved and shows no signs of resolution in the near future despite numerous rounds of negotiations between the two sides over the past two decades. The optimists in India however emphasise the commonality of interests between the two neighbours in terms of combating the growing fundamentalist and terrorist menace, cooperation in countering climate change and environmental degradation, dealing with resource and especially energy scarcity, maintaining access to capital and markets and evolving joint strategies to derive benefits from globalisation which in their view out weighted the negative factors. China has emerged as the largest export market for India. It is also one of the large emerging investors in India. The present ground reality dictates that establishment of normal friendly ties is in the interests of both the countries while they continue their (competitive cooperation) projecting their major roles in the Asia of the 21st century. (Partha Pratim Basu: 9:59).

## 2. *Befriending Close Neighbours*

India is the recognised pre-eminent power in South Asia. Its close neighbours are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (Pakistan and China have already been discussed) India is the largest country in terms of territory (78 per cent of the region), population (1.2 billion), natural resources, GNP (78 per cent of the region) and military strength. Geographically India is centrally located in the region as it shares 4046 km land border with Bangladesh, 3310 km with Pakistan, 1752 km with Nepal, and 587 km with Bhutan apart from a maritime border with Sri Lanka. (B.C.Upreti: 2006:205). The inter-state relations in the region has been marked by deep rooted turbulence and

hostilities especially involving India and Pakistan which has already been discussed. Even besides Pakistan and India has major or minor border disputes with all its smaller South Asian neighbours except Bhutan. No other country of the region shares border with any other country except India. This Indo centric nature of the region has been a major source of discord. (Sisson and Rose:1990). This unique centrality of India has conferred on the region its common identity and image. It is also noteworthy that India is tied to these countries with bonds of ethnicity, language, religion, culture and other civilisational connections. However in spite of these commonalities India's centrality has spawned a negative image of India in the perceptions of these countries. India has largely been perceived to be a hegemon which is bent on imposing its supremacy on the region and is therefore a threat to their identity and independence. India's relations with these countries have been largely marred by disharmony, suspicion and apathy to a large extent. India has made efforts to counter this Indo-phobia among its smaller neighbours though geo-political and other factors apart from inherent suspicions have prevented these efforts to be converted to amity. (B.C.Upreti: 2008:204).

During the Nehru era India had accorded greater priority to international relations than regional issues. The factors contributing to such an outlook have already been discussed. However as also mentioned the 1990s ushered in a new world order where apart from other considerations the need to accord pre-eminence to regional policy, regional cooperation and regional organisations was keenly felt. Keeping in view this sentiment of the emergence of a new regionalism South Asia too, like other regions of the world, established the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Though SAARC was not created to be a platform for solving bilateral problems between India and her neighbours it certainly sought to provide an ambience and mechanism to address regional economic, developmental and ultimately even security issues such as tackling terrorism, drug and human trafficking. and also other problems like climate change, food security and regional connectivity.

While this is not the place to discuss the details of the functioning of SAARC and its successes and failures it may be noted that the organisation has

not quite come up to the expectations generated at the time of its inception in 1985.

India's South Asia policy has recently come under increasing scrutiny due to the fact that the unresolved disputes with some of the smaller neighbours is impacting adversely on its image in the world. While a detailed survey of all the bilateral relations is not in the scope of this paper some specific instances are worth mentioning. India played a major role in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. However, its relations with Dhaka have not always been smooth. Sharing of the waters of the common rivers, border disputes and uneven trade relationship are some of the irritants that continue to define the ties between the two countries. New Delhi's relationship with Sri Lanka too has not been free of controversies. The treatment meted out to the Tamil minority on the island nation by successive Sri Lankan governments since its independence from Britain in 1948 has been a source of discord between New Delhi and Colombo. India-Nepal relations have been relatively free from the kind of dissonance witnessed in the cases of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka though there were hitches between the two countries primarily on the issues of trade and transit treaties (Nepal's dependence on India for access to the sea for its trade due to its landlocked status). However, after the abolition of the monarchy in 2008 Nepal has been undergoing a profound and prolonged transition to a popular democracy and India remains naturally concerned that the political process in that country culminates in the establishment of a stable democratic order which would facilitate a more congenial relationship between the two countries.

The challenge that India faces at the moment in its immediate neighbourhood is the establishment of strong and enduring partnerships with the smaller South Asian countries. India needs friendly neighbours not only to concentrate on socio-economic development for itself and the region but also to project a positive image internationally. At the same time New Delhi needs to find a sustainable basis for friendship with its neighbours while retaining political primacy in South Asia which, though, should not be tantamount to the imposition of a hegemonic role in the region. Indeed a stable and prosperous neighbourhood is in India's interest. New Delhi needs to convince its neighbours that India is an opportunity and not a threat.

### *3. Partnership with Extended Neighbourhood*

As has already been mentioned the end of the cold war unleashed hitherto unseen forces in international relations which also offered new opportunities for India's foreign policy. In its desire to establish new partnerships in regions away from South Asia to wield greater influence and clout in international relations in the 21st century New Delhi has begun to pay more attention to South-East Asia and East Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region and Africa. It all began with the unfolding of India's 'Look East Policy' in the early 1990s. The policy was initiated as a significant step towards developing India's relations with East Asia, South East Asia, Pacific countries as well as the immediate neighbours of India's North East region which had got atrophied during the cold war. According to Lakhan Lal Mehrotra who had served as secretary East in the Ministry of External Affairs this policy is a response to the security threats posed by the Chinese and the great economic potential of the East and South East Asian countries. (Lakhan Lal Mehrotra: 2012). Subsequently India became a full dialogue partner of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)-the most successful regional association in Asia-and also a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Over the last two decades the policy has evolved from rhetoric to substance as New Delhi's policy makers realised the increasing strategic significance of the region with the world balance of power gradually shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As the South East Asian nations began to register rapid growth in the 1990s India began to feel the need to substantially increase its trade and economic relations with the South East Asian countries. The progress in this direction has been so rapid in recent times that India is now in the process of completing a free trade agreement with the ASEAN.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Central Asia has emerged as a strategically significant region for India. Prior to 1991 most of the Central Asian states were part of the erstwhile USSR and a strategic vacuum was created thereafter which has been sought to be filled by a 'great game' involving the US, Russia and China in almost the 19<sup>th</sup> century style. The region is rich in its natural resources such as oil and gas; it also provides the shortest transit route to Europe from Asia. With a strong consumer market the region provides tremendous economic prospects in an extended strategic neighbourhood for India in its foreign policy

priorities. Energy rich Central Asia would be particularly important for energy starved India which is expected to be dependent on a huge supply of gas and oil for its rapidly growing economy in the next 25 years. In the coming years New Delhi would be keen to enhance its profile in this region and also combat terrorism, drug trafficking, secure export markets and become an active player in a region neighbouring Afghanistan and Pakistan, the hotbed of Jihadi terrorism. (Rama Sampath Kumar:2010).

The strategic significance of the Persian Gulf region need not be recounted for students of international relations. As is well known it is the primary reservoir of the world's oil and natural gas. Over the past many decades India has imported the bulk of its oil from this region. The region has not featured for much in India's foreign policy considerations except for its dependence on oil imports from this area. The 21st century however offers opportunities to look at the region with a new perspective. As is well known millions of Indian workers are employed in the Gulf and their well being is a constant concern for New Delhi. There are vast opportunities to increase India's trade and industrial links with the countries of the Gulf region. Developing closer economic relationships could benefit millions of people on either side. It has also been suggested that New Delhi can replace bilateralism with multilateralism in its engagements with the countries of the area. Multilateral diplomacy can also bring in countries with whom India has not done business before. In this-regard, India, can follow the example of the ASEAN and seek the status of 'dialogue partner' of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). There are opportunities for a pro-active policy in this region. (Kingshuk Chatterjee: 2009:374).

Apart from a brief period during the non-aligned era Africa has largely been neglected by makers of India's foreign policy. However along with the rest of the world Africa is also changing in the post-cold war era and India will have to be sufficiently sensitive, towards these changes. Problems such as mounting debts ,constant deterioration of the terms of trade, bad governance leading to ethnic, religious and other forms of strife and the gigantic scourge of AIDS have made it extremely difficult for most African countries to cope with the challenges of globalisation effectively. In spite of these difficulties India has been quick to recognise the potential of Africa and has already

started new cooperative ventures in the areas of information technology, trade and military ties. There is the potential to collaborate with other developing countries in framing India's Africa policy. India needs to approach Africa with a positive and pro-active set of policies which would be beneficial for both sides. It can identify middle ranging and regionally dominant 'countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa to expand its network of ties in Africa which would further consolidate. Indo-African ties in the areas of trade, technology transfer and military cooperation on a reciprocal, bilateral and multilateral basis. It may be noted here that China is already present in Africa in a big way and therefore poses challenges for India's Africa policy in the 21st Century. (Hershe: 2009).

#### *4. Extending the Reach of the Defence Forces*

In 1962 India fought a disastrous war with China which exposed its lacunae in defence preparedness. Since then the Indian leadership undertook the rapid modernisation of the military on a priority basis. Since it lacked indigenous production capability India turned to foreign suppliers and the Soviet Union emerged as the largest exporter of weapons and weapons technology as the United States would not supply any defence material to India which was not a member of any of the US sponsored alliances and followed a policy of non-alignment. India's nuclear postures also underwent a radical transformation since the Chinese acquisition of nuclear capability in 1964 and the creation of a discriminatory nuclear non-proliferation regime through the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970 which allowed the existing nuclear powers-US, USSR, UK, France and China to retain their nuclear arsenal but imposed a prohibition on any further nuclear proliferation. India refused to sign the treaty on the ground of its clearly discriminatory nature and retained its nuclear option which eventually facilitated its path to nuclearisation when it carried out tests in 1974 and 1998. Thereafter India declared itself as a nuclear weapon state, created a command and control system and pronounced a nuclear doctrine which incorporated a 'No first strike strategy'. Acquisition of a nuclear status has conferred on India a deterrent capability vis-a-vis China and Pakistan which are also nuclear powers. However the military modernisation did not remain confined to arming India's defence forces with nuclear weapons. The steady and rapid economic growth over the past two decades has augmented



its capacity to further build its hard power capabilities with military expenditures rising by approximately 350 percent in nominal terms between 1999 and 2009 including purchases of more high end systems. Nominal expenditures rose from roughly \$10.5 billion in 1999 to \$36.6 billion in 2009. (SIPRI Yearbook 2000 and SIPRI Yearbook 2009). As already mentioned India has maintained one of the world's largest armed forces in terms of personnel and in recent years its quality has also improved.

Any state aspiring to a great power status must also possess the capability to project its power beyond its territorial limits. It must think beyond the traditional obsession with territorial defence and be ready to deploy forces beyond the border. Needless to add that India has not reached that stage so far as its land borders are concerned as it is pre-occupied with maintaining its territorial integrity vis-a-vis China and Pakistan. However, in recent years India's maritime capabilities have increased significantly which was not a priority before 1962. The threats that India faced before 1962 were in the landlocked areas of its north and west and emanated from Pakistan and China. Compared to these areas the oceans did not pose any threat to India's defence. However the situation began to change in the 1970s with the beginning of a superpower rivalry in the Indian ocean, growing terrorism and nuclearisation of the oceans. In recent times the increasing activities of the Chinese in the Indian ocean has forced India to give a serious thought to the maritime dimensions of its national security strategy. As the largest littoral state of the Indian ocean India is not only interested in ensuring its security; the ocean's resources are also not less lucrative for a rapidly growing Indian economy.

In recent years the South China Sea has also emerged as an irritant between India and China ever since India agreed to assist Vietnam in the exploration of oil in the region. China considers the South China Sea to be its exclusive preserve and is locked in a dispute regarding its rights in the region with some of its regional neighbours including Vietnam in terms of exploration of the resource rich sea. Beijing considers India to be an interloper in the region and would like New Delhi to stay away. India too does not like Chinese naval activities in the Indian ocean though both the countries have a common interest in keeping the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) in the ocean

free for smooth naval movements from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca. Nevertheless as long as India and China remain strategic competitors in Asia. Chinese maritime activities in the Indian Ocean, especially in India's maritime neighbourhood, would continue to pose a security threat to New Delhi. (Mukhtar Alam: 2010:85).

### 5. *Dealing with Major Powers*

As has been mentioned in the first section of this paper the end of the cold war offered opportunities for new directions in India's foreign policy. It also provided the setting for reorienting its relations with the major powers of the world. As non-alignment became increasingly irrelevant in a multi-polar world India also had to make the transition from non-alignment to multi-alignment. In the last two decades India has forged multiple strategic partnerships with the major powers of the world. These include the United States, Russia, the European Union, China and Japan. It needs to be reiterated that as the scope of this paper is limited to an overview it would not be possible to discuss these relationships in detail.

#### (i) *The United States*

The most dramatic transformation that India's foreign relations have undergone in recent times is with the United States. As is well known the Indo-US bilateral relationship during the cold war was marked by lack of trust, disharmony and even acrimony as the US viewed India's non-aligned stance to be morally wrong in what Washington perceived as an ideological struggle between democracy and communism. The US's initial stand on Kashmir and the subsequent defence relationship with Pakistan, among other things, further contributed to the estrangement between the two countries. The end of the cold war however helped the two countries to view each other in a new light. India now welcomes any kind of US help in stabilising South Asia. Issues which had bedevilled relationship earlier such as Kashmir, nuclearisation and China are less divisive now. The improvement in the relationship found new manifestation in the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement of 2008 which unveiled a range of civil nuclear cooperation between Washington and New Delhi which would have been unthinkable earlier given the track record of India refusing to sign the NPT and the US terminating all kinds of nuclear cooperation with this country and marshalling international efforts to ostracize New Delhi as a nuclear *pariah*. The

deal is too complex to discuss in detail here. However, many analysts have argued that the agreement is virtually an acceptance of India as a defacto nuclear weapon power by America. (S.Paul Kapur:2010:266).

Some of the other select issues that define current indo-US relationship can be highlighted here. Military cooperation, unthinkable during the cold war era, is the most visible aspect of the relationship. The two countries have conducted in recent times a number of joint military exercises both in India and the US. Particular mention may be made of the war games held a few years back when the Indian pilots put up an excellent show which highly impressed their American counterparts. The two countries have also been conducting joint anti-piracy and anti-submarine drills in the Indian Ocean. The US is also interested in Indian combat experiences in high altitude warfare as well as jungle and desert warfare. In an effort to diversify its sources for arms procurement and to reduce its dependence on Russia India has started purchasing American weapons systems. In this regard New Delhi has made it clear that it is not interested in just a buyer-seller relationship but would prefer a more comprehensive relationship that includes the transfer of technology and co-production. Indian purchase of US military equipment is expected to touch \$100 billion by 2022 and \$10 billion would be spent on homeland security (M.J.Vinod:2012:22-23). Another issue that shapes and would continue to shape Indo-US relations this century is their avowed aim to prevent Asia from being dominated by any one power-in other words advancing the cause of Asian stability. Here the China factor plays an important role as Beijing's continued 'rise' as a major political, military, economic and strategic actor in Asia poses a challenge to the traditional role the US has performed on the continent particularly during the cold war era. It may be noted here that the American approach to China and India smacks of a clear ambivalence as, notwithstanding its reservations about China (lack of democracy, its human rights record, the potential rivalry from China in Asia) the US attaches much greater importance to Beijing because of its military and economic clout *vis-a-vis* New Delhi. At the same time there are suspicions in Beijing that Washington is seeking to use New Delhi as a prop against China and its legitimate interests in Asia.

#### (ii) Other Major Powers

As has been mentioned several-times the desire

for autonomy remains a core Indian priority. Notwithstanding the evolution of its multifarious relationship with the US New Delhi wishes to balance its ties with Washington in seeking leverage through multidirectional partnerships. In this regard Russia, the European union and Japan figure prominently in New Delhi's diplomatic canvas. The disintegration of the Soviet Union had led to a sort of collapse in Indo-Russian relationship as the Russian Federation grappled with the multiple challenges of its transition from communism to market economy and a plural democracy. It is only during the Putin era that Indo-Russian ties have rebounded. A 'Strategic Partnership' was concluded between the two countries in 2000 which resulted, among other things, Moscow emerging again as India's dominant arms supplier swapping obsolete Soviet era hardware for modern equipment. In recent years the two countries concluded a number of pacts for military, technical and economic cooperation. (Ciorciari: 2011:77).

India has also forged what it considers 'Strategic Partnerships' with the European Union and Japan. After some initial indifference towards the EU during its formative years during the 1950s and 1960s New Delhi became alive to the prospects and opportunities the grouping offered after Britain, India's principal link with Western Europe in the aftermath of independence, became a member of the EU in 1973. Since then trade between India and the EU has grown phenomenally and is poised to grow further. The EU today is a political and security dialogue partner of India besides being a major source of developmental, environmental and energy cooperation with New Delhi.( Purusottam Bhattacharya:2012).

During the cold war years India viewed Japan primarily as an American surrogate. However hardly anyone, let alone India, could ignore the remarkable economic resurgence of Japan in the post war era. India's technological and economic cooperation with Japan had started long before the end of the cold war and Japan has traditionally been a major source for aid for India. In the new century the commonalities between the two countries as democracies and stable polities have provided a firm foundation for building a stronger relationship. In the last few years there have been a number of high level visits to and from India and Japan. It should also be noted here that both the countries are locked in disputes with China on territorial issues though this is never mentioned

in public by the leaders of India and Japan in an effort to dispel an impression that they are forging a common front against China.

#### **6. Responding to Challenges of Globalisation Climate Change and Managing Critical Issues**

A much talked about phenomenon in the post-cold war phase is the onset of globalisation which 'aims at the establishment of a single global marketplace by integrating national economies through unrestricted flow of commodities, services, labour, capital, technology, information and knowledge.' (K.Ramchandran Nair: 2009:41). It plays a crucial role in the agenda of the Washington Consensus, sponsored by the United States, International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Many analysts have feared that the present process of globalisation have been geared towards the domination of the rich countries over poorer ones as the agenda was drawn up by the US and its rich allies and supported by the IMF, World Bank and the WTO, Major international developments as far-reaching international treaty obligations regarding trade, investment, taxation, intellectual property rights, banking and financial sector supervision, currency convertibility, foreign policy, the NPT, the CTBT would be imposed on sovereign states. Needless to say that India has been caught in the vortex of these developments and decided to undertake, as has already been mentioned, a policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) since 1991. However, it has to ensure that its domestic economic growth, employment, macro-economic stability and inter-personnel equity are not compromised. Another way of countering the adverse effects of globalisation is to mobilise similarly affected and like-minded nations so that a collective stand can be taken by these nations in the global fora to assert their economic and political independence and revive- a strong political will to fight injustices in global relations. (K.Ramchandran Nair:2009:43-45).

However, there are other analysts who argue that globalisation has also opened up immense opportunities for India by linking the Indian economy to the world economy by providing opportunities of vastly enhanced access to the markets, capital and technology of the major economies of the world. Such an exposure would help upgrading skills, standards and technologies enabling weaker economies to become more competitive. It is further argued that these

advantages persuaded India to become a part of globalisation which has helped it to define broadly the areas of concentration of modern development-oriented foreign policy. 'In India's foreign economic policy there is now greater emphasis on attracting more foreign direct investment, including foreign institutional investment; facilitating Indian investment and joint ventures abroad; enhancing earnings from services particularly in the areas of tourism, media, entertainment, healthcare and education; and working in tandem with the private sector in the pursuit of India's economic interests abroad'. (Muchkund Dubey: 2013:14).

Yet another challenge for India's foreign policy in the 21st century is the issue of environmental degradation and climate change. The global climate is changing with more floods and tornadoes in recent times than in the past. The seasons are shifting. There is a discernible upward trend in the average temperature in the last few decades in spite of the fact that recurrent fluctuations in temperature have been observed since records started in 1866. Scientists have taken note of the phenomenon over, the last four decades and international efforts have been underway with the formation of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in November 1988 in drawing up an action plan for due investigation of the phenomenon and formulation of corrective steps. Most experts are now of the view that the cause is anthropogenic and it is now well known that 'certain gases, named Greenhouse Gases, (GHGs) are responsible for the trapping of the re-radiated heat absorbed by the earth's surface from the sun and the fast increasing concentration of these gases, mainly carbon di-oxide, (CO<sub>2</sub>), is of real concern'. (Sujay Basu:2003:229). As is well known most of the environmental issues are interlinked and trans-boundary in nature. Issues like water and flood control and energy cannot only be tackled in a regional framework and along with other problems (ozone depletion, climate change) need global solution. India realises that it needs to work with other developing countries in this regard as its interests are intertwined with theirs. As the industrialised countries have been seeking in international negotiations to impose across the board cuts on emission of GHGs involving both the industrialized and developing countries India has taken a clear and specific stand on the principle of 'Common but differentiated responsibilities' enshrined in the UN framework Convention on Climate Change. India's Environmental Policy states

that the issue cannot be viewed in isolation and must be seen in the context of the developmental needs of the developing countries. India looks at climate change in the context of the promises made by the international community for technology transfer and additional financing which have remained unfulfilled so far, (Ambarish Mukhopadhyay: 2010: 91-98). India has now joined hands with China, South Africa and Brazil to ensure that the industrialised countries which have been primarily responsible for the global environmental problem should bear the burden of capping their emission and the newly industrialising countries such as India, China, South Africa and Brazil should be excluded from this obligation at least for the near future. However there are experts in India who think that in the ultimate analysis these countries which also emit a considerable amount of GHGs (China being the largest emitter) will have to undertake some cuts not only because climate change affects us all but also due to the fact that it is the poorest and the most vulnerable in these countries, including India, who will be the most badly hurt. (Navroz K. Dubash: 2009: 8)

Achieving a great power status is also very much dependent on India's ability to bring about a degree of reforms in international institutions. At the WTO India has been the principal champion in the poor-country cause when it spearheaded opposition to wealthy state's agricultural subsidies during the Doha round as also in resisting the Western trade liberalisation agenda. In spite of facing opprobrium from the first-world capitals India was able to mount a vigorous opposition to Western designs to dominate world trade. India has also been a vocal critic of the IMF and other multilateral banks and their governance. These criticisms yielded results when in October 2010 the G-20 of which India is a member reached agreement on major reforms to the IMF's governing structure which was followed by the IMF announcement in November 2010 that emerging powers were going to get greater weight. India was made the Fund's eighth-largest shareholder. This was a significant step for India which raised the prospect of similar reforms in the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In contrast India's long held aspirations for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council appears to be an uphill task as it is mired in controversies related to the mode and even desirability of the overall reform of the UN. In spite of endorsements of India's candidature by most of the permanent members the situation has

been complicated by the fact that there are other aspirants (Germany, Japan and Brazil) and the opposition from the neighbours of all the four candidate countries. Concern has also been expressed about the efficiency and effectiveness if the Council becomes too large. (Ciorciari: 2011: 77-79).

### *Looking Forward*

India stands today on the threshold of attaining the status of a major power in the not too distant future. As has been mentioned Jawaharlal Nehru had pronounced on the morrow of independence that India deserved to be the fourth power in the world. However, as has been extensively discussed in the voluminous literature on India's foreign policy the regional and the international scenarios during the cold war period did not match up to New Delhi's expectations. While the non-aligned movement did confer on India, at least during its initial years, some influence the defeat in the war with China in 1962 and the emergence of a hostile conflict-ridden scenario involving two of India's most important neighbours-China and Pakistan, turned it into a prisoner of its regional security concerns which considerably diluted its global focus attained through non-alignment earlier. Domestic factors such as developmental challenges, poverty, ethnic, linguistic and religious strife along with the vagaries that a multi party, highly pluralistic democratic society faces have also acted as road blocks in India turning its obvious potential for a major power status into a reality.

As has been discussed in the preceding pages the 21st century however has brought new opportunities. There are positive factors, some of which have already been noted, such as a thriving democracy which continues to attract the admiration of the world notwithstanding its imperfections, a burgeoning economy which, according to many experts, is poised to rank as the third largest in the world by 2050, India's world class IT services which has brought a lot of foreign exchanges as well as laurels for the country in recent years, one of the largest scientific and technological pools in the world, its achievements in outer space explorations which has placed it among the top five nations in this field, a coveted market with a middle class of about 500 million, its soft power which includes its cinema, art and music with a global following and above all its partnership with the United States forged in the post-cold war years, which many experts in India and the Indian

Diaspora believe will stand this country in good stead in this century. However the challenges, including many negative factors, outlined in detail in the preceding pages, are also formidable and have to be confronted successfully if India is to count as a confirmed, accepted and established major power of the world this century. In the last two years India's economic momentum seems to be faltering with GDP growth rates which had been around 8% during much of the last decade slipping to about 5% and the outlook to getting back to the higher growth path in the immediate future does not seem too bright. The partnership with the US can be problematic in the sense that while in bilateral dialogues Washington continues to profess that India would continue to be one of its most important allies doubts remain about India's actual place in American global strategy where China definitely figures much higher than India. India is also worried about the implications about the withdrawal of American and European forces from Afghanistan after 2014 and its fallout for the region. There are also differences of opinion between India and the US on climate change, trade and agriculture. Most importantly India will seek to retain its autonomy and status in the partnership and the US, in the pursuit of its global concerns, may not always be sensitive to India's interests. Most problematic for India's foreign policy this century, as has already been noted, will be its relationship with China and Pakistan which may continue to hamstring its efforts to play a more international role. China remains a difficult actor to deal with, especially on the border issue as recent developments have demonstrated. Repeated Chinese incursions into territories India considers to be its own continue to be a headache for New Delhi. The recently agreed Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Beijing "provides a more 'robust protocol' to defuse confrontations and 'build trust' between the rival armies along the 4057 km Line of Actual Control (LAC) till a long term solution of the boundary dispute is worked out." (Sumit Chakravartty: 2013). While the BDCA may not prevent future face-offs between the two armies as there is a serious misperception on both sides as to where the LAC actually lies it "provides a template to manage and defuse face-offs"-and allow the two countries to take appropriate measures according to their own security needs. However notwithstanding the border issue there are positives in Sino-Indian relations which have

already been noted in the section dealing with China. The two countries will simply have to learn to live together within the framework of cooperation and competition.

As already mentioned in the section dealing with Pakistan the challenge of establishing a normal relationship with Islamabad presents New Delhi the most difficult task in the neighbourhood. The election of a new government in Pakistan headed by the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif had raised hopes for better days in bi-lateral relations. However Nawaz Sharif's own commitment, iterated during the election campaign, to improve relations with India have turned out to be a damp squib as, if anything, relations have got worse with Pakistani troops repeatedly violating the cease-fire along the Line of Control (LOC) which had actually started during the regime of the last Pakistani government. Sharif's efforts to again internationalise the Kashmir issue have further irked New Delhi. There appears to be no visible efforts on the part of the new Pakistani government to rein in the Jihadi elements still operating with impunity from the soil of Pakistan. As things stand at the moment and as has been the case for many years India will have to be reconciled with what one observer has termed a 'cold peace' in its relations with Pakistan at least for the near future. (Basu: 2009:62).

Achievement of a major power status for India not only signifies the need to deal with the challenges, discussed in detail in the preceding pages, but also underscores its capability and readiness to shoulder regional and global responsibilities in realms such as energy, environment, terrorism, playing a defining role in international trade and economic relations, promotion of human rights and good governance as well as democracy. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has recently pointed out it also means 'developing comprehensive national power' to tackle challenges posed by the shift in the global strategic focus towards the Asia-Pacific region where the US and China jostle for domination. The PM also notes that the economic competition among nations fostered by globalisation has now spread to the security arena. As the economic pendulum is shifting from the west to the east so is the strategic focus. 'This is exemplified by the increasing contestation in the seas to our east and the related 'pivot' or 're-balancing' (of military forces) by the US in the area.' There is uncertainty as to whether these transitions (economic and strategic) will be

peaceful. But the PM reminds the nation that while building its capabilities India has to take into account its limited resource availability. (The Times of India). This reality, along with other impediments discussed earlier, will continue to define India's quest for a major power status in the world in the 21st century.

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# Domestic Dimensions of India's Look East Policy (LEP) with Reference to Manipur

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India's Look East Policy (LEP) is the current essence of India's foreign policy paradigm.<sup>1</sup> India's Look East Policy, instituted since the early 1990s, is oriented towards deepening of India's engagement with the countries of the East and South-East Asia.<sup>2</sup> The policy primarily tries to develop greater ties with the South and South-East Asian countries through bilateral and multilateral engagement with the ASEAN and its member countries. The Look East Policy aims to promote regional cooperation by engaging in trade, commerce, industry and in a number of other allied and collaborative fields. The Look East Policy also projected North Eastern Region (NER) of India to become a trading route between South Asia particularly India and South East Asia. The projection (of the Northeastern region) was prepared due to its geographical proximity and its shared history, culture, custom and tradition of the North East people with her neighbouring countries in the South-East Asia. In other words, the Look East Policy tries to engage the Northeastern region of India with the S-E Asian countries and make the North Eastern region as a 'Gateway of India' to the East and South-East Asian Countries. In this context, the paper studies the domestic dimensions of India's Look East Policy (LEP) with reference to North Eastern Region of India and particularly to Manipur in the light of its international ramifications. The paper is mainly divided into four main sections. The first part discusses the general overview of the Look East Policy. The second section discusses the relevance or the importance of North Eastern region in the scheme of India's Look East Policy. The third segment of the paper studied the domestic dimension of Look East Policy from the perspective of Manipur and its international ramifications. The

third part is again sub-divided into two-sections—Imagination of the Eastern Door and Security Concerns. Lastly, the paper makes critical observations of India's Look East Policy from the perspective of the North East people in general and Manipur in particular.

## **Look East Policy**

The 1990s were remarkable years in the history of modern India. One of the most important events of the 1990s was the 'New Economic Policy' of India initiated by the then Prime Minister of India Mr. Narasimha Rao with his Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh (the present Prime Minister of India). The New Economic Policy brought a paradigm shift in India's economic policy by introducing open and liberalized economic policy. It dramatically changed the Indian economy. The economic growth of India transformed from the 'Hindu growth rate' to the real economic growth by touching 8% in 2000s for the first time in the history of independent India. The new economic policy was followed by another initiative in the foreign policy which is popularly known as 'Look East Policy'. India's Look East Policy tries to restore her relations with Southeast and East Asian nations, a relation that was lost and disconnected from the colonial period.<sup>3</sup> The Look East Policy marked a strategic shift in India's perspective of the world politics. Describing India's Look East Policy, Prime Minister of India, Dr Monmohan Singh, said that it is 'not merely an external economic policy, it was also a strategic shift in India's vision of the world and India's place in the evolving global economy. Most of all, it was about reaching out to our civilizational neighbours in South East Asia and East Asia...India's commitment to work with

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ASEAN and East Asian countries to make the 21<sup>st</sup> century truly Asian century.<sup>4</sup> In short, India's Look East Policy tries to rebuild and maintain a closer and deeper economic integration with her East and South East Asian nations. It is important (here) to question why India wants to reestablish a good relationship with her eastern neighbours?

India had not been paying sufficient attention to her eastern neighbours in the last few centuries due to variety of reasons. No doubt, there is no history of war or conflict between India and this region, only peaceful interaction through flow of trade and the movement of people, and intermingling of culture and ideas. Yet South Asia and East Asia have adopted independent policies over the last few centuries. During the last five centuries, Asia's destiny was primarily shaped by the colonial power and weakened the memories of shared commonalities of history, culture and tradition and ideas. In the post-colonial era, India and the nations of East Asia were found themselves on the opposite side of the Cold War divide. India failed to develop a good neighbourly relationship with her immediate eastern neighbours – Bangladesh and Myanmar during the period. Bangladesh did not provide adequate transit facilities to India. Myanmar was facing internal problem and was a closed society and its ties with India were quite minimal till the early 1990s. Last but not the least, Indian elite tended to look towards the west because of colonial links rather than to its then relatively less developed eastern neighbours.<sup>5</sup> The long gap of unfriendliness led to mutual distrust and suspicion. This period of alienation however came to an end following the reorientation of India's foreign policy which is known as 'Look East Policy' since 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

The reorientation of India's foreign policy came into being due to multiple factors (both domestic and international) that emerge out of the end of Cold War. India's economic crisis in 1991 and subsequent adoption of the processes of liberalization, privatization and globalization to integrate its economy with the world forced India to pursue foreign economic diplomacy to seek Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and access to markets and trade. This new policy prompted India to look eastward and engage them. The involvement of China in Southeast Asia in a big way compelled India to rethink her foreign policy and engaged itself with the East to checkmate the Chinese influence. The emergence of 'Asian Tigers', the

significant success of ASEAN experiment, the failure of SAARC and the economic dynamism of South Asia made India to look East and benefit from the multilateral interaction. Moreover, the success story of Indian economy and the recognition of India as an emerging economies (and also emerging power) of the world produces a synergy to encourage new confidence and strength to carry forward the Look East Policy.<sup>7</sup>

The Look East Policy, since its initiative constitutes an increasingly important dimension of India's foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> Initially, the focus of Look East Policy was to forge closer economic ties with the member countries of ASEAN.<sup>9</sup> India's economic engagement with ASEAN has been central and most important to India's Look East Policy.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, India initiated for a Sectoral Dialogue with ASEAN in 1992 and became a full Dialogue Partner in 1995 and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum in July 1996. However, India became a Summit-Level Dialogue Partners of ASEAN only in 2002. This was made only after the ASEAN members' nations recognized India as a rising Asian power and an important potential for economic partner. Later on, the East Asian countries also recognized India's economic potential.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, India has included China, Japan, South Korea and other Pacific Nations like Australia and New Zealand in the purview of India's Look East Policy.<sup>12</sup>

The expansion of the idea of Look East Policy marked the beginning of a new phase or second phase of the Look East Policy which began in the year 2003. Since India becomes a Summit-level Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 2002, India makes an effort to strengthen the relationship and agreed to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia as early as 2003. At the same time, India also offers to conclude a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) at the first India-ASEAN Summit in Cambodia in 2002. The Indian initiatives were well acknowledged and brought credibility to India's seriousness of engaging with ASEAN. Consequently, the heart of India-ASEAN engagement – the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement was signed in 2003 which envisages the establishment of a FTA in goods, services and investment over the next decade or so. This was followed by negotiations with different countries and India on the issues of FTA and ultimately signed the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement in August, 2009.<sup>13</sup> India believe that the ASEAN region's abundance of

natural resources, significant levels of technological skills and robust economic performance provides the ideal platform for synergies and closer cooperation with India and ASEAN. Moreover, the relation between India-ASEAN is more important and interested particularly because more than one state of Northeastern Region of India (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram) borders with Myanmar—the only ASEAN member that India shares a land border with.<sup>14</sup> In the second phase, the focus of the policy has also shifted from trade to wider economic and security cooperation, political partnerships and constructing transport corridors and promoting linkage and connectivity facilities like road and rail links. This phase prominently emphasizes on the development of the Northeastern region because of its geographical, demographic, political, economic, cultural and religious proximity to Southeast Asia.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Domestic Dimension of Look East Policy – Northeastern Region**

More recently, India's Look East Policy has developed an important domestic dimension, namely how to help its Northeast Region (comprising of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim) and get over the handicap of its geographical location.<sup>16</sup> The Northeastern Region is connected with the mainland India by two percent and the rest 92% is connected with our foreign neighbours – Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan and China (Tibet). Moreover, the Northeastern Region of India is not fully integrated – both economically and emotionally – with the rest of India; it also lags behind from the rest of India in development and all the Northeastern state experiences (some kind of) insurgency movements. Jairam Ramesh however, believes that the future of the Northeast lies in political integration with India and economic integration with Southeast Asia.<sup>17</sup> On the line with the idea of Jairam Ramesh, the Government of India envisages an intensification of the Northeastern Region's communication and economic links with Myanmar, Bangladesh and Southeast Asian countries through sub-regional cooperation through India's Look East Policy to help the NER of India and overcome its problems and constraints.

The Look East Policy of India largely promotes regional cooperation. Regional cooperation on infrastructural development, transport, trade facilitation, technological interdependence and cultural exchanges can transform the landlocked

region into land-linked regions.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, India initiated and formed a sub-regional economic grouping called the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in 2004 comprising of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal.<sup>19</sup> BIMSTEC was instigated by India with a view to reinforce and strengthen India's Look East Policy. This forum has identified six sectors for focused cooperation in the initial stage and then expanded to 14 sectors: (i) trade and investment, (ii) Technology, (iii) Energy, (iv) Transportation, (v) Tourism, (vi) Fisheries, (vii) Agriculture, (viii) Cultural cooperation (ix) Environment and disaster Management, (x) Public Health (xi) People-to-People contact (xii) Poverty alleviation (xiii) Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime and (xiv) Climate change.<sup>20</sup> The forum has signed a framework agreement with an aim of establishing free trade agreement.<sup>21</sup> It has the potential to facilitate the development of the Northeast Region as it is located in the middle of the BIMSTEC region. According to Rajiv Sikri, BIMSTEC has the potential to transform the Northeastern Region from their present position as relatively poor regions on the periphery of the South Asian subcontinent to becoming the fulcrum of a thriving and integrated economic and cultural space linking India and Southeast Asia.<sup>22</sup>

Another regional cooperation of India's Look East Policy is the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC). India is also part of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Project, which includes Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The project is primarily aimed at the development of overland trade, tourism, communication and transport linkages.<sup>23</sup> The MGC is a sub-regional organization with considerable potential for cooperation in the field of education, culture, tourism, and transport and communications. Under the MGC project, there is a proposal to set up a railway line from Delhi to Hanoi in Vietnam passing through North eastern States of Assam, Manipur and Myanmar. In addition to it, India also proposed to extend India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral Highway to Laos and Cambodia. These projects (if materialized) will immensely help to overcome some of the problems of the Northeastern region of India specially the issues of connectivity. In other words, Northeastern region of India will become the 'bridge' between India and Southeast and East Asia. The Look East Policy of India is expected to usher in a new era of development for the North Eastern states through

network of pipelines, connectivity, communication and trade.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the first Indo-ASEAN car rally in 2004 deserves a special mention.<sup>25</sup> On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> commemorative year of India-ASEAN relations, the second edition of the ASEAN-India Car rally was organized during 26<sup>th</sup> November 2012 to 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2012. The rally flagged off from Yogyakarta, Indonesia and covered 8000 kms across nine countries over 22 days with 124 participants from 11 countries before culminating its journey in Guwahati, (via Moreh-Imphal-Kohima) India on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2012, a flag down ceremonial was organized in New Delhi by the Prime Minister of India and other Head of States of all ASEAN countries. The Car rally aims to demonstrate the close civilization links with ASEAN countries, create public awareness, promote connectivity, and enhance trade, investment, tourism and people to people links between ASEAN and Indian region.<sup>26</sup> It was an important initiative taken up by the Indian Government to highlight the geographic proximity between Northeast India and Southeast Asia.<sup>27</sup> In short, India's Look East Policy also makes an attempt to bring positive changes in the Northeastern Region of India. Ministry for External Affairs had also taken a high level meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007 on the Look East Policy with the Chief Ministers of the Northeastern states and the Central Ministries concerned so as to formulate a strategy for meaningful involvement of the Northeastern Region in the Look East Policy.<sup>28</sup>

India's Look East Policy envisages the Northeastern region not as the periphery of India, but as the centre of a thriving and integrated economic space linking two dynamic regions with a network of highways, railways, pipelines, transmission lines crisscrossing the region.<sup>29</sup> In this connection, India involved in a variety of cross border development projects with Myanmar in diverse fields such as roads, railways, telecommunications, IT, science and technology, power, etc. These initiatives are aimed at improving connectivity between Northeastern India and Western Myanmar and are expected to give impetus to the local economies as well as bilateral trade. Among them, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Facility is one of the most important one. The project envisages connectivity between Indian Ports on the eastern seaport and Sittwe Port in Myanmar and then through riverine transport and by road to Mizoram, thereby providing an alternative route for transport of goods to North-East India. The upgradation of the 160

km Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo Road in Myanmar across Manipur has already been completed. The proposed trilateral Highway Project, which will connect Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Bagan in Myanmar, has already been discussed to start the work at the earliest. Efforts are also underway to improve infrastructure, particularly road links, at the second India-Myanmar border trade point at Rhi-Zowkhathar in Mizoram sector by upgradation of the Rhi-Tidim and Rhi-Falam road segments in Myanmar. Moreover, it is decided to develop rail link from Jiribam in Manipur to Hanoi in Vietnam passing through Myanmar.<sup>30</sup> As a part of the project, Indian Government already started construction of railway line as a first phase from Jiribam to Tupul in Manipur. This project will again extend from Tupul to Imphal, then from Imphal to Moreh (a border town in Manipur with Myanmar). In short, under the scheme of India's Look East Policy, Northeast and particularly Manipur is very much a part of the policy. Manipur is one of the most important bordering states of India with Myanmar – the only ASEAN countries. Most of the project specially related with connectivity is passing through Moreh in Manipur. Today, Moreh is becoming one of the most important trading centres between India and Myanmar in particular and India and the South-East and East Asian countries in general. So, Manipur is slowly and gradually becoming the 'Eastern Gateway of India' to connect with Southeast and East Asian countries through Myanmar.

### **Domestic Dimension: the Manipur Perspective** *Imagination of the Eastern Door*

Manipuri, traditionally and culturally, are very much attached to the eastern direction than the west. In most of the cultural and religious practices, Manipuri use the eastern direction. Even most of the traditional Manipuri houses turn towards the east and never turn towards the west. There is also a belief in the minds of the people of Manipur that someday the 'Eastern Door' will be open. Once the 'Eastern Door' is/are opened then prosperity will come to Manipur and the Manipuri will live a happy and prosperous life. This is not a new idea among the Manipuri, rather a prediction of the Meitei's book of Prophecy – the *Puya*<sup>31</sup> that things would begins to fall back in place and prosperity will return to the State after the '*Nongpok Thong*' (Eastern Door) opens up. The imagination of opening up an 'Eastern Door' of the Manipuri seems to come to a closer when the first Indo-

ASEAN car rally in November 2004 passed through Manipur. The occultists prophesy may have come from an intuitive economic vision, derived out of an inmate understanding of Manipur's and the northeast's history, geography and economic predisposition.<sup>32</sup> In other words, India's Look East Policy renews the hopes and imaginations among the people of Manipur for establishing various kinds of linkages with their ethnic cousins living across the borders. Different ethnic groups like the Naga, Kuki, etc, living in Manipur are also staying in Myanmar, Bangladesh, etc. In fact, many of the ethnic groups presently inhabitants in Manipur are believed to be migrated from South East, Northeast and East Asia. There is a feeling of oneness among the people across the eastern border even if they are divided by political boundary. Therefore, people want to have a good relationship with their brothers and sisters living in their neighbouring countries through people-to-people contact. This is one of the most important reasons why the people of Northeast particularly the Manipuri look towards the east. Moreover, there is a feeling among the people that Manipur will no longer be a landlocked state in the new millennium once the 'Eastern Door' is opened permanently.

In the present situation of Manipur, opening of 'Eastern Door' is very important and relevant. Manipur is economically a poor state and it relies heavily on the central fund for her survival. There is practically no industry worth mentioning. The state does not produce enough food grains. As a result, the Manipur Government procures food grains like rice, pulses, sugar, oil, etc apart from the petroleum products from other states. Almost all these products are transported through either National Highway No. 1 (Guwahati—Dimapur—Imphal) or National Highway No 37 (Shilchar—Jiribam—Imphal) by trucks. The highways are therefore the 'lifeline of Manipur.' There is no rail connection to Imphal—the capital of Manipur. Moreover, the so called highways passing through Manipur are only in the same sack and barely motorable. In the rainy season, it takes more than one day to reach Imphal from Jiribam which is only 221 kms. Thus, People suffer a lot due to the bad condition of the highways passing through Manipur.

The National highways are also disturbed and blocked due to landslide during the rainy season. In July 2013, nearly 300 metres long segment of Imphal-Dimapur highway sunk near Heritage

Village, Kohima.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the traffic movement in the National Highways is being totally disturbed. Repairing of the sunken segment is still on. This type of landslide is not uncommon in the hilly areas of Northeast. The other highway connecting Imphal from Jiribam is pathetic. The National Highway No. 37 (Jiribam to Imphal) is normally not motorable during the rainy season. The highway is maintained by the Border Road Organization (BRO) but it never maintains the road to make it motorable in all season. In, short, the National Highway No. 37 is not an all weather road. Recently, the road was inspected by the Chief Minister of Manipur along with Union Minister of State for Home Jitendra and submitted a detailed report on the conditions of the highway to the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways. During the inspection, the Union Minister had instructed BRO to complete construction of the highway at the earliest.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the state of Manipur is also facing economic blockades on the national highways. Economic blockade is used by the different ethnic based non-governmental organizations as a tool to pressurize the government in order to take decision(s) in their favour. It not only creates ethnic hatred among different communities living in the state but also brings shortage of food supply, petroleum products, pharmaceutical products and other essential items. The blockades produce a humanitarian crisis in the state. Among the two national highways, the National Highway No-2 which connected between Imphal and Guwahati via Dimapur and Kohima is more important and the people take it as the 'life-line of Manipur.' The state depends heavily for almost everything on this highway. And, the highway is becoming a blockade zone in the last few years.<sup>35</sup> In addition to it, many insurgent organizations based in Nagaland and Manipur also extort money from the vehicles plying on the highways.<sup>36</sup> They imposed heavy taxes. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the International Manipuri Apunba Lup, an Imphal based voluntary organization urged the Government to check extortion and looting of state trucks and buses allegedly by NSCN (IM) on the national highways. The memo further said that the extortion range from Rs 10,000/- to Rs 30,000/- annually per vehicles depending on the vehicle.<sup>37</sup> It is a highway of sorrow.<sup>38</sup> 'The rebel Nagas and the unpredictable nature have made the traffic on the Imphal-Dimapur road, the only lifeline connecting Manipur with rest of the country through Nagaland risky and uncertain.'<sup>39</sup> In present situation, it is desirable and also the hope of every Manipuri

that the 'Eastern Door' is opened properly and permanently at Moreh so that the basic requirement of the people can be brought from the eastern border of Manipur also.

### Security Concerns

India's Look East Policy is also related and guided by the issues of internal security. India's concern for security cooperation with other eastern neighbour is very much visible in the policy. It is already mentioned above that the BIMSTEC agenda for cooperation includes the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime. Moreover, in the second phase of India's Look east Policy involves security cooperation, including joint operations to protect sea lanes and pooling resources in the war against terrorism. The military contacts and joint exercises that India launched with ASEAN states on a low key basis in the early 1990s are now expanding into full fledged defense cooperation.<sup>40</sup> The security cooperation with the Southeast Asian countries and the member nation of the BIMSTEC especially with Myanmar and Bangladesh is very important for India to counter and contain insurgencies in the North East region of India. The existence of various armed insurgent organization in the Northeastern region of India forced the Government of India to cooperate with her neighbouring countries in the fight against terrorism and counter-insurgency. India strongly maintains that the insurgent organizations like the NSCN (IM), NSCN (K), UNLF, PREPAK, RPF and ULFA have established their military camps in Myanmar while ULFA, RPF, ATTF, NLFT, ANVC, HNLC, etc. have their training camps in Bangladesh.<sup>41</sup> Many of these insurgent organizations are based in and around Manipur. Recently, the Home Minister of Manipur Shri Gaikhangam declared on the floor of the Assembly in July 2012 that there are more than 50 underground outfits operating in the state.<sup>42</sup> The presence of various insurgent organizations in Manipur creates a serious law and order problems in the state. Almost everyday, the media (based in Imphal) cover some issue(s) or incident(s) related with insurgency. In other words, there is no peace and normalcy in the state of Manipur.<sup>43</sup> The Government of India is trying their best to control the situation. One of the important efforts of the Government is to maintain good relationships with her neighbouring countries through Look East Policy and take security cooperation in order to contain insurgency in the Northeastern Region and Manipur in particular. The fruit of the initiatives (security cooperation)

has already witnessed in the region. Recently, it is often reported in the media that the North East Insurgent based camp in Bangladesh and Myanmar are destroyed by their security forces. Moreover, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) Chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa and United National Liberation Front (UNLF) Chief, Rajkumar Meghen alias Sanayaima were both nabbed in Bangladesh and were later handed over to India.<sup>44</sup>

### Critical Observations

India's Look East Policy is one of the most important foreign policy of India. The Look East Policy is oriented towards deepening India's engagement with the countries of East and South-East Asia through cooperation and coordination. The policy primarily tries to develop greater ties with the South and South-East Asian countries through bilateral and multilateral engagement with the ASEAN and its member countries. The Look East Policy aims to promote regional cooperation by engaging in trade, commerce, industry and in a number of other allied and collaborative fields. The Look East Policy makes an attempt to bring the India's North Eastern region closer to her eastern neighbouring countries by opening up an 'Eastern Door'. The policy projected the Northeastern region to become a trading route between India and South East and East Asia due to its proximity (geographical location) and its shared history, culture, custom and tradition among them. In fact, the Look East Policy tries to make the North East region as a 'Gateway of India' to the East and South-East Asian Countries. The policy give immense emphasize to develop proper connectivity between India and ASEAN countries through Northeast. Also, it is believed among the Indian policy planner that development will follow after proper infrastructures are put in place in the North Eastern Region of India. They admitted that the region needs huge improvement in infrastructure to become sufficiently attractive for big-time investors, domestic or foreign.<sup>45</sup>

India's Look East Policy however, attracts the attentions of the critiques. There are lots of apprehension among the scholars, intellectuals and community leaders regarding the progress of the Look East Policy. India's Look East Policy has been initiated in the early 1990s. The progress of the policy after 20 years of its inception is however not so much visible on the ground. For instance, if the lynchpin of Look East Policy is the connectivity through NER of India, then it is possible through

air, road and rail. None of them functional as yet between India's North East and the eastern part of Asia. Nor is it likely to be so in the foreseeable future. The uncomfortable fact is the dismal state of infrastructure in the Northeast itself. The airports are hardly world class; the connectivity within the region and the rest of the country is just functional. The current state of roads are barely sustainable for the passenger traffic, so how can the pot hole ridden stretches survive the pressure of heavy traffics? And the rail network largely remains the same as it was during the British rule. To give Look East a real meaning there has to be a vast traffic of goods both ways. As of now, there is no single major industrial unit in the area. Unless that happens, and till major industries come up in the Northeast, it would have very little to export. It will merely be making promises during high level visits. And overtime, the indented audience may just stop taking seriously.<sup>46</sup> It is therefore necessary to take up concrete measures to implement the policies and programmes properly. For this, institutional arrangement and infrastructural development should be executed with political commitment by giving maximum priority to border trades. In addition to it, effort should be made to resolve the problems of insurgency in the Northeastern region of India. Because, it will be very difficult to complete the project as per schedule, if different groups disturb the implementation of the project every now and then. Moreover, without maintaining proper law and order, it will be difficult for the investor (both big and small) to invest in a volatile region like the Northeast India.

The indigenous people of the North East have some reservation of India's Look East Policy. They (indigenous people) believe that if all the project of the Look East Policy materialized (especially those related with connectivity) then there will be a huge illegal migration/mass exodus in the region. Illegal migration (from Bangladesh and Myanmar) is already a big problem in many parts of the North east. So, what will happen if all the projects (the proposed connectivity's through Look East Policy) are put in place in the region? There is a fear psychosis among the indigenous people of the region. The indigenous people fears that their culture and tradition will be wiped out, their language/dialect will be endangered and they (indigenous people) will be pushed further to the periphery. Other's will slowly and gradually dominate the indigenous people and ultimately the identity of the indigenous people will be lost

forever. They (indigenous people) always refer the case of Tripura where the indigenous Tripuri are already pushed to the periphery and become minority in their own land. The culture and traditions of the indigenous people will become a 'piece' of museum. The indigenous people also feel insecure about their land. There is a strong believe that the migrant (legal or illegal) are more educated, more advanced, more sophisticated and more technology savvy. As a result, they will be in a better position than the relatively not advance (almost in every field) and innocent (and also ignorant) indigenous people of the region. This is also one of the main reasons for the demand of Inner Line Permit (ILP)<sup>47</sup> in Manipur. Lately, there is demand for Inner Line permit in Meghalaya<sup>48</sup> and Assam<sup>49</sup> also.

The issues and the concerns of the indigenous people are yet to be addressed properly by the Government. As a consequence, many scholars and intellectual of the region raise their voice against the Look East Policy of India. According to many, the Look East Policy is not empowering the Northeast and making its residents stake holders in the process. There needs to be a concerted effort to develop and involve the region before Government push eastward, otherwise the Northeast will remain just a 'corridor'.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, many scholars also asked themselves who is/are going to be the beneficiary of India's Look East Policy? They have their own doubt that the region will get the maximum benefit from the Look East Policy. Therefore, it is very important to address the concerns of the people and solve the problem(s) by the Government before it is too late. The indigenous people of the North Eastern Region of India need to take into confidence by the Government. Government should take multiple steps to prepare themselves (indigenous people) for any eventuality which come out of the Look East Policy. In other words, Government should provide adequate facilities for the people so that they can prepare themselves and ready to take maximum advantage from any policy/ies including the Look East Policy. One area where the government can focus is the improvement of quality of human resource of the NER. This can be done by establishing good quality institutions and provides proper guidance and training to improve the skills of the young northeasterners. The region require not only higher (and research) institutions but also institutions offering diploma and certificate course in different field. The region is in need of

Community Colleges so that the unskilled labour force of the region can be converted into skilled labour and productive forces. In other words, the human resources of the Northeastern region need to be harnessed in the right direction, so that they can improve themselves and take maximum benefit of India's Look East Policy. This is possible, however, only when there is good governance in all the states of the region. Corruption and poor governance in all the states of the region is one of the main factors for all the ills of the Northeastern Region of India.

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47. The Inner Line Permit is the permit system under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 where no citizen from other parts of India (outsider) are allowed to enter the boundary of a State without a valid pass issued by a competent authority under the regulation. Inner line Permit system continued to exist in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland even after the Britisher left the Indian sub-continent. Without Inner Line Permit, Indian citizen are not allow to enter the three states of the Northeastern region of India. See details. *Why does Manipur require Inner Line permit System?* Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System, Manipur, The Sangai Express (English), dated 25th & 26th October 2012
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49. The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) demanded issuance of Inner Line Permits (ILP) for people coming from outside the state to check the unabated influx of outsiders, mainly from Bangladesh. ABSU said that over 3.6 lakh bighas of land under tribal belts and blocks have been encroaching upon by illegal migrants. See details: *ABSU demands introduction of ILP for outsiders*. [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-07/guwahati/37530692\\_1\\_absu-promod-boro-tribal-people](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-07/guwahati/37530692_1_absu-promod-boro-tribal-people) Accessed on 1st September 2013.
50. Look East, but through the Northeast, [www.tehelka.com/look-east-but-through-the-northeast/](http://www.tehelka.com/look-east-but-through-the-northeast/), Accessed on 16th august 2013.



# Communicate-Terminate-Communicate: The New Challenge of Terror Communication

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Since the last decade of the twentieth century we have been witnessing the intensification of the phenomenon of terrorism around the world. For obvious reasons the phenomenon is being rigorously analyzed from various vantage points in academic literature and policy arena. Yet one vantage point terror act as communicative act receives relatively less attention, except for occasional and secondary references. This is so even if terror communication, integrated with and motivated by the generation of certain context-specific meanings to achieve a set of objectives, poses severe challenge to security experts and academics exploring the strategic and enabling activities of terror networks in order to combat them. The paper explains why and how communication constitutes the motive force of terror activities. In doing so, it identifies and elaborates the outward and inward dimensions and strategies of terror communication. As

part of this endeavour it also explains why the more-focused issues in analyses of terrorism like network technologies and media are to be viewed as a sub-set of human-centric communication. The paper, in warning against missing the woods for the trees, thus accords primacy to the human factor while privileging the communicative actions over sophisticated high-tech devices and artifacts. While having as a major reference-point the Information Superhighway (ISh), with special reference to network technologies and mainstream media, the paper elaborates the paradox of democratization which leads the ISh to provide power, precision and predictability to terror networks. As a fundamental counter-measure the paper advocates utilization of the power of human communication especially through the expansion and intensification of dialogue for minimizing the impact of terror communication.

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## Introduction

In recent years the act of terrorism<sup>1</sup> is being widely and rigorously analyzed from various vantage points in academic literature. It is not that terrorism is a new phenomenon of the twenty first century; it has been existing in one form or another for centuries. However, what is new is its reincarnation in the days of globalization, which is often described as New Terrorism<sup>2</sup> – not just in terms of a growing shift from ‘pure political’ orientation towards religious militancy, but also in terms of number, operational methods, decision-making process, greater frequency, intensity, spread and the state-of-the-art hi-tech nature. Various concepts are being created and various others being revised to intellectually develop ‘appropriate’ theoretical frameworks and methodologies in order to

intellectually negotiate with the act. Yet one vantage point – terror act as *communicative act* – receives relatively less attention, except for occasional direct and ancillary references.<sup>3</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that integrated with and motivated by the generation of certain context-specific meanings to achieve a set of objectives, terror communication poses severe, if not the most potent challenge to security experts and academics exploring the strategic and enabling activities of terror networks in order to find ways to combat them.

The paper seeks to explain why and how communication constitutes the motive force of terrorism. First, the paper identifies and elaborates the *outward* and *inward* dimensions and strategies of terror communication. Second, within the broader framework of the global information order the paper

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focuses overwhelmingly on the Information Superhighway (ISh) and its main components the network technologies and the mainstream media. In the process it reveals how the paradox of democratization leads the ISh to lend power, precision and predictability (P3) to terror networks. Third, based on the contention that it is human communication which needs to be accorded primacy in analyzing terror communication, the paper also explains why the more-publicized issues in analyses of terrorism— like network technologies and media— are to be viewed as a *sub-set* of communication in such analyses, and the *human factor* should be privileged over them. In the concluding part, as a counter-measure the paper advocates utilization of the power and reach of the ISh itself to expand and intensify dialogues for minimizing the impact of terror communication.

### Defining Terror Communication

Before we explain in detail the terror act in terms of its communicative dimensions it is imperative that we clarify what we mean by 'terrorism' and 'communication'. Defining terrorism is a stupendous task. As there is supposed to be more than one hundred definitions of the term a consensus on one particular definition is nowhere in sight. The word terrorism, derived from *regime de la terreur*, gained wide currency in the nineties of the eighteenth century, in the aftermath of the French Revolution. However, it then had a positive connotation for its association with the establishment of order out of chaos and anarchy. Terrorism at the same time has remained a dynamic concept<sup>4</sup> in terms of its changing core— from the dominance of 'political' (more specifically, ethno-national) to that of religious orientation, and in the specific context of 'new terrorism' the growing presence and leverage of the non-state actors<sup>5</sup> along with the conventional state-actors. Two pioneering analysts identify<sup>6</sup> a number of major characteristics of terrorism: i) it is premeditated and designed to create a climate of extreme fear; ii) it is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims; iii) it inherently involves attacks on random or symbolic targets, including civilians; iv) it is considered by the society in which it occurs as 'extra-normal', that is in the literal sense that it violates the norms regulating disputes, protest and dissent; and v) it is used primarily, though not exclusively, meant to influence the political behaviour of governments, communities or specific social groups. Thus, notwithstanding the bewildering varieties in

definitions there is at least an attempt to construct a sort of common core of terrorism.

It is also important to note that there is a normative thrust in most of the definitions of terrorism. It is in the sense that such acts are considered illegitimate for various factors<sup>7</sup>, but mainly for their reliance on 'unlawful' violence. Schimdt and Jongman also provide a reasonably comprehensive definition of terrorism as an 'anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action', employed by semi-clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby — in contrast to the calculated act of assassination — the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. They add that the immediate human victims of terror acts are generally chosen randomly (*targets of opportunity*) or selectively (*representative or symbolic targets*) from a target population, and the idea is to serve them as message-generators. Acknowledging the inalienable role of communication in terrorism they would also argue that the process involves terrorists, their organizations, imperiled victims, and the manipulation of the main target— the people— into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. In our case, we can adopt a working definition of terrorism by defining it somewhat broadly as ideology-legitimizing violent and harmful acts or threat of such acts committed to achieve political, ideological and purportedly religious goals and objectives.

Communication to us is a complex process of creation, circulation, neutralization and destruction of meanings. One has to go beyond any linear 'one-way' approach<sup>8</sup> to understanding communication because in such approach it is assumed that if the messages are disseminated by the senders in a direct, bullet-like manner for them to have great influence on the recipients. Our definition of communication leads us to the basic contention of the paper that terrorist act is inherently communicative act because there is a built-in need in such act to communicate certain specific messages— notwithstanding the variations in their nature, magnitude, scale and time. Communication as a meaning-intimate process facilitates exchange and sharing of data, information, ideas and perspectives. In being so, it is fundamentally a human phenomenon, steeped in human relationships and sustained by human value-/belief-systems. Much of communication, it must be

added, is carried on through perceived meanings of signs, symbols and language. At the same time one cannot ignore the 'power issue' in communication— the fact that communication is a process by which people seek to influence one another.

### Communication and Terror Organizations

The terror activity chain, composed of separate yet interlinked issues like recruitment, training, resource gathering, logistics, strategic and operational planning, target fixing, post-attack assessment and so forth, heavily relies on communication— ideological-doctrinal, strategic and operational. Two cross-cutting aspects of communication have immense impact on terror activity chain and the functioning of terror organizations and networks: the *outward* and the *inward*.

In its outward aspect it relates to the task of aiming the decision-makers or more generally, the powers that be as well as specific segments of people, rather than immediate victims who, as we have noted earlier, are manipulated as 'senders of message'. The idea here is to tempt the enemy to overreact, so that the intended message receives greater depth and spread. The inward aspect relates to influencing the cadres through rigorous acts of inspiration, intoxication and indoctrination. Thus, the formation and circulation of certain specific messages and the simultaneous neutralization of some are part and parcel of terror communication. The great significance of the message-orientation in terror communication has been stressed by Richardson who argues<sup>9</sup> that terrorism is by its very nature is a rhetorical act designed *not to defeat the enemy but to send a message*. There are a number of instances, including the diabolic event of '9/11', which reveal that the victims accidentally become victims of the terrorists who are determined to prove a point or two to the perceived enemy— to repeat, not because the victims were specifically targeted as individuals. The point holds true irrespective of the nature and degree of complexity of terror organizations— from single-cell to multi-cell.

Let us now come to certain specifics of terror communication, which are different but interlinked categories. First, insofar as the discourses— the organized way of determining through power-laden statements, what can be said about certain themes and topics— of the terror organizations are concerned the epistemological foundation is based on the basic strategies— *authorization, moralization,*

*rationalization, narrativization* and *normalization*. Following some seminal studies<sup>10</sup>, we define *authorization* as an act based on the invocation of authority of tradition, custom, law or persons supposedly inculcated with authority. In this case the organization is presented as the source of cent percent objectivity, which in turn contests the counter-sources of authority. *Moralization* has a normative and value-based thrust in evaluation of certain events as good/bad, desirable/undesirable, and in the more familiar dramatic language of terror organizations with militant religious orientation, holy/evil<sup>11</sup>. *Rationalization* is based on the promotion and legitimization of cognitive validity and utility of individual and collective-organizational ideas, goals, means and action. *Narrativization* is an act of story telling to enforce and reinforce the ideas, goals, means and action of the terror organizations. Narratives are texts structured by the time-sequence of the events they represent. Narratives are, so to say, 'received wisdom' embedded in specific institutional structures and actor-network groups. *Normalization* is construction of the 'idealized' conducts and acts of the terror organizations and their dissemination as 'natural'. It is important to bear in mind that in terror action groups such normalization does not come 'naturally'. It emerges through intricate, if not always huge, ideological brainwashing, and also, if deemed necessary, through coercion. The discursive strategies combine to psychologically initiate a terrorist to dedicate her/himself to the 'greater cause'. Thus, we find women, teenagers, highly educated and highly skilled individuals motivated and dedicated to serve the means— unlawful acts and violence— and the cause espoused by terrorist organizations, without much regard for self-interest. Obviously, more efficiently these strategies are pursued by the terrorist organizations more likely would be their success in 'operations'. In this endeavour, as Crenshaw<sup>12</sup> notes, the role of leaders is extremely vital in maintaining a collective belief system establishing and maintaining organizational routines; controlling the flow of communication, manipulating incentives (and purposive goals) for followers; deflecting conflict to external targets; and last but not the least, keeping the action going. The leaders in their communicative endeavour must strike where the perceived deprivation is deepest and most intense. At the same time, they must communicate in a manner in which the voice of dissent is overwhelmingly suppressed inside the organization and totally outside it.

Second, language constitutes the key instrument in effecting the function enumerated above. The terror organizations contest the dominant language of the non-terror and anti-terror forces and seeks to reinstate the language of their own. Such contestation finds expression in such binary terms as *suicide versus martyrdom* or *assassin versus avenger* or *operation versus attack*. Does a terrorist commit suicide, as the dominant statist discourse would assert? Or, does she/he offer her/himself to the holy cause of martyrdom? In communicative terms, different meanings are attached to the act of self-destruction/ violence/ mobilization of resources. From different angles, a terrorist would be described as *depoliticized* deviant agent or *politicized* agent in pursuit of justice. Contestation of dominant meanings also occurs in a vehement manner when a pejorative term 'terrorist' sought to be ousted from the prevailing discourse, with terms with positive connotations like freedom fighter, rebel, revolutionary, *jehadi*, *mujahedeen*, guerrilla and militant. In this context Fierke<sup>13</sup> makes a relevant methodological observation. Taking on the Rational Choice theorists for underestimating the language factor and the emotive dimension vis-a-vis the constitution of meanings intertwined with the act of terrorism he explains how the Rational Choice approach suffers from deficiency. In Fierke's own words<sup>14</sup>:

The distinction between the two uses ('suicide' and 'martyrdom') is significant because the language of 'martyrdom' politicizes the act of the human bomb, while that of 'suicide' depoliticizes. In politicizing, 'martyrdom' constitutes the human bomb as a moral agent in pursuit of justice, who is empowered vis-a-vis (sic) an earthly and a divine community. In depoliticizing, 'suicide terrorism' constitutes the agency of states vis a vis (sic) a moral deviant and an abject other who is outside politics and is thus the object of legitimate violence. [Brackets mine.]

Third, when it comes to the language rhetoric occupies the centrestage of terror communication. The terror organizations and networks have an inscrutable symbolic core and the rhetoric serves to reinstate the same. Thus, be they Al Qaeda, Hamas, HUJI, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Talibans or LTTE, IRA and PLO— despite the variations in aims, objectives and locale— they are not just physical entities; they are also 'symbols of struggle'.

Studying the terror websites in the Internet Gabirel Weimann<sup>15</sup> identifies three rhetorical structures used by the terrorists to justify their reliance on violence.

- The claim that the terrorists have no choice other than to turn to violence. In this category violence is presented as a necessity foisted upon the weak as the only means with which to respond to an oppressive enemy. Weimann notes that while the sites avoid mentioning how the terrorists victimize others, the forceful actions of the governments and regimes that combat the terrorists are heavily emphasized and characterized with terms such as *slaughter*, *murder*, and *genocide*. The terrorist organization in this category is depicted as constantly persecuted, its leaders subject to assassination attempts and its supporters massacred, its freedom of expression curtailed, and its adherents arrested. This tactic, Weimann adds, which portrays the organization as small, weak, and hunted down by a strong power or a strong state, turns the terrorists into the underdog.
- Another rhetorical structure is related to the legitimacy of the use of violence is the demonizing and delegitimization of the enemy. The members of the movement or organization are presented as freedom fighters, forced against their will to use violence because a ruthless enemy is crushing the rights and dignity of their people or group. The enemy of the movement or the organization is the real terrorist. Many sites insist: "Our violence is tiny in comparison to his aggression" is a common argument. This kind of terrorist rhetoric tries to shift the responsibility for violence from the terrorist to the adversary, which is accused of displaying its brutality, inhumanity, and immorality.
- Yet another rhetorical device is to make extensive use of the language of nonviolence in an attempt to counter the terrorists' violent image. Although these are violent organizations, many of their sites claim that they seek peaceful solutions, and their ultimate aim is a diplomatic settlement achieved through negotiation and international pressure on a repressive government.

Fourth, as the aforementioned points reveal, terror communication on the whole fundamentally relies on an ensemble of representations. Representations are not as simple as reflections. Such representations composed of languages, images, signs and symbols— can be of various types: politico-secular, politico-mythical, mytho-ideological and religio-political. More specifically, the representations are based on: i) the supposed denial of identity which constitutes the motive force of the terror groups; ii) perceived threat to self-identity, iii) negation of the 'other', and iv) affirmation of old or new identity. In the representations general violence is accorded a transcendental quality. Though their referents vary, all terror organizations and networks have a 'nucleus' in what Kenneth Burke calls *terministic compulsions*<sup>16</sup> (from which the title of this paper is inspired) which has been described as "symbolic DNA of terrorism"<sup>17</sup> by Robert Rowland and Kirsten Theye. They argue, on the basis of the contention that the terrorists do not go through some sort of satanic transformation and suddenly become evil-doers, that the symbolic DNA of the terrorist message is a mythic symbolic pattern that serves as both a persuasive and an epistemic device. The point is explained by the scholars at length<sup>18</sup>:

'The symbolic DNA of terrorism begins with a sense that identity has been *Denied* and the very existence of the group is threatened. This Denial of identity motivates group members to both seek a new identity and attack the Others they see as blameworthy. The second component is *Negation* of the Other. Total negation of the Other allows violence to be viewed as serving a transcendent purpose, rather than as murder. The third component of the terrorist narrative is a mythic narrative, usually a myth of return, that provides an *Affirmation* of a new/old identity. That myth of return both affirms the new/old identity and puts the group in touch with the symbolic power associated with the time of origins.'

### Information Superhighway: of Network Technologies and Media

In its new incarnation terrorist activities have developed an inalienable tie-up with highly mobile global capital and its most visible channels, namely, the new technologies and the media. In the Information Age, the terrorist organizations and networks, like many other organizations and

networks of different purposes, cannot function on the basis of 'trial and error' method, at least not conceptually. In the contemporary period the Baconian dictum *information is power* has come true like never before. Control over information means greater power, precision and predictability. But at the same time information does not originate and float in vacuum; nor does communication for that matter. The global information order, more specifically its chief instrument, the Information Superhighway (ISh) serves as the 'harbour' in which communication takes place. Terror communication, being an extremely aggressive form of communication, seeks to manipulate the power of ISh to the maximum possible extent. Before we specifically refer to the ways the manipulation of the ISh by the terrorist actors take place, let us at this point explain in brief the nature of the ISh itself.

The ISh and its broader framework the Global Information Order (GIO) has many differences with the previous kind of information order which was widely known as the World/International Information Order<sup>19</sup>. In the preceding order the 'world' denoted the overwhelming presence and power of the states and the 'international' those of the nations. The GIO, on the contrary, has acquired a *global* character through transnational routes, which, by themselves undermine the primacy accorded to the states and nations. The most distinguishing feature of the GIO is the compression of space and time, which has given birth to the theses of 'the death of distance' and the 'end of geography'. While several problems remain in oversubscribing to such theses, especially because the state is yet to show the tell-tale signs of withering away, the fact is that, to a considerable degree the new order is qualitatively different from the preceding one. The progress in information technology without any doubt lies at the base of such transformation but the complexity of the process of transformation that marks the GIO and the ISh cannot be explained only in technological and technocratic terms. Technological progress is a handiwork of the *human factor* which needs to be addressed to understand what lies beneath such transformation.

Despite attempts by the powers that be— particularly the dominant states and allied organizations— to exert totalistic control over the ISh the new technology has lent a 'slippery' character to it. While the powerful entities argue

that the ISh requires an array of governing rules by its very existence, the ISh with the aid of network technologies, gives rise to innumerable channels of communication for non-state actors and the associated autonomous, random, ultra-flexible, hyper-responsive, self-forming nodes, linkages and networks— many of which have subversive character. The term *network technologies*, as a Rand Corporation study explains<sup>20</sup>, refers to command, control, communication, computer, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance technologies in military parlance, as well as the consumer-oriented technologies that can often provide the functionality needed for terrorist operations. These network technologies can include connectivity technologies (e.g., wireless routers), mobile computing (e.g., laptop computers), personal electronic devices (e.g., personal digital assistants and cell phones), IT services and Internet access, and video recording, among others. Terror organizations occupy a large space in this regard, being facilitated by the largely discontinuous ‘virtual’ locations. The Rand Corporation study<sup>21</sup> also refers to four broad approaches that terrorist groups adopt with respect to new technologies:

- *Specialize in specific technologies, enabling the group to customize and shape them to the needs of its activities and operations.* Typically, implementing such an approach requires some parts of the organization to specialize for such technology to be acquired and used.
- *Adopt many technologies, providing the group with a wide variety of options to apply as needed.* Although variety-based strategies do not necessarily require groups to build up specialization or deep knowledge of particular technologies, the groups must invest time and resources in maintaining their ability to use many different technologies well. Variety-based strategies are made much easier when technologies are readily available on the commercial market.
- *Focus on individual technologies, but choose ones that are versatile and can be used in many different ways.* The more ways in which an individual technology can be used, the higher its potential value to an individual terrorist group. The ubiquity of communication across the terrorist activity chain—and the availability of these technologies on the commercial market—

demonstrates that many network technologies could constitute very versatile technologies within these groups’ operations.

- *Rely on technology opportunistically, without a concerted organizational focus on adopting and deploying novel technologies.* Just because technologies appear potentially attractive to terrorists, there is no certainty that they will adopt them. Although passing up opportunities to use new technologies will deny organizations their benefits, such a strategy may also result in little organization-wide vulnerability to technology failures, countermeasures, or exploitation.

To refer to the terror websites more specifically, often such sites show an interesting variety of religious, political, military, cultural and from the perspective of the sponsors of such sites, humanitarian, messages. Thus, for instance, a website on Hamas<sup>22</sup> hosts the following points: military-style training, Palestinian mothers being more willing to encourage their sons to become suicide terrorists, promotion of Shahada (death for Allah) as better than present life, refusal to disarm despite having participated in parliamentary elections, hope that Hamas will continue to be “a home for all Palestinian and jihad fighters”, opinion that the voluntary Israeli withdrawal from Gaza could be the first step in the destruction of Israel, the promise that “we will make all of Palestine (which includes Israel) a hell for you”. In some cases, as in the case of the website<sup>23</sup> of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) the content and tenor are overtly political, and tactically, in the face of the offensive by the Sri Lankan army, against the use of violence. The following excerpt from the site would substantiate the point: “Both our liberation movement and our people never preferred war to a peaceful resolution. We have always preferred a peaceful approach to win the political rights of our people. We have never hesitated to follow the peaceful path to win our political rights.”

As I have extensively argued elsewhere<sup>24</sup>, the GIO, both in its structure and process, is more reflexive in character with some space for ‘unintended consequences’. The messages of the GIO are, to a considerable extent, sourced through such unintended consequences. In some cases the visibility of the messages are articulated to a select target-group without being visible to a larger section, and the audibility of the messages are articulated to a select segment without being made

audible to a larger audience. In some cases, the messages are meant for a broader section— the target-groups and beyond. To reiterate, despite the efforts to have formal control over the ISh by the dominant forces the 'more or less out-of-control bytes of information' continue to defy the hegemony of any master narrative. Terror organizations thus have a very 'friendly' space in the ISh. Thus, whether one likes it or not the GIO is a *shared space* in which forces with completely contradictory orientations cohabit without much scope for mutual control. On the one hand, one just has to type and click a site to find oneself instantly face-to-face with various pro-Al Qaeda links celebrating the cause of radical Islam and denouncing the West, or the pro-LTTE links advocating a separate Tamil homeland. On the other hand, the same click to other links would bring us face-to-face with sites extolling the virtues of the "liberal secular" West and making scathing critique of the "religio-fascists" and theocracy.

One may call it the paradox of democratization that the successful attempt to free the main propelling force of the ISh— the Internet— from the control of the US military<sup>25</sup> and providing immensely greater access and connectivity has also facilitated the cause of the terror networks and their subversive potential. The extraordinary expansion of the cyberspace has come to the aid of cyberterrorism. Today, the technology widely used by the terror organizations and networks in one way or other are nurtured by the ISh. One can cite the instances of the WIFI network, GPS, CDMA, Skype manifestations in this connection. One can also cite different kind of acts— hactivism<sup>26</sup> or more intense cybotage<sup>27</sup>— which are being resorted to by the terrorists of the information era with lot of success. Yet another significant instance of the utilization-cum-subversion of the ISh could be found in an even in 2006 when Hezbollah-influenced Al Manar TV network manipulated the Broadwing customer connection quite successfully to beam programmes first in Texas in USA and later in India. One cannot but find Paul Virilio's observation quite relevant here. In his book *The Information Bomb*<sup>28</sup> he had predicted that the information war would soon be based on 'global interactivity', just as in the earlier era the war of atomic energy was based on 'local radioactivity'.

When we refer to the ISh reference, media cannot be far behind. The mainstream media today has acquired a *global* character, at least in its ability to

penetrate and defy the national borders. As far as the media is concerned, the terror organizations use it both directly and indirectly. While there are scholars, such as Wievorka<sup>29</sup>, who argue that the terror organizations' reliance on media is overstretched, judging the innumerable instances one cannot dare to undermine the relationship. As Lockyer argues<sup>30</sup> in a more balanced way, while the language of the mainstream media is often influenced by the official language because of the perceived information superiority of the government the media also coopts the 'engaging' language of terrorists. The direct form referred here finds itself in leaflets, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, video and websites owned and controlled by the organizations themselves. The indirect form can be found in the dissemination of messages through media not owned by them. The latter has lot of significance because generally the 'big media' has greater reach and credibility, and the terror organizations on certain counts prefer greater dissemination of messages to greater number of people. Thus, it is a common practice of the terror organizations to inform the media about an impending terror act or owning the responsibility of an act committed.

The terrorism-media linkage is not a one way-traffic. Studying the history and the statements of Al Qaeda Torres Soriano notes that there is a 'contradictory dependence'<sup>31</sup> of the terrorists on the media. Soriano in the study shows<sup>32</sup> that as far as the terrorists' view of the media is concerned far from being composed of rigorous ideological or political principles, is shaped by their calculations of estimated opportunities. Its perception of the mass media, has depended on its perception of estimated media impact. This has determined three stages during its history: i) Hostility toward media that it has held responsible for hiding or distorting its message; ii) Adaptation to a new environment where there are networks that are willing to interpret reality from a perspective similar to the *Jihadist* point of view, and iii) Exploitation of the Internet as an indirect means of obtaining the mass media's attention. From the vantage point of the media, information and news about terror activities constitute dramatic material with 'excellent market potential' in terms of the consumption by the consumers-cum-audience. This is why we find Bin Laden's face or the plane crashing into the Twin Towers at World Trade Centre being ceaselessly telecast. Mainstream media has often been accused of making a spectacle out of terror acts interestingly

also by the media watch groups themselves<sup>33</sup>. The horrific 26/11 event in Mumbai and the relentless endeavour by the electronic media to telecast its details 24X7 – including that of Ajmal Kasab, the lone survivor – led to the formation and articulation of critical public opinion against the ‘onslaught of the mainstream media’. However, there is a fuzzy area in such cases. Where does one draw a line between the ‘need to inform’ by the media, on the one hand, and ‘indulging in sensationalism’, on the other hand? In some cases, as in the prominent case of Al Jazeera<sup>34</sup>, the conscious attempt to inform and familiarize the viewers of the terror organizations’ points of view, laced with the periodic assertions that US’s War on Terror is also an act of (state-sponsored)<sup>35</sup> terror itself, has immensely enhanced the network’s credibility as a potent counterpoint to the West-controlled media<sup>36</sup>. Al Jazeera has come to be known as the ‘perfect answer to BBC/CNN’, a harbinger of McArabism<sup>37</sup>. While the dividing line between ‘publicizing terror activities’ and ‘providing space to alternative perspective’ is quite blurred, such blurring distinction continues to generate intense debate among media analysts, with the result that either way it tends to reinstate the belief that media constitutes a preferred channel of terror organizations. Interestingly, the attempt by the US, including its then President George Bush, to establish a counter-network Al Hura apparently to counter terror communication of the Arab groups and implicitly to contest Al Jazeera had failed pathetically for want of credibility<sup>38</sup>.

### Conclusion: In Human Factor We Trust

Notwithstanding the heavy reliance of the terror organizations on network technologies and the media the primacy in understanding terror communication should be accorded to the *human factor*. Often the mainstream analyses of terror communication unduly privilege the technologies and in the process make terrorism synonymous to cyberterrorism or cybotage. It is a partial and perverted view, generated the tendency to undermine the *human factor* and a deterministic and reductionist stance on technology. Such analyses find ‘intelligence gathering’ as a solution to terror activities. Interestingly, the Rand Corporation study, referred earlier, despite its primary focus on network technologies argues<sup>39</sup>, implying the importance of *human factor*, that the terrorists are likely to use advanced communication technology in the future only when it suits their operational needs and when

they judge the risks to be acceptable, rather than allowing technological capabilities to dictate operations. Good operational tradecraft is likely to determine and limit terrorist operations despite future technology-based communication capabilities. In another significant observation the study reaffirms<sup>40</sup> the point in this manner: “Though advances in network technology can provide operational advantages to terrorists, our research suggests that the effects of these changes will be more incremental than revolutionary.” The report devotes a large portion to the strategies of propaganda and persuasion by the terrorist organizations with the logic that these have foundational role and the network technologies can only make them ‘state-of-the-art’ *but cannot be a substitute*.

In a similar vein, analysts of Information-Age Terrorism<sup>41</sup> suggest that to assess whether a particular tactic or target is a result of netwar<sup>42</sup> or whether a netwar design may enhance the likelihood of terrorists’ pursuing that tactic or target ‘one should examine not only how the information revolution is altering technological orientations of the terrorists, but also how it is changing their organizational and doctrinal orientations’<sup>43</sup>. Most important, the analysts in this context also advise the governments to go beyond ‘simple technological counters’ and reengineer the way they approach the problem of terrorism in the contemporary era.

The importance of such advice is to be underlined when one thinks of the counter-measure approaches to the challenge being discussed here. There are in fact two sides to the role of the *human factor* in communication. On the one hand, the preceding discussion reveals that neither technologies nor the media can have ‘own’ consciousness or will. It is the *human factor* which would ‘operate’ them and make them what they are. On the other hand, face-to-face communication in the form of what is known as dialogue in political, administrative and diplomatic parlance has prime importance in this context as means of relational and collective communication. While better utilization of technologies and media is important dialogue is of fundamental value whether it is in the case of negotiations with the terrorists or in a deeper vein, seeking to neutralize the root causes of terrorism, which is often an intense sense of deprivation. The same strategy applies for the state itself if it indulges in terror activities directly or in a clandestine way. Invoking the importance of dialogue as a potent



force in combating terror communication may sound utopian to many, especially to the die-hard practitioners of *realpolitik*, but serious theoretical probes<sup>44</sup> into the mechanics of dialogue has brought forth two of its most distinctive features which also lend it a transformative character. First, the basic idea of dialogue is to be able to communicate while not trying to convince the 'other' by force, but simply trying to understand. Second, dialogue does not eliminate differences. On the contrary, through dialogue, the participants create a consciousness of differences that can sustain differences within a larger social compact of toleration and respect. Can we really afford to dispense with these two features if we seek to minimize terrorism and eliminate its *terministic core*?

In repeatedly asserting the *human factor* and assuming that the states would continue to remain a key actor in combating terror communication— if not with any altruistic motive but at least to retain their credibility at a time when they are under severe challenge— we can make a concluding remark that the state of the art communication calls for appropriate communication art of the state. This holds true especially in an era in which the dominant social and political discourse is alarmingly prioritizing technology-guided 'connectivity' at the cost of human 'connections'.

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1. We are aware of the fact that the term is considered not politically correct by radical thinkers who would rather prefer militancy as a substitute.
2. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 25-28; I. O. Lesser and B. Hoffman et al., *Countering the New Terrorism*, (Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 1999).
3. A direct study is the following: R. Crenlisten, 'Terrorism as Political Communication: The Relationship between the Controller and the Controlled' in P. Wilkinson and A. Stewart eds., *Contemporary Research on Terrorism*, (Aberdeen: University Press, 1987). An indirect reference can be found in M. Crenshaw, 'Decisions to Use Terrorism: Psychological Constraints on Instrumental Reasoning', *International Social Movements Research*, 4, (1992), pp. 29-42.
4. Hoffman, *Ibid.*; M. Crenshaw, *Ibid.*
5. While there can be a number of instances of the increasing clout of the non-state actors the admission of the Asif Ali Zardari, the former President of Pakistan, that the Mumbai carnage of 26 November, 2008, was a handiwork of the non-state actors who defy the control-mechanism of

the state is of much significance. To add, in this paper the thrust is on the non-state actors in terrorism though this does not seek to undermine the role of the state in it.

6. Alex P. Schmid, Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Databases, Theories, and Literature*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005, Second Edition).
7. The factors that lead to this normative thrust include:
  - i) Terrorist acts are committed by organized groups at—or beyond—the edge of the law.
  - ii) With their acts, they claim to seek specific objectives that have not been democratically accepted.
  - iii) The main instrument used for attaining these goals is to provoke social terror.
  - iv) This terror is achieved through acts of extreme intensity and violence, able to catch the attention of the media and to compromise the civil authorities.
  - v) These acts involve human lives in an indiscriminate way. Therefore, the victims become an instrument to help achieve a level of terror and social impact.See, Tania Menedez Hevia, Maria Luisa Garcia Guardia & Ubaldo Cuesta Cambra, 'Social Communication and Terrorism: Some Ethical Considerations', *Media Ethics*, 18:1, (Fall 2006), pp. 42-43.
8. In Communication Studies it is widely known as the Bullet Approach or Hypodermic Syringe Approach. The propaganda machinery of Nazis and Fascists used to adopt this approach.
9. Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat*, (New York: Random House, 2006).
10. T. Van Dijk, 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis', *Discourse & Society*, 4:2,1993, pp. 249-283; T. Van Leeuwen, "Legitimation in Discourse and Communication", *Discourse and Communication*, 1:1, (2007), pp. 91-112; The latter, however, uses the term Mythopoesis to connote legitimation conveyed through narratives, which we do not borrow.
11. One can give some credit to Ayatollah Khomeini, the former supreme religious leader of Iran, for making the world conscious of the good/evil dichotomy while dislodging the Shah of Iran.
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13. K.M. Fierke, 'Agents of Death: The Structural Logic of Suicide Terrorism and Martyrdom', *International Theory*, 1:1, (2009), pp. 155-184.
14. Fierke, p. 157.
15. Gabirel Weimann, *Special Report: www.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet*, United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org. Retrieved on 3 January, 2009.

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17. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-85.
18. *Ibid.* p. 60.
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21. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
22. Website#1: [www.pmw.org.il/asx/PMW\\_Hamas.aspx](http://www.pmw.org.il/asx/PMW_Hamas.aspx)
23. Website #2: [www.eelam.org](http://www.eelam.org)
24. Dipankar Sinha, 'Religious Fundamentalism and its 'Other'' in S. C. Saha ed., Religious Fundamentalism in the Contemporary World Order Critical Social and Political Issues, (Maryland: Lexington Books, Lanham 2004), pp. 11-28.
25. In its earlier form it was known as the ARPANET(Advanced research Projects Agency Network) which was created in 1969, strictly under the command and control of the US Department of Defense, for enabling military and scientific information.
26. It refers to defacing the enemy sites with own slogans.
27. It connotes disrupting or destroying information infrastructure of the enemy.
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30. Adam Lockyer, The Relationship between the Media and Terrorism, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, (2003), p. 2.
31. Manuel R. Torres Soriano, 'Terrorism and the Mass Media after Al Qaeda: A Change of Course?', Athena Intelligence Journal, 3:2, April, (2008), p. 9.
32. *Ibid*, pp. 1-20.
33. In India a prominent instance would be the website [www.thehoot.org](http://www.thehoot.org)
34. While in the text we follow this spelling of the network in the Reference section its varying spellings used by the respective authors have been retained.
35. The statement made by A.A. Zardari, the President of Pakistan, during an interview to the NBC news channel that the Talibans have been jointly created by the CIA of the United States and the ISI of Pakistan leaves little to imagination. Source: The Times of India, 12 May, (2009).
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40. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
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# Indo–Brazil Relations in the Current Global Order

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Relations between Brazil and India are more than episodic; here friendship flourishes against the backdrop of the right blend of domestic and international developments. Both countries share a commonality of interests in multilateral political and economic matters as well as rich cultural heritage combined with a colonial past. No wonder in the process, they have assumed a leading role in the process of revival of South-South diplomacy in world affairs. India and Brazil have many points for strategic convergence in the present multipolar world; be it the framework of a changing global order or the coexistence of enhanced regionalism alongside strengthened multilateralism. There is tremendous prospect for deep bilateral commitment and engagement in political and security dynamics at the global level given the shared interest and concerns over specific issues and developments at the international level.

This naturally raises interest in the history of relations between the two countries. If one sets about connecting the dots, an intriguing tale unfolds of the proverbial friendship between the elephant and the toucan, mediated by the rooster. The journey can be traced back to maritime trade and the colonial era. The credit for bringing India and Brazil together goes to Pedro Alvares Cabral, a Portuguese explorer. Way back in 1500, Pedro landed on the Brazilian coast on his way to India, and reported it to be an effective stopover for the fleets bound to Goa, the Portuguese colony on the Indian subcontinent. In the initial years of discovery, Brazil was continued to be the port of convenience but later on was replaced by East Africa as a better halting option. Though the interaction was short lived, it sowed the first seeds of trade through exchange of plants and cattle between India and Brazil.

This trivial nature of interaction characterized Indo-Brazil relations right up to the onset of the Cold War era. Even as India set about chalking out her foreign relations post independence in 1947, the entire Latin American region, including Brazil, was yet to receive due attention. For the first two decades after World War II, there was little mentionable trade or diplomatic transaction between the two nations.

A dramatic turn of events marked the course of relations for the following two decades. And again it was the rooster that had a role to play. The decolonization process of the Portuguese enclaves in India (primarily Goa) caused a lot of diplomatic tensions. Brazil came to represent Portuguese interests in India, when the two broke off diplomatic relations. While India continued to pressurize Portugal into retreat from the subcontinent, Brazil steadfastly supported Portugal's claim to Goa. In 1961, when the Indian defence forces overpowered the Portuguese to take control of Goa, the Brazilian government was bitterly critical of India for undertaking a war that went against international law, and 'mutilated Portugal'. This stance of Brazil, a democratic country and a former colony was rather disappointing to India.

It was only in the mid 60s that Brazil started to figure on the diplomatic and economic radar of India. In 1964, with the creation of UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) and G77, Brazil and India found themselves frequently taking up joint positions on issues of common concern. This was most evident in the case of nuclear arms race in the international order. At the onset both Brazil and India were highly critical of nuclear weapons and condemned the creation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) viewing it as a brazen

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attempt to contain emergent powers. Both supported the idea that the developed North should focus on providing financial aid to developing countries in their fight against poverty, instead of going on a spending spree on arms. Thus disarmament and development were the two main pillars on which the foundations of the Indo Brazil ties were laid.

Given their shared colonial past and faith in democratic political norms, it is not surprising that India and Brazil discovered common grounds for building their friendship despite their earlier differences. The visit of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1968 helped to bring Brazil closer to India. GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) was yet another multi lateral forum which further strengthened the bonds between the two countries. However much of these alliances were often spontaneous and coincidental, rather than premeditated.

While these could be viewed as early steps being taken towards bridge building, geo-politically the two countries had a huge chasm to cross before the friendship could be truly consolidated. In the bipolar world that characterized the international order of the cold war days, Brazil was unambiguously in the United States camp, while India, though non-aligned, was inclined to maintain special relations with the Soviet Union. India had unofficially invited Brazil to turn into a full member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) to complete the presence of Latin America, but Brazil declined and preferred to remain an observer. Thus throughout the cold war decades the bilateral ties remained cordial but minimal.

The end of the Cold War brought far reaching changes to the nature of inter-state relations in both trade and diplomacy. This was further visible as the axle of the global economy shifted from the northern Atlantic to the Pacific with the rise of the Japanese and Southeast Asian economies in the late 1980s, followed by China and India and other new emergent powers and economies in the last two decades. Both India and Brazil have been quick to reposition their international strategies in the midst of new realities while dealing with the political demands and opportunity costs brought forth in the wake of the new economic and political order. A striking similarity was increasingly visible in the foreign policies adopted by both India and Brazil as both countries set about liberalizing their economies and strategically working on expanding their international presence. Over the years India

has shown enthusiasm in building a strategic trans-oceanic, trans-continental bond with Latin America as these countries offer a huge market for Indian commodities, goods and services. Trade experts are quick to point out that while India's scientific and technological expertise would help countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil, India's needs for strategic metals, minerals and bullion can be met by these countries endowed with rich mineral deposits. Technology transfer from Cuba would benefit Indian Pharma and Biotech sectors. In oceanographic research and fisheries development a tremendous scope exists for co-operation between India, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Argentina. In the energy sector also there is great scope for cooperation as Brazil has developed the technology of Gasshol or bio-ethanol fuel blends which can be beneficial for India in reducing oil import bills. The Indian and Brazilian governments are also considering possibilities to engage in jointly developing military aircrafts. In the agri-horticultural and food processing sector, Indo-Brazilian long term co-operation has the potential to dominate the world trade in food commodities.

India and Brazil also share the political desire for state protection in the form of welfare -state liberalism, even though their economies do not yet generate the necessary revenue to support a welfare state. This is evinced in the schemes such as the Bolsa Familia income supports<sup>1</sup> and Fome Zero<sup>2</sup> (Zero Hunger policy, Brazil) or the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Food Security Bill 2013 (India). Brazil has the commendable achievement of adopting and implementing social programs that have allowed it to reach the Millennium Development Goal of reducing extreme poverty and hunger (United Nations Organization) by half years earlier than anticipated. However India's government programs aimed at reducing poverty and bolstering food security have been plagued with ineffectiveness and shortsightedness. This therefore is a key area where India can gain valuable insights from the successful Brazilian experiment and formally institutionalize cooperation on social protection programs between both countries. Brazil, which suffers from a housing shortage of about 6 million homes, with low - income individuals accounting for 90% of the deficit<sup>3</sup>, can gain from the Indian success in providing affordable housing<sup>4</sup> for the poorest segment of society with active involvement of the corporate developers.

Brazil's President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994–2002) is credited for carving and implementing Brazil's new foreign policy, which involved forging stronger ties with other developing countries such as India while at the same time maintain relations with traditional allies in Europe and North America. A number of bilateral agreements and MOUs came to be signed subsequently between Brazil and India in the diverse areas of tourism, science and technology, oil and gas, education, human settlements etc. to name a few. The Indian government reiterated the importance of trading relations with Brazil by rolling out a special programme, FOCUS LAC for promoting the trading relations between India, Latin America and Caribbean. India has had traditionally a positive trade balance with Brazil, primarily because of export of diesel besides cotton and polyester yarns. Over the years, Brazil has emerged as India's biggest partner in the LAC region with the bilateral trade between Brazil and India growing by 20% in 2011 (going from US\$ 7.7 billion in 2010 to US\$ 9.2 billion) and by 15% from US\$ 9.2 billion in 2011 to US\$10.6 billion in 2012 (January to December). It is significant to note that India has moved up as the seventh largest market for Brazil's exports. Thus Brazil's trade relations with India have witnessed a ten-fold increase in the last decade, with exports of \$5.04 billion and imports of \$5.58 billion – close to 10 times increase in the last ten years.<sup>5</sup>

Cardoso's successor President Lula (2003–2010) sought to institutionalize Brazil-India ties in 2003, when the two countries jointly led the developing world during the WTO negotiations at Cancun, and when IBSA, a trilateral outfit with South Africa, was created. Previously, India, Brazil and South Africa had been known as G3, a group that had jointly decided to break the patent of an HIV/AIDS drug and to provide generic drugs to domestic patients. Brazil and India went on to join the G4 (consisting of India, Brazil, Japan and Germany) and made an unsuccessful bid to enter the UN Security Council. The blooming friendship suffered a small set back after the signing of the US-India nuclear deal of 2005 as the Brazilian government felt that it violated the NPT. However diplomatic prudence on part of both countries did not allow this friction to permanently damage the flourishing relations.

The India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) grouping changed the way poor countries engage in economic

bargaining with developed countries. Perhaps what is most significant about IBSA is that it is openly acknowledged by the three countries to be a stepping stone towards broader co-operation amongst developing countries. IBSA's functional leadership in WTO negotiations and the UN reform debate offers a countervailing force to the current hierarchy of the global order. India, Brazil and South Africa use "voice opportunities" provided by institutions such as the UN, the WTO and G-8 Summits to challenge the short sighted policies of the big powers. After IBSA, G20 and G4, the "BRIC" (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) grouping of 2006 brought India and Brazil into closer ties. These countries with the later inclusion of South Africa have come to share similar view points on international issues such as climate change, food security, energy security, equitable world order etc. The BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) format was institutionalized under a joint agreement of November 2009, wherein the member countries had issued a common set of non negotiable terms for the Copenhagen climate conference, threatening a joint walkout if the proposed terms of negotiation were violated. The result was the Copenhagen Accord. The four BASIC countries are also expected to play a significant role in successfully brokering any future international agreement on the sensitive issue of climate change. India had welcomed the appointment of the new WTO Chief Roberto Azevedo from Brazil, at the crucial juncture ahead of WTO Bali Ministerial meeting in Dec 2013.

Thus at all these various fora, Brazil and India have continued to adhere to a traditional developing country position. There is also an emerging common interest in the underdeveloped countries (as strongly evinced in Africa) where one finds both Indian and Brazil on a path of prestige diplomacy. Both countries ( have had their own agricultural revolutions ( and are among the world's ( top food producers. Individually, India and Brazil have leveraged their strengths in affordable low-tech and scientific research to boost Africa's agricultural productivity. India provides the Triple A (adaptable, appropriate and affordable) technologies<sup>6</sup> and Brazil has launched research and food security initiatives throughout Africa.<sup>7</sup> This kind of interlocking investment by India and Brazil could be the new investment model for Africa. It is a significant responsibility for both the countries because bilateral links and multilateral common action are crucial to upgrade the underdeveloped countries' international capabilities and set them on a path

of equitable social and economic development.

Brazil-India relations reached a high point in April 2010, with the renewing of their governments' commitment to the "strategic alliance" between the two countries in a bilateral meeting in Brasilia. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed satisfaction at the growing bilateral relations. Under the current President Dilma Rousseff, the strengthening of India - Brazil strategic partnership has continued unabated and the two countries agreed to diversify the trade basket and set a target of US\$15 billion for bilateral trade to be achieved by 2015.<sup>8</sup> Rousseff has reaffirmed the need to consolidate a substantive bilateral agenda and to strengthen similar foreign policy principles, including the staunch defense of the interests of both countries; poorest populations, the promotion of sustainable economic growth and an independent international position that is coherent with the new world order.<sup>9</sup> Standing at the present juncture, India and Brazil have both adopted a pragmatic and realist approach in response to the asymmetric and indeterminate nature of the contemporary global order

However, time and maturity are still needed to assert that Brazil-India bilateral ties and converging interests will build up as a relevant dimension for each other's international insertion as well as for an effective amalgamation of South-South relations in the years to come. The establishment of this new 'trilateralist' diplomatic partnership of the South begs a number of questions about the states involved, the nature of their co-operation and its relationship to international system as a whole. But undeniably, there is a great scope for emerging economies, among them prominently BRICs, to stand up against protectionism and use their new economic power to increase their political weight in international economic policymaking. The positive outcome of the WTO Bali Ministerial Declaration on the following areas of negotiations – a package for Least Development Countries (LDCs), Trade facilitation, and Agriculture – is being lauded as a success for the collective diplomacy efforts of the South. However the Bali package, though successful, represented just a miniscule fraction of the issues that negotiators set out to tackle in the Doha Round talks and ended with a commitment for trade officials to develop a "clearly defined work programme" to iron out the remaining thorny issues of NAMA and services etc. This would naturally require further cooperation among the member

nations. Nonetheless, by bringing global trade back on the rails and taking steps to successfully conclude the Bali Ministerial, these countries have opened a new chapter on *positive multilateralism*. Also apart from changing the way international trade decisions are made, the strengthening of bonds between emerging powers such as India and Brazil is bound to have an impact on the political values and systems of governance worldwide. Whether it is the reforms of the UN or the unfinished tasks of sustainable development taken up by the Rio + 20 Summit, or the ticklish issue of EU carbon tax, or even the broader concerns over nuclear security, India Brazil partnership on common platform clearly holds out the prospect of a more rationally organized global system.

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# Northeast India in BIMSTEC: The Myanmar Factor<sup>1</sup>

*Dr. Langpoklakpam Suraj Singh\**

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## **Introduction**

In the present global scenario of multilateralism and rapid transformation of the structural identity of nations, regional or sub-regional groupings are no longer a matter of choice, but the need of the hour. Coupled with this, the swift advancement of communication facilities, shortening of distance and transforming of borders into gateways is the new occurrence anywhere. Economy as the moving force has become a crucial variable in the dynamics of international politics. Consequently, issues of transnational dimensions and externalities become prominent for most areas. Related with it is the transformation in the thinking and values surrounding specific regions. Perceptions of policy makers change. It is in the newly emerging but irreversible trend of regional integration in Asia that the indispensability in the relationship of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Northeast India (NEI) with Myanmar as the decisive factor came up. The emerging BIMSTEC-NEI-Myanmar equation is an interesting outcome of these new phenomena.

A sub-regional grouping consisting of some geographically contiguous countries of South and Southeast Asia, particularly the littoral and hinterland countries of the Bay of Bengal, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, BIMSTEC is directed towards bringing a harmonious and cooperative growth among its member countries, though modestly at the moment. With the relevance of regional and economic groupings directed towards Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) increasing in the geopolitical scenario the importance of a grouping like BIMSTEC is very much there in the regional level.

India went for economic reforms in 1991 followed by its Look East Policy (LEP) in 1992 directed towards the countries of Southeast Asia, and ASEAN as a grouping. A new dimension that emerges is the increasing importance of NEI. In this emerging changes Myanmar remains a top priority in the optimal success of India's new foreign policy of engaging with its distant and immediate Eastern neighbours, taking into consideration the dimension of Northeast India (NEI). Thus, India supported the Thai initiative for setting up BIMSTEC primarily for the purpose of connectivity and linkages, signifying Myanmar's geo-strategic position as India's land corridor to Southeast Asia, with India's Northeast as linkage<sup>2</sup>.

A proper synchronisation and synergy among the three aspects namely BIMSTEC initiative, India's Myanmar policy and the NEI is crucial for bringing a rational all round regional development and a secured regional security, though the politico-security aspect is downplayed. At the same time the immediate concern of policy makers is in dealing with various issues of mutual interest of all the three stakeholders (BIMSTEC, Myanmar and NEI) that has Myanmar as the deciding factor. In fact, if BIMSTEC is able to usher an era of productive integration of South and Southeast Asia then it could enhance the economies of these regions more with expansion of the market for goods and services, reduction of prices of outside competitors, more foreign direct investment (FDI), reduction in cost of production and welfare gains and reduction in trade barriers<sup>3</sup>. What is also hoped is that this will create many opportunities for NEI in developing its potential through proper linkages with other nearby countries and regions. Therefore, when the BIMSTEC stake is put in NEI, the unavoidable role of Myanmar automatically comes in the picture.

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This could also be viewed in the context of the fact that closely related to the formation of BIMSTEC is the much talked about idea of a '*growth triangle*', involving India, Myanmar and Bangladesh – supported and endorsed by the Asian Development Bank and UNDP.

Ultimately, the study will confine on how Myanmar could act as a fulcrum in the growing BIMSTEC-NEI equation. It will deal more with various issues associated with Myanmar the tackling of which with a rational Myanmar policy could provide the right type of background for the growth of NEI - BIMSTEC relations.

### **Relevance of BIMSTEC: Could it be a Growth Engine**

Originally launched as BISTEC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) on 6 June 1997 in Bangkok, it was changed into BIMSTEC on 22 December the same year with the joining of Myanmar. Later on entry of Nepal and Bhutan in February 2004 took it to the present form though the acronym remains the same<sup>4</sup>. In fact its emergence was really well-timed as it coincided with the continuing wave of regionalism and regional groupings in Asia since the 90s where a concerted effort is on for a harmonious blending among the South and Southeast Asian economies.

Today, BIMSTEC provides a unique link between South and Southeast Asia bringing together around 1.4 billion people, a combined GDP of about US \$ 1.7 trillion, and a considerable amount of complementarities. With 13 priority sectors lead by member countries in a voluntary manner this grouping is working for regional economic growth, technological cooperation and trade liberalisation<sup>5</sup>. In the last few years, BIMSTEC economies have been growing at a faster pace than of some other dominant blocs.

Interestingly, BIMSTEC is in between two already existing regional organisations in South and Southeast Asia, South Asian Association for regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) respectively – aimed at fostering development of these regions. Besides, it also serves as strategic link of cooperation in the framework of Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS), Ganga-Mekong Cooperation (GMC) and Kunming Initiative. Having an inter-regional dimension this grouping aims more to a multi-pronged approach towards the development perspective of the entire region. Today, the enormous pressures of

globalisation are forcing countries in the region to seek greater efficiency through larger markets, increased competition, access to superior technology and greater FDI that could only be achieved through Regional Trading Arrangements (RTAs) and Regional Integration Arrangements (RIAs). BIMSTEC's significance lies in the fact that this grouping is all out to set up a mechanism for promoting regional economic development by utilising the existing potential of member countries through specific cooperation ventures, mutual assistance and the building up of complementarities<sup>6</sup>. Related political aspects are also gradually supplemented with it. With such arrangement there are mutually beneficial strategic and security reasons also. This was highlighted in its 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit Meeting of November 2008.

Now, despite the existing viewpoint that compare to other regional groupings BIMSTEC have got a very modest decisive role, the merit point is that its less demanding nature is suited for the not so developed members by removing the atmosphere of a strong competitive apprehension. Besides, it is largely free from any past political and security misgivings among its members. With the right mechanism this grouping would likely emerge as a growth engine for the region in the near future. Especially for India, the grouping is significant as it provided an additional stepping stone to ASEAN through Myanmar and Thailand and also created a grouping that excluded Pakistan<sup>7</sup>. It could also be a contributing element in India's focussing on balancing interests to protect its strategic position in the region while opening up its restive and uncharted Northeast region with right reciprocity towards Myanmar.

### **Uniqueness of Northeast India**

Here continuing with the above discussion on aspects of regional grouping like BIMSTEC from India's angle the logical question is why the sudden shift of attention towards NEI. This needs to be examined. The indispensability of NEI came in the focus of Indian Policy makers mainly with the initiation of the Look East Policy. Before that the region was merely viewed from security point only. Indeed, situated in the tri-junction of South, Southeast and East Asia NEI has a locational importance of its own in the shifting regional economic trends. It is in the transit of many of the newly formed sub-regional groupings with a vast amount of untapped potential, but yet to be developed fully. Significantly this part of India has

got more borders with neighbouring countries rather than with the mainland with which it is connected. It has international borders with Myanmar (1643 Kms), Bangladesh (4031 Kms), China (1100 Kms) and Bhutan (410 Kms). Today realisation has dawn on the foreign policy mandarins in New Delhi that any proper physical connectivity with Southeast Asia, the main decisive factor for the success of LEP, could be possible only through this region.

During his visit to the Northeast in June 2007 former Union Minister of State for Commerce, Shri Jairam Ramesh in his speech expressed the following lines for everyone to ponder upon. To quote Shri Ramesh,

‘India’s Look East Policy has to look North-East first. Today one-third of India’s trade volume is with South -East Asia which has emerged the largest trading partner with India but it has had no impact on the country’s North-East. India’s Look East policy is meaningless if it does not have any impact on the region’<sup>8</sup>.

In the same vein NER Vision 2020 also emphasised the need for refashioning the development process of NEI so as ‘to ensure that the region plays the arrow-head role it must play in the vanguard of the country’s Look East Policy’<sup>9</sup>. Implication is clear of the long term potential and importance of the region yet at the same time the continuing negligence and indifference towards the same. The unfortunate part of NEI in the emerging scenario is that India’s economic engagement with Southeast Asia has expanded, but not to the advantage of the Northeast<sup>10</sup>. Even in the existing bilateral trade between India and Myanmar the share of NEI form only about 3 to 4 percent of India’s total trade with the latter<sup>11</sup>. Profiling NEI is a much to understand both its foray in the BIMSTEC sphere as well as the issues related with it which compel India to move closer to the Myanmar military regime.

Northeast India, consisting of eight Indian states, is one of the naturally most endowed but highly neglected regions in the country, more to do with the way governance. Deficit of development, an end result of deficit in good governance, is writ large. Representing 8.9 percent of the country’s geographical area, 3.8 percent of its total population and 2.7 per cent of GDP, characterised by an extraordinary mixture of ethno-cultural heritage and intertwining realities of ethno nationalism and sub-regionalism, NEI is considered to be one of the most complex regions of India with over 200 ethnic

groups. Being a latecomer in the national mainstream the questions of transition and alienation always loom large in the mind of its natives – leading to anti-Indian tensions in various stages<sup>12</sup>. Further, despite its unique biodiversity, hydro-electric potential, hydro-carbon reserves (38%), forests wealth, rich soil and abundant flora and fauna, the area remain a neglected area because of geographical bottlenecks and lack of adequate and right type of policy implementation – thus limiting its access to international market. Nevertheless, because of its geographical location it has got a high potential market value which will roll once the right type of exposure in made. The mongoloid affinity the people of NEI have with those of its Asian neighbours is also in its advantage. The uniqueness of the region itself lies in its mosaic of differences.

Thus, in the present era of globalisation where distances are decreasing and boundaries are changing into gateways the potential of NEI can no longer be sidelined with transnational dimension gradually picking up. In the present context it specifically has to act as India’s land bridge to Myanmar and outlet to the rest of Southeast Asia.

### **BIMSTEC - NEI: The Coming Together**

BIMSTEC in order to act as a proper linkage between South and Southeast Asia needs NEI. At the same BIMSTEC and NEI together forms a vital aspect of India’s LEP. Ironically not long back when India started initiating various sub-regional groupings to promote ties with economically vibrant countries of the above regions Northeast was viewed from security angle only. It was only recently that the realisation of the economic importance of NEI dawn on the policy makers. Consequently initiatives from the side of the Government of India could be seen, followed by reciprocal move from the BIMSTEC countries.

Even after many years of developmental strategy required level of basic infrastructure growth is missing in NEI. In this background balanced and sustainable economic growth under the new market equation becomes difficult. Development of the potentials are always curtail by various challenges such as ethnic insurgency, inefficient and corrupt governance, militarisation of the region or a warehousing atmosphere, lack of financial discipline, lack of proper marketing channel etc. Thus, what is hoped is that regional grouping like BIMSTEC will be a means to pull it in the normal global

economic flow by gradually overcoming the existing development deficit. It is viewed as a growth engine for transforming NEI by making it a gateway to the East with the right type of linkages (physical and emotional). Indeed subregional developments are meant to link adjacent areas with different factor endowments and different comparative advantages. In this scenario NEI is very much suited for the BIMSTEC initiatives. Reciprocity is writ large.

The success of BIMSTEC will definitely contribute and complement to the development of India's LEP in general and Northeast in particular. Indeed, for India, this regional grouping acts as a medium for achieving the three-pronged strategy of its LEP: (i) closer link with its proximate and immediate neighbours, (ii) economic integration with Southeast Asia, and (iii) security considerations of NEI and development of its untapped potential. Various infrastructural efforts will be enhanced with the participation of the member countries which in turn will also bring out reciprocal benefits. An effective and progressive cooperation is very much in demand between BIMSTEC and NEI so that when the FTA really materialised NEI does not lag behind or it pose a hurdle to the grouping itself.

### **Myanmar in the Scenario: The Rationale**

Success and failure of the whole issue of NEI in BIMSTEC depends on how India tackle with the many factors associated with Myanmar. This forms an important aspect of the paper and the main focus of the presentation. This could be at time prospective as well as problematic. The country, not only as a member but also a proximate one with which the Northeast region has a long history of relationship, is to be taken into consideration with utmost seriousness.

For Myanmar, association with regional organisations was not new. Despite its emphasis to the foreign policy of bilateralism, it has a long history of participation in regional and multilateral institutions. It was a leading country in the initiation of *Panchsheel* in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1954, and played a role in the establishment of Non-Alignment in 1961. But, during the Ne Win regime the country diverted to a policy of neutrality and isolationism. It operated an inward-looking economic system built on import substitution which in fact failed to sustain and widespread poverty ensued. The country changed from one of the wealthiest in Southeast Asia to one of the poorest during a span of about four decades. However, the post-Ne Win regime,

even though still military, realises that the said policy of the past is no longer relevant in the context of the changing international and regional security environment. An open-door policy was hence introduced in 1988. As a part of the changing environment the country began to participate in regional cooperation groupings. Consequently, Myanmar joined BIMSTEC some months after its initial establishment<sup>13</sup>. Joining the grouping has politico-security as well as economic implications for the country. On the one hand it could garner support from both South and Southeast Asian countries in counter-balancing the increasing penetration of China, and on the other hand it could enhance its ability in dealing with the increasing international pressure in the aftermath of '1988 Uprising'<sup>14</sup>. This, in fact, went well with the ongoing transition process in the Myanmar economy since 1988. Though no notable change could be seen in the initial decade yet it was a time where significant steps toward liberalisation and openness in different sectors were taken up by the regime. It introduced or established: Foreign Investment Law (1988), Revocation of the 1965 Law of Establishment of Socialist Economic System (1989), Private Participation in trade (1989), 100 per cent retention of Export Earning ((1990), Tariff Law (1992), Foreign Exchange Certificates (1993), start of Foreign Banks (1994), Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre etc<sup>15</sup>. Besides, the country has also got the advantage of having abundant cheap labour and vast natural resources in its disposal. All these paved the way for Myanmar to join regional economic groupings for enhancement of its economy without the exception of BIMSTEC.

In the overall, it is believed that BIMSTEC could be a beneficial forum for Myanmar, economic as well as other related politico-strategic aspects, and at the same the common meeting ground for mutual interests of both India and Myanmar. And specifically it could provide Myanmar a common platform with a large democratic country like India which will provide it not only with abundant economic, technological and defence supports, but also an indirect legitimacy tag despite its subjugation of democracy in the country.

### **Myanmar Factor and Issues of Common Relevance**

Today, one of the most integral part of India's area specific Look East Policy is its Myanmar policy with the obvious reality that in the process NEI issue have to catch up with the nearby regional groupings –BIMSTEC being not an exception. New

Delhi looked upon Myanmar as an indispensable medium for acquiring more economic benefits as well as to put India in a strategically more advantageous position through its Northeast. Coupled with it is NEI's transnational dimension which brought to its fold both problematic as well prospective facets, specially associated with Myanmar. Dealing with the problematic issues for removing the negativities and the prospective one for further speeding up growth and increase positivities, is a much. Proper synergy between NEI and BIMSTEC thus calls for an understanding of these facets and dealing with them thereof.

### China Factor

Benefit from BIMSTEC and its members will have less gain for India in general and NEI in particular unless China's foray is check through proper understanding and synchronisation with Myanmar. The ever-changing sub-regional geopolitics with China emerging as a strong directive force is one very important deciding factor compelling India to go for a change in its existing Myanmar policy. The concern for the competitive dynamics with China is always there in the mindset of the foreign policy mandarins in South Block.

According to India's former diplomat Rajiv Sikri, *'should Myanmar get irreversibly locked in China's tight economic and strategic embrace, this would pose serious security dangers to India..... A China sponsored link-up between Myanmar and Bangladesh would bring China right on India's doorstep and complete China's encirclement of India from the East'*<sup>16</sup>. In the same wavelength Professor Mohan Mallik, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies Hawaii, expressed, *'China's forays into Myanmar are definitely a part of a Grand plan, to expand its economic and strategic interest in South and Southeast Asia'*<sup>17</sup>. This has its impact on regional economic and security environment. Though Naypyitaw never wants itself to be entirely under the influence of Beijing, yet in the aftermath of '1988 Uprising' China became the main partner of Myanmar thus giving a boost to the former's 'Southward Policy'. Degree of closeness and cordiality between the two is reflected clearly by the use of the vocabulary 'Pauk-Phaw' (mean sibling in Myanmar language) for each other. China is heavily involved in the development of Myanmar's industrial, infrastructure and energy sector. One could subsequently see large-scale Chinese aid, capital and equipments pouring into that country which India considered as an encroachment in its sphere of influence.

Presently, China is the third largest trading partner of Myanmar with a trade volume of US \$ 13 billion (in March 2011)<sup>18</sup>. Commercially China has three goals in having closer relations with Myanmar namely: (i) direct access to Indian Ocean via Myanmar in order to avoid dependence on the vulnerable Malacca Strait, (ii) unlocking its remote Southern province of Yunnan, and (iii) enhancing its energy security to meet the booming economy<sup>19</sup>. So strong is the influence of China on the country that the entire Northern and Central Myanmar are gradually being transformed into a Chinese economic zone. What also worries New Delhi is the fact that the influx of cheap Chinese goods through Myanmar to NEI may undermine India's national commercial interest. If the present trend continues the region may completely transformed into a dumping ground for cheap Chinese manufactured consumer durables.

Furthermore, existing China-Myanmar relations become more prominent when it comes to military and security sphere. China is the largest arms supplier to Myanmar. The involvement of Chinese military experts since 1989 in upgradation and development of Myanmar's naval installations in its islands in the Bay of Bengal and the coastal areas is also a serious concern for New Delhi. India sense the need to challenge the 'String of Pearl strategy' of China whereby the latter is trying to have friendly naval bases all around the coastal areas of India. Besides from a strategic point India's North-east is also in the Chinese radar. India needs to delve with all these angles. Security rapport with Myanmar is thus very much felt<sup>20</sup>.

Through more engagement India is trying to bring Myanmar closer to it and at the same time freeing the country from the 'dependency syndrome' it has towards China.

### Economic Cooperation: An Eye for Regional Economic Integration

The economic relevance of BIMSTEC in the region could be further enhanced when India established proper cooperation with Myanmar. It becomes an imperative in the changing economic architecture of the region. Closing the gap between New Delhi and Naypyitaw in the realm of economic relations could be traced to the signing of an MOU on trade and economic cooperation, particularly in terms of border trade in 1994<sup>21</sup>. Subsequently, the Moreh-Tamu Border Trade was opened in April 1995, followed by steps to materialise the Zokhawthar

(Champhai) Border Trade Post in Mizoram State adjoining Rhi in Myanmar, which was inaugurated in January 2004. In addition, in March 2007, Government of India (GOI) approved the setting up of 5 Border Trade Centres (BTC) along the Indo-Myanmar border in the state of Nagaland<sup>22</sup>. And in recent trade meetings between the two countries it was decided that the present border trade at the Tamu-Moreh and Rhi-Zokhawthar border points be converted into normal trade and to expand the list of items that can be legally traded.

Though Moreh-Tamu Border Trade does not form a very large share of the total trade volume between India and Myanmar, yet it is considerably significant from the angle of India's move toward Southeast Asia through NEI. With the Government of India and Government of Myanmar (GOM) working towards facilitating Letter of Credit (LOC) facilities at two banks, United Bank of India in Moreh and Myanmar Business Bank in Tamu, the trade may further be enhanced<sup>23</sup>. Adding to it is the coming up of an Integrated Check Post (ICP) in Moreh at an estimated cost of Rs.130 crore.

Diversification and expansion in trade cooperation continues between India and Myanmar. India is the fourth largest trade partner and one of the largest export markets of Myanmar with a trade value of \$ 1.2 billion (2009-10)<sup>24</sup>. India has already given *preferential tariff* to most of the items imported from Myanmar namely wood products, legumes, gems etc. It also supported the setting up of various factories and plants<sup>25</sup>. Besides, from 1999 to 2006, the two countries had signed 825 agreements for development projects coming to an amount of US\$ 4,846 million<sup>26</sup>. Here, most of India's economic cooperation with BIMSTEC touching NEI is inclusive of its initiative for promoting vibrant economic partnership with Myanmar. To promote the existing multilateralism presently effort is being extended by India for early materialisation of the BIMSTEC FTA.

### **Ventures in Infrastructure Sectors: New Gateway and Connectivity**

Infrastructure in the form of transport and communication constitutes one of the priority sectors of BIMSTEC with India as the lead country. Entry of NEI in the BIMSTEC initiative means opening up through proper infrastructure development with proper coordination with Myanmar. In the first meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Transport and Communication Sector, held in New Delhi in

April 2001, discussion was made on issues concerning transport and cross border facilitation, multi modal transport and logistics, infrastructure development, aviation, maritime transport, as well as communication linkages and net working. Consequently, many infrastructure ventures between India and Myanmar came up as integral part of the above move. Changing NEI from being mere border points to profitable economic gateways has become an urgent imperative for India for which a proper infrastructural link is a much with Myanmar.

The first significant facet of India-Myanmar infrastructure cooperation in the post-88 era could be seen in the inauguration of the 165 km long Tamu-Kalemyo-Kalewa Road (named *Indo-Myanmar Friendship Road*) in February 2001- linking NEI with Mandalay, through Moreh town. Another significant move in this direction is the initiative for earliest materialisation of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway linking India's Moreh to Mae Sot of Northern Thailand through Bagan in Myanmar<sup>27</sup>. This is an important BIMSTEC project. To add to it is the recent handing over of the Tamu-Keygone-Kalemyo stretch of road, built with Indian assistance, to the Government of Myanmar in October 2009. Effort is also on for the development of '*Stillwell Road*' (the old Burma Road). Further, India and Myanmar is engaged in completing the missing links in the Trans Asian Railways (TAR) in different parts of their countries<sup>28</sup>. In this direction India has already approved the signing and ratification of the Inter Governmental Agreement on TAR on 8 March 2007. With all these, an Optical Fibre Telecommunication project to run along the Trilateral Highway is coming up under the aegis of BIMSTEC. Efforts have also been taken up between New Delhi and Naypyitaw for the early materialisation of other joint infrastructure projects within the framework of BIMSTEC development programme. Some of these are the signing of the US\$ 135 billion Kaladan Multimodal project in New Delhi in April 2008 to allow the landlocked NEI to have direct access to the open seas; Tamanthi Hydro-Electric Power Project in the Chindwin river, once completed could supplement the power needs of NEI; and the Dawei Deep-Sea port. A delegation of Water and Power Consultancy Services, a GOI undertaking, also visited the project sites of five mini-hydel power projects in Chindwin River valley in Myanmar from 10-24 December, 2009<sup>29</sup>. According to an official of the External Affairs Ministry of India the time table for all these projects is the

next 5-10 years, so that by the time India-ASEAN and BIMSTEC FTAs are fully operational the infrastructure is in place to sustain the anticipated much higher level of trade and economic interaction. The grouping's project in the form of BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) undertaken under Asian Development Bank also proved helpful in this direction by identifying the bottlenecks that need to be overcome<sup>30</sup>. In all these equal share and eager support from the side of Myanmar is a much.

### Energy Diplomacy: Unending Quest

Growing Indian economy needs a sustained energy supply. Its need is estimated to climb to 400 million standard cubic meters per day by 2025. As such India's economic diplomacy has attached due importance to energy security. Myanmar provided the nearest and the most feasible source. India is the sixth largest energy consumer of the world, while Myanmar has enough gas to last for another 38 years at the current rate of extraction<sup>31</sup>. According to 2006 figures from the Energy Information Administration of U.S.A., Myanmar has abundant amount of crude oil reserves approximating to the tune of 150 million barrels, while its natural gas reserves are around 10 to 13 trillion cubic feet<sup>32</sup>. Lobbying for this huge quantity of gas has become an important objective of India's diplomatic equation. Presently India's public sector undertakings GAIL and ONGC Videsh Ltd on the one hand and private enterprise Essar on the other are engaged in gas extraction work. An agreement was signed between the two countries on 23 September 2007 in Naypyitaw to this effect. And, in this pursuit for energy security India's Northeast has an importance of its own because of its locational importance for any future transportation of oil and gas to India from Myanmar.

Greater understanding with Myanmar in the said area will also help in bringing better commercial cohesion within BIMSTEC with energy as the linking basis, without the exception NEI. Myanmar as a lead country in the energy sector of the grouping, and India with its expertise could contribute to the overall objective of BIMSTEC by using the energy demand-supply aspect for regional resource cooperation with related reciprocity. Signing of the Memorandum of Association among the Members for establishment of BIMSTEC Energy Centre in India in the recently concluded 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of BIMSTEC in January 2011 is an added advantage in this direction.

### Tourism Promotion: Prospective Avenue

While tourism is also one of the priority sectors of BIMSTEC where India is the lead country, developing tourism forms another area of India-Myanmar cooperation, with India giving emphasis to its Northeast. Tourism is one particular sector in which NEI is rich and has got abundant amount of untapped business potential. The region is an exceptional tourism destination with the exotic flora and fauna, natural scenic beauty, unique performing arts and varied cuisine and handicrafts<sup>33</sup>. The presence of large number of religious places of different cultures in the region could also help in promoting pilgrim tourism. New Delhi is gradually trying to add this dimension in its LEP. The objective is to renew and rejuvenate the age-old cultural and historical ties between the peoples of Southeast Asia and Northeast India through Myanmar for enhancing the avenue for tourism growth. A declaration known as the *Kolkata Declaration on Tourism Cooperation* was also adopted in February 2005 with Indian initiative<sup>34</sup>. Earlier in a meeting in July 2004 in Bangkok, it was agreed among the members to promote 2004-2005 as '*Visit-BIMSTEC Year*'. A BIMSTEC Tourism Working Group has also been formed to initiate common steps in the said issue. Thus, when these features are open up with the proper linkages and infrastructure NEI could become one of the best tourism hubs of the world, which in turn will show the flow of income and investment.

### Security Concern in NEI: Insurgency, Small Arms and Drug Trafficking

Home grown insurgency, cases of Islamic terrorism, small arms infiltration and ever increasing narco-trafficking are main areas of serious security concern in Northeast India with Myanmar dimension. In this atmosphere one could not be too optimistic of the benefits of BIMSTEC contributing to the growth of the region. As mentioned India has 1643 km long border with Myanmar, which lies entirely in its Northeast, inhabited by trans-border tribes and very porous in nature. On the other hand, the whole of NEI is link with the mainland by a very narrow 22 km wide '*Siliguri Corridor*'. The juxtaposition is very clear. Ample potential for much better link is open towards its Eastern side. The only problem is the existing turmoil in NEI. In the absence of proper controlling mechanism the number of multilateral and bilateral cooperation initiated by India touching this region become less practical. Curbing insurgency, small arms

proliferation and narco-smuggling became an urgent requirement. Overall security problem of Northeast forms an important aspect which possibly will have a direct impact on any NEI-BIMSTEC cooperation the tackling of which again will require full support from Myanmar.

A significant step in this direction was the endorsement and signing of a Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking in the 12<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Naypyitaw on 11 December 2009.<sup>35</sup> India raised the issue of insurgents groups operating from Myanmar soil with the Government of Myanmar on the sidelines of the same meet. Problem of cross-border insurgency in NEI has been a cause of serious concern for New Delhi. Most states of Northeast are grappling with the problem of endemic insurgency which is sustained most by the availability of cheap weapons and easy sanctuary from the Myanmar side. It is believed that at present there are still about 30 camps belonging to ULFA, NSCN (K), CNF, UNLF and PLA insurgents inside Myanmar, with or without the consent of the military regime, despite Myanmar's repeated assurance that it will not allow them to work inside its territory. Interestingly some of these are located in the residential areas of Tamu town itself, bordering India. According to the disclosure of a top cadre of the ULFA recently it is being confirmed that there has been a perceptible move by the Northeast militants to shift their bases from Bangladesh to Myanmar in the wake of the crackdown by Dhaka since December 2009. As such, since 1993, the issue of India's insurgency linked security concerns in its Northeast form an important part of any bilateral talk between the two countries. The outcome was the increasing exchange visits among top civil officials, army functionaries and joint operations.

Aggravating the already complex situation of insurgency in NEI is the influx of small and light weapons (SALW) from Southeast and East Asia through Myanmar<sup>36</sup>. Consequently, the region has become one of the hotbeds of low intensity warfare in this sub-continent. The opening of the border trade has also indirectly helped in promoting the existing dangerous liaison of insurgency and gun running to a new height<sup>37</sup>. According to Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), Manipur alone receive illegal weapons coming from 13 countries all through Myanmar as transit<sup>38</sup>. Further, a

disturbing sign in the whole melee is the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) and Bangladesh's Directorate General Forces Intelligence (DGFI) on the one hand and Islamic militant organisations suspected to be linked with *Al Qaida* such as *Lashker-e- Toiba*, *Jaish-e-Mohammed*, *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami* and on the other<sup>39</sup>.

Last but not the least another related problem with a Myanmar aspect is the heavy incidence of narco-trafficking. Ultimately, collateral damage in the form of mass scale drug addiction and AIDS/HIV has become a common happening in the region. Border fencing which is very much in need is also in the anvil from the Indian side but for which a mutual consensus is again expected from the side of Myanmar.

### Assessment

In the context of the aspects discussed the intertwining nature of BIMSTEC, India and its Northeast, and Myanmar became very evident with Myanmar having a decisive role of its own. BIMSTEC is relevant as most of the issues are commensurate with the priority sectors taken up by it. At the same time it could act as an important medium for synchronisation of the different aspects of the region through a single line process - an interlinking mechanism for linking these different aspects, which will be beneficial for both India and Myanmar. For India, particularly the Northeast, it is the immediate recipient of the end results. And eventually all these issues came within the purview of Myanmar in the sense that in different points of time it is a stakeholder, an originator or act as transit or sponsor to all these. The prevailing apprehension is could India overcome the predicaments by having good relations with whatsoever government in Myanmar or do India still need a rethinking and follow another approach towards the country which could be more helpful. Practical diplomacy, no doubt, demands cordial relations with whatsoever government, yet for India, in the long run, a democratic as well as India friendly government will be in the interest of the country. What is needed is certain convincing of the Myanmar military regime that it would be in its interest to be more open minded on issues of concern to the international community as well as in the domestic affairs.

The implication is very much clear. Emphasis on BIMSTEC economic cooperation must not downplay the politico-strategic and security dimensions.

Political and security issues still form the basis of economic cooperation among many of the member countries. So, what needs to be taken care is that bilateral political and security issues are not allowed to derail the process of BIMSTEC-NEI initiatives. Since Myanmar is a deciding factor confidence building measures are needed. Improving relations between New Delhi and Naypyitaw coupled with the BIMSTEC initiative, inclusive of the special consideration for NEI, could be taken as a manifestation of the bridging gap between South Asia's 'Look East Policy' and Southeast Asia's 'Look West Policy' which may gradually contribute to a *Pan Asian Movement*. With the right mechanism, the BIMSTEC FTA, which is in the anvil, could also materialise at the earliest so that a liberalisation of trade in goods could be initiated<sup>40</sup>.

In the ever evolving scenario the sustain growth factor of India's Northeast is of utmost importance since in the long run initiative towards the same will prove self enhancing for India in its bilateral as well as multilateral initiatives. The new changes in and around the BIMSTEC region must be used for promotion of trade, development of infrastructure, proper linkages, border trade and tourism which in turn will promote economic activity in NEI, with lots of positive multiplier effects. Presently, for New Delhi, development of NEI and its integration with larger regional integration processes has become an imperative, going beyond the security aspects. However, sense of alienation, insurgency, excessive militarisation, health hazards, drug trafficking, porous border with unscrupulous activities, etc., still remain issues that creates cleavages from time to time in all these initiatives. This is heightened when the benefits which should be for the common people is diverted to the existence of a bureaucrat-politician-insurgent nexus. This needs correction. NEI specially needs to be viable from security angle as this region is to be the focal point for many of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects coming up. A right type of synergy in the India-Myanmar relation and adjusting it with BIMSTEC efforts will go a long way in pulling up this region towards sustained economic growth and socio-political stability. This could be supplemented more effectively, as suggested by expert on NEI like Subir Bhaumik, by overcoming two lasting deficiencies of the region: deficit of democracy and development<sup>41</sup>.

Besides, there is the prevailing view point among some scholars that all these process of

regionalisation will not bring any proactive change for NEI. They are sceptical of all these moves of India under its Look East policy and considered it to be devoid of the ground reality. Rather, they believe that it will ensue more negative multiplier effects in the form of corporatisation and squandering away of local resources, corridorisation of the region, surrendering of the rights and benefits of the local people, coercive policies etc. This may not be the whole picture but at the same time cannot be taken as completely unfounded, particularly in the context of the sensitiveness surrounding NEI.

Thus, for transforming the potentials of NEI to actual growth by dispelling the apprehensions surrounding it, the need of the hour is to have a long term policy perspective with certain level of sincerity in governance and vision, and support from the masses, emphasising on removing economic bottlenecks and developing infrastructures on the one hand and overcoming security challenges on the other. In addition, proper connectivity between NEI and the rest of India, physically and psychologically, much beyond superficiality is called for. Efforts for proper understanding among all who are part of the development process is a much in order to achieve the long-term vision of shared prosperity and growth through cooperative action, with due consideration of the ground realities.

Last but not the least what could be deduced is the fact that despite the problems which need to be tackled with support from Myanmar there are many important areas in which mutually beneficial arrangements among the stakeholders could be pursued further. The NEI-BIMSTEC equation within the broader perspective of LEP with Myanmar playing a pivotal role could move towards further enhancement with a pragmatic and rational policy. Opportunities for more people to people contact between those in NEI and Myanmar over and above the existing relationship between the trans-border tribes, if allowed, will be an added advantage in this direction. The urgent demand lies in finding a mechanism to rough out all the negative cleavages. Myanmar is not an all in all factor, yet it still form one of the most decisive factor when it comes to NEI, and could be an enterprising potential within BIMSTEC if put in the right track for all round progress of the aspects. Transcending nature of BIMSTEC must be used for promotion of bilateral relations ultimately leading to common regional growth and multilateralism. It could change NEI from being merely a security issue to a more



productive and vibrant economic hub. This will be in the overall interest of India in the long run and will make its LEP more meaningful, enabling NEI to take the arrowhead role while Myanmar provides the required bridge.

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# Development vs. Armed Conflicts vis-à-vis Development and Armed Conflicts: A Case of Manipur

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Human beings are 'at the centre of concerns for development'. Development and armed conflict are antithesis: one represents progress, self-fulfillment and creative partnership; and other symbolizes killings, destruction, gross violation of human rights and poverty. Horror and devastation of the Second World War are still haunting our minds. Civilianization of contemporary armed conflicts lead more casualties of civilians. Armed conflict poses a serious stumbling blocks to development. The UN Charter outlawed war but many international and non-international armed conflicts are occurring around the globe. Axiom is 'Peace is *sine qua non* for entire process of development: no peace no development'. India experiences Maoist conflict, and armed violence in J & K and North East (NE). Manipur is now the most violent theater of conflict in the NE region of India involving more than a dozen non-governmental armed

groups (NGAGs). Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, due process violations, torture, forced disappearances by State forces; and stalling of developmental schemes and works, threats, extortion, abduction for ransom, wanton destruction of public property, indiscriminate attacks and bomb explosions, and killings, by NGAGs are now trademarks of conflict paradigm in Manipur. Law such as Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) sanction impunity. Only workable mechanism in this critical juncture is implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Manipur and thereby development activities will not be hampered. For humanitarian reasons, IHL restrict the rights of the parties to the conflict to use the methods and means of warfare of their choice, and protect people and property affected or liable to be affected by the conflict.

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## Introduction

Human beings are 'at the centre of concerns for development'. Development and armed conflict are antithesis: one represents progress, self-fulfillment and creative partnership; and other symbolizes killings, destruction, gross violation of human rights and poverty. Horror and devastation of the Second World War are still haunting our minds. Civilianization of contemporary armed conflicts lead more casualties of civilians. Armed conflict poses a serious stumbling blocks to development. The UN Charter outlawed war but many international and non-international armed conflicts are occurring around the globe. Axiom is 'Peace is *sine qua non* for entire process of development: no peace no development'. India experiences Maoist conflict, and armed violence in J & K and North East (NE).

Manipur is now the most violent theater of conflict in the NE region of India involving more than a dozen non-governmental armed groups (NGAGs).

The paper will highlight what basic concept about International Humanitarian Law, ongoing armed conflict and its evil faces in Manipur and how application/implementation of International Humanitarian Law be a effective tool in this critical juncture to mitigate effects of armed conflict and ultimately leading to development in the State. Discussion on development and peace concept is out this paper. application International Humanitarian Law as a tool in the juncture to mitigate effects of armed conflict and ultimately leading to sustainable development in the State.

## International Humanitarian Law

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is one of the most powerful tools the international community has at its disposal to ensure the safety and dignity of people in times of war. It seeks to preserve a measure of humanity, with the guiding principle that even in war there are limits.

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IHL is the body of international law that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to regulate war or armed conflict. IHL is founded on the following basic principles:

- **distinction** (between civilians and combatants; civilian objects and military objectives)
- **'elementary considerations of humanity'** (prohibits inflicting unnecessary suffering, injury and destruction) and the so-called "**Martens Clause**" (in cases not covered by treaties "civilians and combatants remain under the protection and authority of the principles of international law derived from established custom, from the principle of humanity and from the dictates of public conscience)
- **military necessity** (the use of military force is only justified to the extent that it is necessary to achieve a definite military objective)
- **proportionality** (the collateral harm must not be "excessive in relating to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated" when an attack is launched against a military objective)
- independence of *jus in bello* from *jus ad bellum*  
Principal sources of IHL are four Geneva Conventions of 1949 supplemented by its two Additional Protocols of 1977 and body of customary laws. India is party to Geneva Conventions and not a party to its Protocols.

### Definition of Armed Conflict

IHL is triggered by the existence of an armed conflict. The most authoritative definition of armed conflict is:

'An armed conflict exists whenever there is resort to armed force between states or *protracted armed violence* between governmental authorities and organized armed groups or between such groups within a State. IHL applies from the initiation of such armed conflicts and extends beyond the cessation of hostilities until a general conclusion of peace is reached; or, in the case of internal conflicts, a peaceful settlement is achieved. Until that moment, IHL continues to apply in the whole territory of the warring States or, in the case of

internal conflicts, the whole territory under the control of a party, *whether or not actual combat takes place there.*'<sup>[1]</sup>

This test was subsequently endorsed by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court. The ICTY consequently interpreted the term '**protracted armed violence**' to refer to the 'intensity of the conflict'.

In *La Tablada* it was held that a mere thirty hours of intense and organized hostilities can be sufficient to justify invoking IHL<sup>[2]</sup> and in *Hamdan* it was insisted to apply minimum standard of IHL even to members of al Qaeda.<sup>[3]</sup>

IHL distinguishes two types of armed conflicts, viz. International and Non-international Armed Conflicts. Depending on the type of armed conflict applicable laws are also different.

### International Armed Conflict (IAC)

According to common Article 2 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (GC) IAC occurs when one or more *States have recourse to armed force against another State*, regardless of the reasons or the intensity of the confrontation. Relevant rules of IHL may be applicable even in the absence of open hostilities. Moreover, no formal declaration of war or recognition of the situation is required.

Apart from regular, inter-state armed conflicts, Additional Protocol I extends the definition of IAC to include armed conflicts in which peoples are *fighting against colonial domination, alien occupation or racist regimes in the exercise of their right to self-determination* (wars of national liberation).<sup>[4]</sup>

### Non-international Armed Conflict (NIAC)

Most armed conflicts today are non-international in nature. Two legal sources must be examined in order to determine what a NIAC under the IHL.

#### (a) NIACs within the meaning of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949

Common Article 3 applies to 'armed conflicts not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties'. These include armed conflicts in which one or more non-governmental armed groups are involved. Depending on the situation, hostilities may occur between governmental armed forces and non-governmental armed groups or between such groups only.

In order to distinguish an armed conflict, in the meaning of common Article 3, from less serious forms of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions, riots or acts of banditry, the situation must reach a certain threshold of confrontation. Two criteria are usually used in this regard:<sup>[5]</sup>

- (1) The hostilities must reach a *minimum level of intensity*. This may be the case, for example, when the hostilities are of a collective character or when the government is obliged to use military force against the insurgents, instead of mere police forces.
- (2) Non-governmental groups involved in the conflict must be considered as “*parties to the conflict*”, meaning that they possess organized armed forces. This means for example that these forces have to be under a *certain command structure* and have the capacity to sustain military operations. (the armed groups in question must reach a minimum level of organization)

In the current state of IHL, the *motives* of the non-governmental groups, for example, to cover only groups endeavoring to achieve a political objective as a further condition of NIAC has no legal basis.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### **(b) NIACs in the meaning of Article 1 of Additional Protocol II**

A more restrictive definition of NIAC was adopted for the specific purpose of Additional Protocol II. This instrument applies to armed conflicts “which take place in the territory of a High Contracting Party between its armed forces and dissident armed forces or other organized armed groups which, under responsible command, *exercise such control over a part of its territory* as to enable them to carry out sustained and concerted military operations and to implement this Protocol”.<sup>[7]</sup> However, this instrument does not apply to wars of national liberation, which are equated with IACs by virtue of Article 1(4) of Additional Protocol I. This definition is narrower than the notion of NIAC under common Article 3.

In practice, it is often difficult to identify situations that meet the criteria of application established by Additional Protocol II.

In this context, it must be reminded that Additional Protocol II “develops and supplements” common Article 3 “without modifying its existing conditions of application”. This means that this restrictive definition is relevant for the application of Protocol

II only, but does not extend to the law of NIAC in general. The Statute of the International Criminal Court, in its Article 8, para.2 (f), confirms the *existence of a definition of a NIAC not fulfilling the criteria of Protocol II*. Common Article 3 thus preserves its autonomy and covers a larger number of situations.

#### **Law Applicable to NIACs Conflicts**

The rules of IHL applicable in situations of NIACs are found in both treaty and customary law.

*Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949* specifically applies in the case of conflicts ‘not of an international character’. Common Article 3, which is sometimes referred to as a ‘treaty in miniature’, stipulates the *minimum protection* that must be afforded to all those who are not, or who are no longer, taking an active part in hostilities, for examples, civilians, members of armed forces of the parties to the conflict who have been captured, are wounded, or surrendered. It provides for humane treatment and non-discriminatory treatment for all such persons, in particular by prohibiting acts of violence to life and person specifically murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, the taking of hostages, and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment. It prohibits also the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without judgment being pronounced by a regular constituted court providing all judicial guarantees recognized as indispensable. Finally, it imposes an obligation on the parties to collect the wounded and sick and to care for them.

The application of the common Article 3 shall not affect the legal status of the Parties to the conflict.

Article 3 is the bedrock of IHL as affirmed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), recognized within customary law as the *absolute minimum of humanitarian treatment* applicable during armed conflict of any legal qualification.<sup>[8]</sup> (*jus cogens*) *Additional Protocol II* (adopted in 1977) supplemented common Article 3, (without modifying its existing conditions of application) which was specifically enacted to apply to certain situations of NIAC; it strengthened protection beyond the minimum standards contained in common Article 3.

Like common Article 3, *Additional Protocol II* provides the humane and non-discriminatory treatment of all those who are not, or who are no longer, taking part in hostilities.<sup>[9]</sup> Most of provisions

of Protocol II are now considered as a part of *customary IHL* and, thus, *binding on all parties to NIACs*.

A limited number of other treaties of humanitarian law, human rights – particularly non-derogable and domestic laws – in the State in which a conflict is taking place are also apply to situations of NIAC. The treaty rules applicable in NIACs are, in fact, rudimentary compared to those applicable in IACs.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Parties Bound by Humanitarian Law in NIACs

All parties to NIACs - whether *State actors*<sup>[11]</sup> (and other persons or groups acting in fact on their instructions or under their direction or control) or *armed groups*<sup>[12]</sup> - are bound by the relevant rules of IHL. Even *States not party to an armed conflict* are required by common Article 1 to Geneva Conventions to neither encourage a party to violate IHL nor to take action that would assist in such violations. Furthermore, common Article 1 is generally interpreted as requiring States not party to an armed conflict to endeavor – by means of positive action – to ensure respect for IHL by parties to a conflict.

### IHL applicable to (IACs)

There are over 30 international instruments in force dealing with the law of IACs. The most important among them are:-

- 1949 *Four Geneva Conventions*:
  1. Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the condition of the wounded and sick in armed forces in the field
  2. Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the condition of wounded, sick and shipwrecked members of armed forces at sea
  3. Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of prisoners of war
  4. Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of civilian persons in time of war
- Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and relative to the Protection of victims of International Armed Conflicts (*Protocol I*).

Other relevant IHL treaties, Human Rights treaties, domestic laws and most importantly *customary IHL* are also simultaneously applicable during IACs.

### Case Study - Manipur

Historically, Manipur's existence as an independent kingdom can be traced back around two millennia according to the royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumpaba*.

It is fact that Manipur was an independent kingdom until it was defeated by the British forces in the Anglo-Manipur War (1891) and became a British protectorate till 1947. Manipur regained her independent on 14 August 1947 after the British left.

The Maharaja-in-Council of independent Manipur drafted and then adopted *Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947* and established democratic and secular popular government having the Maharaja as a Constitutional Head akin to the British principle of Parliamentary Sovereignty and Collective Responsibility.<sup>[13] [14]</sup> The State Assembly was inaugurated by the then King Bodha Chandra in October 1948 thereby marking the historic transition from the 2000 year old absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. Probably, Manipur was the first to introduce parliamentary democracy in Southeast Asia.<sup>[15]</sup> An independent judiciary also existed to safeguard the citizen's fundamental rights and, also, ensure the citizen's duties as well.

Manipur became a part of India through *controversial 1949 Merger Agreement*<sup>[16]</sup> and accorded Part C State status (even not a full fledged State). Manipur was a Union Territory of India from 1956 and then later a State of India from 1972 (that also after prolong and sustain struggle by the people of Manipur).

### Armed Conflict in Manipur and its Effects to Civilians

The indigenous peoples of Manipur (Manipuris) consisting about 36 communities or groups, and they are racially and ethnically akin to the peoples of South East Asia; ethically and culturally are distinct from the rest of mainland India. Popular discontent around the illegal and unconstitutional merger and subsequent state policy of racial discrimination and genocide that fumed resistance movements ever since, and escalated into open armed conflict since late 1970's. The Government of India (GOI) responded by promulgating the colonial, racial and genocidal legislation Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance on 16 April 1950, and afterward enacted the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA).

Presently, Manipur is one of the highly militarized zones in the world. There are about 350 military

installations having around 50 to 60 thousands armed forces of India and roughly one troop for every 15 citizens, a proportion possibly higher than that used in many recognized active war zones.<sup>[17]</sup>

<sup>[18]</sup> This armed forces of India belonging to a distinctly different ethnic group with distinctive culture, religion and language from the local indigenous population and they considered that the entire population of Manipur are hostile to them. This is the fundamentally racist position characterizing the distinctive context of the on-going armed conflict in Manipur.<sup>[19]</sup>

The deployment of the armed forces and the invocation of a dozen of draconian laws notably AFSPA for a longer period, the annual reports placed in the parliament by the Home Minister, GOI about the death of Indian soldiers and guerrillas with facts and figures, unambiguously prove the existence of armed conflicts between the state forces and the liberation guerrillas in Manipur. The Justice Reddy Commission's Report on AFSPA (RCR)<sup>[20]</sup>, and the Supreme Court (SC) of India in *NPMHR*<sup>[21]</sup>, *PUCL*<sup>[21a]</sup>, *EEVFAM*<sup>[22]</sup> cases, Justice J.S. Verma Committee Report<sup>[22a]</sup>, Justice N. Santosh Hedge Commission<sup>[22b]</sup> and many others also directly and indirectly indicates the existence of armed conflicts in Manipur.

It is pertinent to mentioned that in *EEVFAM* case it was observed by the SC:

There is no denying that Manipur is facing the grave threat of insurgency. It also clear that a number of the insurgent groups are operating there, some of which are heavily armed. These groups indulge in heinous crimes like extortion and killing of people to establish their hegemony. (There are about 30 extremist organizations in the State out of which six are very powerful and they are armed with sophisticated weapons. Their aim and object is to secede from the Republic of India and to form an independent State of Manipur.)

Many credible global NGOs like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Asian Centre of Human Rights, and Asian Commission of Human Rights also concludes existence of armed conflict in Manipur.

In Manipur two types of armed conflicts exist viz. *IAC* between Government armed forces and non-governmental armed forces (National Liberation Movement) and *NIACs* between non-governmental

groups themselves. Even though there is some grey area from the part of GOI to classify the conflict as *IAC*, from this aspect the conflict may be characterized as *NIACs* for proper implementation IHL. On the other hand, in the present context of international law definition of liberation movement is very difficult to define and most of the conflict are generally defined as *secessionist movement*. But the proscribed UNLF (United National Liberation Front) and RPF (Revolutionary People's Front), consistently maintained that they are striving to defend the '*right to self-determination*' of the peoples of Manipur which had been forcibly annexed by the Indian government and Manipur is Non-self Governing Territory and plebiscite is the ultimate solution.<sup>[23]</sup> The fact is that indigenous Manipuris people do not have full measure of self-government as the polity is not federal and the nominal local government runs at the mercy of the union government.

The Indo-Manipur armed conflict involves more than a dozen non-governmental armed groups<sup>[24]</sup> out of which only six groups<sup>[25]</sup> are declared as proscribed terrorist organizations under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). This act of declaration by the GOI is nothing but giving *official recognition* to be parties to armed conflict means guerrillas in Manipur. As a result of armed conflict in Manipur during 1992 - January 6, 2013 it is estimated that **5842 deaths** (which includes 2193 civilians who are not taking direct part in hostilities, 966 security forces personnel and 2683 guerrillas).<sup>[26]</sup> Civil society sources and independent local media claim the conflict resulted in 3 to 5 deaths daily in recent years and 10 to 20 thousands deaths over the last two decades.<sup>[27]</sup> The Chief Minister, O. Ibobi Singh, reportedly said that 'since 1980 when Manipur became a disturbed area over 8,000 innocent people and 12,000 members of armed opposition groups and security forces have lost their lives'.<sup>[28]</sup> Apart from these 2713 cases were registered in Manipur in the last five years attracting the provisions of the UAPA.

The *EEVFAM* case again clearly noted:

For realization of their objective they (armed groups) have been indulging in violent activities, including killing of civilians and members of security forces. It is stated in the counter affidavit that during the period 2000 to October, 2012, 105 policemen, 260 security personnel, and 1214 civilians were

killed; the number of injured during the same period is 178 for the policemen, 466 for members of security forces and 1173 for civilians.

There is no proper documentation of the fact and what data shows is only a fraction of the real casualties. The civilian populations who are not taking direct part in hostilities are main victims of the conflict in Manipur. Given the longevity of the conflict it is likely that overall at least 40,000 people have been killed since 1979.<sup>[29]</sup>

Major non-governmental armed groups are to be considered as parties to conflict and they are well organized<sup>[30]</sup> with command structure and also have the capacity to sustain military operations. In this sense, the conflict in Manipur is qualified as armed conflict based on *dual test of intensity and organization* as stipulated by International Tribunals and ICRC.<sup>[31]</sup>

The existence of armed conflict in so called '*disturbed areas*' are also acknowledged by chief of Indian Army,<sup>[32]</sup> Speaker of Manipur Legislative Assembly<sup>[33]</sup>, the Chief Minister of Manipur<sup>[34]</sup> and many others including UN Special Rapporteur.<sup>[35]</sup>

It is also fact that some armed groups operating in Manipur are not qualified as parties to the conflict as they failed to fulfil dual test for characterization of the existence of armed conflict viz. the intensity and organization. They may be better characterized as *terrorist or armed gangs* mostly involved in extracting money from the local population rather than in fighting governmental forces.

### **AFSPA - a Colonial, Racial, Discriminatory and Genocidal Legislation**

The AFSPA is racist and it is a symbol of racist regime. Although the situation of law and order in other part of India is much more dangerous and disturbed like Maoist affected areas such legislation has not been in force, it only meant for racially or ethnically distinct areas of northeast India (NE) and Jammu and Kashmir. The UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has also endorsed racial discriminatory nature of the Act.

AFSPA is also a colonial legislation. Its predecessor - the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance, 1942 had been enacted in order to *neutralize Quit India Movement*. It was hundred percent a colonial instrument. In short, the Indian Parliament has been acting virtually as Linlithgow- II in the NE region for more than half a century.<sup>[36]</sup>

The Act was originally enacted as a temporary measure to suppress demands for self-determination in the post independence period in the Naga Hills but in fact large part of the NE is still declared '*disturbed*' under the Act and civilian population is still under grip of the military rule. The Act is described as '*dated and colonial-era law that breach contemporary international human rights standards.*'<sup>[37]</sup>

Above all the Act is discriminatory and genocidal legislation. Extra-judicial execution, torture, enforced disappearances, rape, illegal detention, committed against the indigenous Manipuris people with intention to destroy, a national or ethnic or racial or religious group is nothing but genocide. This genocidal Act empowers the armed forces of India to kill with *impunity and immunity*, indigenous Manipuris having distinctive ethnic and racial heritage, and simply transforming the region as a torture-chamber and concentration camp of political dissidents of Delhi regime. And Act itself prima facie discriminatory. RCR also endorsed this aspect very briefly as '*the Act ... has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and instrument of discrimination and high-handedness.*'<sup>[38]</sup> Justice JS Verma Commission adds that '*... brutalities of the armed forces faced by residents in the border areas ..... and conflict areas are causing more alienation*' and '*... that impunity for systematic or isolated sexual violence .... is being legitimized by AFSPA ...*'<sup>[38a]</sup>

The AFSPA in effect allows the state to override rights in the '*disturbed areas*' in a much more intrusive way than would be the case under a state of emergency, since the right to life is in effect suspended, and this is done without the safeguards applicable to states of emergency. A law such as AFSPA has no role to play in a democracy.<sup>[39]</sup>

Under the Act even non-commission officers are empowered to shoot at sight and more interestingly de jure impunity is granted to armed forces of India for their criminal act.<sup>[40]</sup> It means '*extrajudicial executions under the cloak of AFSPA have become virtually a part of state policy*'.

The SC of India<sup>[41]</sup> very surprisingly upheld the Constitutional validity of the Act<sup>[42]</sup> Christof Heyns rightly observed that '*it is therefore difficult to understand how the SC, which has been so progressive in other areas, also concerning the right to life, could have ruled in 1997 that AFSPA did not violate the Constitution.*'<sup>[43]</sup> So there no meaning of judicial activism and sacrosanct nature of right



to life to the people of Manipur. In short, the SC in spirit had upheld a statute comparable to that of a Nazi statute in post-colonial republic of India and consequently a silent party to the genocide in Manipur.<sup>[44]</sup>

It seems that all the organs of GOI viz. Executive thorough the machinery of its armed forces, Legislature and Judiciary and national media are collectively act as policy to accomplish their avowed agenda.

The fact of racial, discriminatory and genocidal policy of GOI is also very clear from the fact that the GOI has repealed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 and not the black law AFSPA. The promulgation of the repressive colonial law leads to no other conclusion than that colonialism exists in the NE region. If colonialism exists, liberation movements logically follow. The insurgency situation in the NE has been worsened since the AFSPA has been imposed in the 1950s. The insurgent groups have greatly increased. Their cadres, weapons, tactical capabilities have expanded and improved immensely.

No civilized jurisprudence would justify this additional empowerment given to the armed forces to kill its own citizens. 1997 judgment of apex court has run a short of juristic ammunitions and the verdict borders on the extreme edge of technical formalism of the crudest positivist kind.<sup>[45]</sup>

GOI's persistent refusal to repeal the Act even though with strong worded recommendations poured from UN human rights bodies, Treaties Monitoring bodies including HRC, CERD; observations by many international rapporteurs, credible international human rights NGOs and its own created commissions<sup>[46]</sup> clearly shows the colonial mindset of the GOI.

The governmental armed forces too are victims of AFSPA because of retaliation and communal tendency arising from genocide, torture and other inhuman acts committed by them. The simple logic is that "Violence and genocide often arise from racial and ethnic discrimination. Discrimination can easily lead to racially and ethnically motivated violence, which in turn, may escalate into genocide."

This state policy of genocide, extreme persecution coupled by oppression and cycle of legal impunity as a result of AFSPA prove that the existing GOI is racist regime and fighting the regime can be justified under the principle of '*Carence de*

*Souverainte'* and that oppressed peoples want to exercise their state right for reversion to sovereign status that existed before the annexation.

### **Breach of IHL in Indo-Manipur Armed Conflict**

From the very moment of merger of Manipur to Indian Union till now many lives including civilians have loss, people are brutally tortured, murdered, many cases of enforced disappearance, arbitrarily arrested, and women are mercilessly rape and gang rape besides committing innumerable cases of extra judicial execution in the name of counter insurgency.

On the other hand non-governmental armed groups are also violating even the minimum rules of IHL and they are also incurred individual and command responsibility just like governmental armed forces for violation of laws and custom of war. Consequently, the civilian population is between 'a rock and hard place' as they have become a target for state and non-state armed actors alike. CM of Manipur acknowledging the conflict situations in Manipur once stated that 'as everyone knows that deteriorating situations is a nadir today with insurgents going beyond their Code of Conducts indulging in unwanted killings, kidnappings, extortions, lootings and fake encounters killings etc.'<sup>[47]</sup>

### **III**

#### **Some Cases fragrant violation of IHL**

(i.e. grave breach of Geneva Conventions of 1949, Genocide, Crimes against humanity, War Crimes, Serious violations of article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and others serious violations of laws and customs of war)

- **1528 cases extrajudicial execution** including 33 women and 98 children by governmental armed forces since January 1979 till May 2012. (documented by CSCHR & UN)
- 44 cases of torture (documented by HRLN, Manipur)
- 1133 cases of illegal detention and arrest by the governmental armed forces during January 2008 to December 2008 and 1119 from January 2009 to December 2009 (HRI, Human Rights Special Report: Manipur-2009)
- 190 and 142 cases of number of people killed by the unidentified persons and non-state actors during January 2008 to December 2008 and January 2009 to December 2009. (Source: *Ibid*)

- 16 cases of enforced disappearances from 1980 to 1999. (Source: *Ibid*)
- 12 cases of Massacres that resulted 110 dead including Malom Killing of 2000, RMC Hospital Killing of 1996, Tera Bazar Killing of 1993, Oinam Village, Senapati Killing of 1987 and Heirangoithong Killing of 1984. (Source: *Ibid*)
- 10 cases of rape including Th. Manarama (Bamon Kampu) of 2001, Ningthoujam ongbi Ahanjoubi (Takyenthongbal) of 1996, and Miss Rose (Ngaprum Khullen, Ukhrul) of 1974. (Source: *Ibid*)
- Displacement of about 50 villagers from Barak circle (which comprised of eight villages) who were forced to flee fearing persecution by the security forces during "Operation Tornado" launched on 27 October 2005. Several houses were reportedly damaged in the operation. A team of MHRC visited the displaced camping at a relief camp at a town hall in Jiribam district. (Source: The Telegraph, 1 November 2005)
- Wilful killing of thousands of civilians who are not taking direct part in hostilities by both parties to the conflict.
- Recruitment of child soldiers by non-governmental forces. (Source: Child Soldier Global Report 2008)
- 79 non-local who are not taking direct part in hostilities were killed by non-governmental forces and 26 were injured during 2001 to 2011 (Source: SATP)
- During 2000- 2012 (till Feb.1), bomb explosions mostly in civilian areas claimed 104 lives and 532 injured mostly civilians by parties to the conflict. (Source: *Ibid*)
- Death of a civilian identified as Jaikalung in an encounter that took place between a combined force of suspected ZUF, NSCK-K on one side and NSCN-IM cadres on the other at Tamenglong district headquarters on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012.
- raping of two girl students in the night of Oct 5, 2012 by cadres of the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) at Khoupum area of Tamenglong district.
- In 1990s ethnic cauldron where more than 900 'innocent Kukis including children, pregnant women, aged persons were slaughtered' by the NSCN -IM cadres and their collaborators. In a single day on September 13, 1993 altogether 104 Kukis were killed. Around 360 villages were also uprooted and around one lakh Kukis were displaced in the 1990s 'ethnic cleansing' by the NSCN -IM.
- NSCN troops had killed 9 AR personnel and inflicted injury to three personnel on July 9, 1987 at the AR Post near Oinam Village in Senapati district. Post the attack, the AR personnel launched the operation and had allegedly burnt down over a hundred houses, six schools and 10 Churches in the thirty Naga villages. Properties worth of 50, 75,000 were allegedly destroyed from seven villages. Three women were reportedly raped, five women allegedly molested and around 300 persons were tortured by the AR apart from killing 27 persons at different locations on different occasions in Senapati district. Oinam carnage of July 9, 1987 - SDC N Surendra who collected hard evidence of the Indian military personnel's atrocities at Oinam was picked up allegedly by Assam Rifles from the road and killed but his corpse was never found. (The Sangai Express; Scars of Operation Blue Bird at Oinam village: 25 years down the line, justice still awaited, July 11, 2012)
- In February 2009, Kasom Khulle SDO Dr ThingnamKishan and his two subordinate staff - Token and Rajen were abducted by NSCN-IM from Urkhrul and they were murdered and abandoned in the most savage manner at Lukhrabi Thong, Senapati District.
- Fact encounter case of three armed militant viz. Laishram Nobin, N. Ingocha and I. Rosan by 23 Assam Rifles near Chadong Tangkhul village under Litan police station in Urkhrul district on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012. It was alleged that Gobi along with two were handed over to one Major Hauman, post commander of 23 AR posted at Nongdam Kukikhul, along with arms for surrendering to the Government of Manipur by his father, but they were killed in a fake encounter and their dead bodies deposited at the morgue of Regional Medical Institute of Medical Science (RIMS).

- Two persons, including the State Secretary of Zeliangrong Students' Union, Manipur (ZSUM) Chunthuigai Kamei have been shot dead by alleged NSCN-IM at Tamenglong district area on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2012. Both died on the spot when a group of NSCN-IM with sophisticated weapons opened fire while they were inside a house. In 24 Mile near Longkao (Nungkao) village, under Tousem police station.
- In Manipur, counter-insurgency operations by the Indian Army against local groups along the border with Burma (Myanmar), as well as ethnic clashes, have resulted in the displacement of at least 6000 people from the Hmar and Paite ethnic groups like IDPs elsewhere in the NE, they are also reported to live in deplorable conditions, lacking food, medicines, warm clothes and other essential commodities. (Source: Monika Menedal; Internal Displacement in India: Status, Condition & Prospects of Return, Refugee Watch, 33, June 2009, p. 36)
- August 20, 2006: Two civilians are killed, while four others sustained injuries when a group of ZRA cadres opened fire towards a crowded church targeting a patrol party of the AR at Vengnuom in the Churachandpur district. (Source: SATP)
- The incident of molestation of more than 20 women allegedly by the UNLF and KCP militants at Parbung and Lungthulie under Tipaimukh sub-division in the Churachandpur district in January 2006. (*Ibid*)

## Conclusion

Only way to mitigate the effects of the armed conflict in any part of the world including Manipur is to apply by both parties in hostilities the relevant provisions of IHL. GOI is no option but to repeal racial, discriminatory and genocidal legislation like AFSPA so that GOI may show its face to the world at least that the government is not racist and may also a strong point in support of them that those fighting going on is not against racist regime in the exercise of Manipuris' right of self-determination, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and thereby denying

granting of Prisoners of War status to guerrillas fighting for independence.

Manipur has been the tradition of implementing IHL through ages. In the historic past, when Manipur was still under the division of many principalities like Meitei, Moirang, Khuman, Heireng Khungja, Khendre, Chaireng, etc., there was a strong tradition of organizing bouts of mutual fights among the individuals or chiefs. There is a very old manuscript written in Meitei script called *Chainarol*.<sup>[48]</sup> The manuscript chronicles records of seventeen such bouts of mutual fight and all the fundamental principles of IHL were found in it. *Saturol Lanturool Sapharol Lanpharol*,<sup>[49]</sup> an ancient manuscript of the Meiteis, elaborates the rules and laws of a warrior had to follow when he is in a combative situation. Valiant heroes and warriors of the past who had successfully fought many battles and captured or killed ferocious wild animals were strict disciplinarians who followed the traditional laws and codes of conduct without any breach. Another ancient manuscript called *Takhel Ngamba*<sup>[50]</sup> details the kinds of foes who should not be killed although fallen at the hands of victor. It records that a foe who has fled from the battlefield or who has disarmed himself should not be killed. A foe who has taken refuge on the top of a tree or who has dipped and taken refuge under water shall not be killed. Further, a foe who pleads for life biting a handful of grass or one who pleads with folded hands shall not be killed. Again, one who is stripped of his clothes or one who is apparently scared of confrontation shall not be killed.

In the present context also, one armed non-governmental organization engaged in the conflict with the Indian government, the Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) and its armed wing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) voluntarily declared to abide by the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions in 1997.<sup>[51]</sup>

So, in compliance to the mandate of the Constitution of India, the Government of India (GOI), being a party to the Geneva Conventions should recognize the existence of armed conflicts in Manipur to facilitate implementation and enforcement of IHL effectively with a view to mitigating the consequences of armed conflicts and punish the perpetrators of IHL in Manipur. In this regard, the existing stand of the GOI requires revolutionary reversal and all the guerrillas should also comply the rules and customs of war. Moreover, whatever happening in Manipur particularly military

massacres, cold-blooded murdered both by governmental and non-governmental forces, torture is due to the non-declaration of a situation of armed conflict else commander and individual will be responsible for their very responsible for their criminal act under IHL and automatically will deterrent effect.

IHL is the only way available to ferret out workable device to put an end to impunity for grave breach of Geneva Conventions including Common Article 3 so that those persons whether belongs to armed forces of GOI or non-governmental forces must be personally liable and also accrue command responsibility and be punished for the grave and other breaches of Geneva Conventions and other related serious violations of laws and custom of war by establishing International Criminal Tribunal for Manipur, or prosecution under International Criminal Court (ICC) or National Court having jurisdiction to try violation of grave breach of Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols and other serious violations of laws and customs of war by suitable amendment to existing the Geneva Conventions Act, 1960. GOI must not isolate itself from ICC Statute and it is high time to sign and ratify the same for cause of humanity.

It high time to stop recruitment of child soldier by the non-governmental armed forces immediately as it violates IHL and International Human Rights Law particularly Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989 and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, 2000 and those recruited child soldiers must be properly rehabilitated as per appropriate provisions of CRC.

Perpetrators of IHL must be booked and try by International Tribunal preferably by ICC and the GOI must give free access by ICRC in Manipur. Last but not the least, GOI must sign and ratify - two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, ILO Convention No.138, and ICC Statute.

Only workable mechanism in this critical juncture is implementation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Manipur and thereby development activities will not be hampered. For humanitarian reasons, IHL restrict the rights of the parties to the conflict to use the methods and means of warfare of their choice, and protect people and property affected or liable to be affected by the conflict.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. ICTY Decision on 2 October 1995, ILR 105 (1997), 419 (453), para 70
2. Juan Carlos Abella v. Argentina, Case 11.137, Report N° 55/97, IACHR, OEA/Ser L/V/II.95 Doc.7 rev. at 271 (1997) para 156
3. Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, decided June 29, 2006, the US Supreme Court
4. Article 1(4), Additional Protocol I (1977)
5. ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic, Judgment, IT-94-I-T, of May 1997, para. 561-568; See also ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Fatmir Limaj, Judgement, IT-03-66-T, 30 November 2005, para.84
6. The *Limaj* case is the authority of this legal point. The Tribunal ruled that 'the determination of the existence of an armed conflict is based solely on two criteria: the intensity of the conflict and organization of the parties, the purpose of the armed forces to engage in acts of violence or also achieve some further objective is, therefore, irrelevant' (i.e. the Serbian forces were not intended to defeat the enemy army but to carry out 'ethnic cleansing in Kosovo). ICTY, The Prosecutor v. Fatmir Limaj, Judgment, IT-03-66-T, 30 November 2005
7. Article 1(1), Additional Protocol II (1977)
8. ICJ, Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. USA), Merits, ICJ Reports 1986, para. 218
9. It expands the protection provided by common Article 3, by including prohibitions on collective punishment, acts of terrorism, rape, enforced prostitution and indecent assault, slavery and pillage. It sets out specific provisions and protections for certain categories of persons such as children, persons deprived of liberty for reasons related to the conflict, persons prosecuted for criminal offences related to the conflict, persons who are wounded, sick and shipwrecked, medical and religious personnel, and the civilian population (attacks on civilian populations, starvation as a methods of combat, and forced displacement are all prohibited).
10. While common Article 3 is of fundamental importance, it only provides a rudimentary framework of minimum standards. Additional Protocol II usefully supplements common Article 3, but it is still less detailed than the rules governing IACs in the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I. Additional Protocol II contains a mere 15 substantive articles, whereas Additional Protocol I has more than 80. While numbers alone do not tell the full story, they are an indication of a significant disparity in regulation by treaty law between international and non-international armed conflicts, particularly when it comes to detail rules and definitions.

## Development vs. Armed Conflicts vis-à-vis Development and Armed Conflicts: A Case of Manipur

11. States are explicitly bound by the treaties to which they are party and by applicable customary law. In addition, Article 1 common to the four Geneva Conventions requires that States Parties must, in all circumstances, not only “respect”, but also “ensure respect”, for humanitarian law.
12. Although only States may formally ratify or become party to the various international treaties, armed groups party to a NIAC also must comply with common Article 3, customary IHL, and, where applicable, Additional Protocol II. The extensive practice of international courts and tribunal and other international bodies affirms this obligation.
13. India became a republic in 1950 with a written constitution and it held its first general elections in 1951-52
14. Elections were held on the basis of universal adult franchise in 1948 and accordingly elected a 53 member state legislature. A seven member council of ministers responsible to it then took office to begin a democratic journey to peace and development. The Maharaja of Manipur became a constitutional monarch.
15. Human Rights Special Report Manipur – 2009, HRI Publication 2009, Imphal, p.2
16. Manipur was annexed into the Dominion of India on 15 October 1949. The King signed under duress the ‘Manipur Merger Agreement’ on 21 September 1949. Under the Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties, 1949 the treaty is void ab initio.
17. UPR, HRC India: Manipur Persistence of Impunity in North-East Region (20 November 2007), Submitted by: CORE Centre for Organization Research and Education
18. There is about 14,000 state police, and an estimated 50,000 soldiers and paramilitary forces of India. (“These fellows must be eliminated”, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2008, p. 22 as cited in “We, Widows of the Gun”, Frank van Llerde, The Hague, 2011 )
19. Manipur: A Memorandum on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary or Summary Executions; Submitted by Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights in Manipur and the UN, to Christof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mission to India, 19-30 March 2012, para. 31
20. Report of the Committee to Review the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2005
21. Naga People’s Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India, AIR 1998 SC 431
- 21a. People’s Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India (1997) 3 SCC 433
- 21b. Report of the Supreme Court Appointed Commission (appointed on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2013 and submitted report on March 30, 2013) for inquiry six cases of extra-judicial killings in Manipur and other related matters)
22. The PIL filed by the Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association, Manipur; the SC asked “How can a State Government file an affidavit stating that they are killing ‘us’ and so we are killing ‘them’. Are we in a state of war?” (“Are We in a state of war? Supreme Court tongue lashes State Govt.”: The Sangai Express, November 24, 2012 )
- 22a. Report of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law (submitted on January 23, 2013)
23. ‘I am not waging war against the Indian government, rather I am striving to defend the ‘right to self-determination’ of the people of Manipur which had been forcibly annexed by the Indian government’, said the chairman of proscribed UNLF, RK Meghen today in his statement submitted to the judge of special NIA court through his counsel. (the Imphal Free Press, December 17, 2010)  
In September 2006, the UNFL forwarded a four point formula to start a plebiscite process for resolution of the conflict in Manipur under the supervision of United Nations. (Overview: Insurgency & Peace Efforts in Manipur, Centre for development and peace studies)  
Memorandum submitted to the Secretary General United Nations and the Chairman of the Decolonization Committee (Committee of 24) for De-colonization of Manipur from India Colonialism and Alien Racist Regime, enlisting Manipur in the list of the Non-self Governing Territories of the United Nations and, Restoration of Independence and Sovereignty of Manipur; Submitted by Revolutionary People’s Front (Source: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/4568/memorandum/index.html>)
24. Major guerrillas groups in Manipur are United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People’s Liberation Army (PLA), People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), People’s United Liberation Front (PULF), United Naga People’s Council (UNPC), United People’s Party of Kangleipak (UPPK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), Manipur Naga Revolutionary Front (MNRF), Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA), Hmar People’s Convention-Democratic (HPC-D), Kuki Liberation Army (KLA), Kuki National Army (KNA), Kuki National Front (KNF), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM), etc. There are 18 Kuki militant groups in Manipur. These Kuki militant outfits have signed Suspension of Operation (SoO) with Government of India under the banner of United People’s Front (UPF) and Kuki National Organization (KNO). KNO signed a SoO with GOI in 2005 and later with the Government of Manipur in 2008. KNF signed a SoO with GOI on August 1, 2005 and later with Government of Manipur on 22 August 2008. (Source: SATP (<http://www.satp.org>))

25. Proscribed guerrillas operating in Manipur are KCP, KYKL, Manipur People's Liberation Army (MPLF), PLA, PREPAK, UNLF
26. Source: SATP (<http://www.satp.org>)
27. "We, Widows of the Gun", Frank van Llerde, The Hague, 2011
28. Sangai Express, 16 June 2003
29. Ploughshares: Armed Conflict Report: India-Northeast (1979-first combat death) Updated January 2010
30. For example, UNLF one of the oldest guerrillas group in Manipur formed in 1964 is having clear cut objective with elected leaders through a decision of its General Assembly Session with hierarchical command structure and international disciplinary mechanism. The Central Committee of UNF is the highest decision making body. Its armed wing – MPA under different district commands. A District Command is headed by a district commanders and it is further divided into units. The front's armed wing MPA has three well-trained mobile task forces – Wangbran Task Force, Siroy Task Force and Maril Task Force. The front also maintains an organizational cell, which takes up developmental and welfare measures for the people. Department of Publicity and Propaganda is the publicity wing of the front and all press releases and propaganda work is done by it. The front also has a women's wing. Other major guerrillas also have more or less same structure. (Source: <http://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/FormTeplete/frmTempSimpleWithEig...> )
31. How is the term "Armed Conflict" Defined in International Humanitarian Law? – International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Opinion Paper, March 2008
32. It needs to be appreciated that while being deployed in 'Disturbed Areas' the Army operates in heightened hostile environment and is faced with well trained and lethally equipped terrorist outfits. These situations which are akin to war are extraordinary and require extraordinary measures to control them. (Ready to face all security challenges: Army chief; the Sangai Express, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011)
33. Existence of armed conflict in Manipur is also acknowledged by Manipur Legislative Assembly Speaker, Th. Lokeshaw as the people of the State are into a critical situation in the face of armed conflicts...." (The Sangai Express, May 5, 2012)
34. the Chief Minister, O. Ibobi Singh as " ... the state government is giving priority to solving these issues by pressuring the Centre to initiate appropriate measures to tackle the armed conflicts in the State through political means....As it has been generally known that the conflict situation/insurgency in the state is created by opposing political thoughts, one believes in the Indian Parliamentary System and other one is the groups who is Opposing it and instead wants total liberation from the Indian Parliament." (Militaryization no solution to conflict in state: Ibobi; the Imphal Free Press, December 24, 2010)
35. The widespread deployment of the military creates an environment in which the exception becomes the rule, and the use of lethal force is seen as the primary response to conflict with a concomitant permissive approach in respect of the use of lethal force. This is also difficult to reconcile in the long run with India's insistence that it is not engaged in armed conflict. (*op. cit.* note 19).
36. But the fact was that the 1942 demoniacal ordinance crafted by the British colonialists, among others, had expedited and facilitated the passage of Indian Independence Act, 1947. The 1958 law inherits the same powerful political potency in the NE India. Instead of containing armed conflict it aggravates the situation and lead to birth of many non-governmental armed groups in Manipur.
37. UN Commissioner for Human Rights , Navaethem Pillay; "When will AFSPA be repealed?"; The People's Chronicle, November 8, 2012.
38. *op. cit.*, note 20, p. 75.
- 38a. Report of the Committee on Amendment to Criminal Law as submitted on January 23, 2013.
39. *op. cit.*, note 19.
40. Sec. 6 of the AFSPA.
41. *Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v. Union of India*, AIR 1998 SC 431.
42. Human Rights groups, journalists and activists harshly criticized the judgment as a "shocking ruling".
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# Situating Northeast in India's Look East Policy

Shubha Chatterjee\*

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*As India's much hyped Look East policy celebrates the twenty first anniversary of its success, there are still many areas where there has been very little progress in terms of the benefits that India receives through this initiative. While the emphasis is more on improving and strengthening the connectivity and relations between India and South East Asia, very little attention is given to the north eastern part of India that happens to occupy a very important place in India's Look East policy. The paper attempts to examine the reasons behind this slow*

*progress. In doing so the paper has been divided into several parts where in the beginning the age old relations between the people of north east India and South East Asia have been explained particularly the similarity in culture and traditions. Then the paper proceeds on to propose a brief historical background of India's Look East Policy and the importance of the north east region of India in ensuring the policy's further success and finally giving way to bring out the present status of the north east in India's Look East Policy and the ways through which India can improve this aspect.*

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## Background

North East India is the eastern most region of India comprising the seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and the recently included Sikkim. It is a landlocked region which is connected with the rest of India with a narrow 21 kilometer long Siliguri Corridor in West Bengal popularly known as the 'Chicken Neck'. The region also shares more than 4500 kilometer of international border with China in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bangladesh in the southwest and Bhutan in the northwest.<sup>1</sup>

With the launch of India's Look East policy, there has been a paradigm shift in India's foreign economic policy. The policy was initiated in 1991 by the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to forge greater economic and strategic ties with the Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. The policy ushered numerous benefits to India with improved connectivity, promotion of trade and investment and cultural exchanges and engagement in various regional organizations like ASEAN where India became a sectoral dialogue partner in 1992 to full dialogue partner in 1995.<sup>2</sup>

In 2003 the second phase of the policy was launched

by India's then Foreign Minister Jaswant Sinha. In this period the northeastern region of India assumed an important position in the Look East policy more so because of its geographical proximity with the South East Asian countries. The idea was to disperse the benefits of the Look East policy more sharply on India's north east region. This is because one of the main reasons pertaining to the instability of this region is economic backwardness which is basically because of the neglect of the Indian Central government from the days of independence. Thus, "economic integration will 'liberate' the Northeast from its present landlocked state and make it prosper whether in terms of infrastructural development or in terms of generation of employment for the vast unemployed youth. While unemployment and denial of economic opportunities are believed to have been responsible for the easy availability of fresh young recruits for the insurgent groups ready to make a living out of the only booming 'insurgency industry', economic prosperity of the region is likely to bring down insurgency and violence."<sup>3</sup> Better roads will promote trade and tourism that will create more jobs and help to reduce poverty in the region through rural connectivity and accessibility.

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## Untapped History

Look East policy was essentially formulated to integrate India with the East and South East Asian region politically and economically by exploring new opportunities through regional integration. The success of the Look East policy will have very limited significance if it does not have any impact on the north eastern region. This is because apart from the geographical closeness the people of both the regions share similar cultures and traditions. For example the Tai Ahoms of Assam shares a historical and cultural identity with the South East Asia.

The Tai ethnic groups live in a vast area extending from the south of China, and north of Vietnam to Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and India's Northeast. Altogether seven Tai groups are identified and recorded in the three northeastern states of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal. These are the Ahom, Aiton, Kabaw, Khamyang, Phake and Turung. The Ahoms are the descendents of the Mao Shan branch of the Tai race who originally migrated from Yunnan of China through Upper Burma where they established a group of small kingdoms. In the early part of 13th century, this group entered the Brahmaputra valley through the Patkai hills from Upper Burma under the leadership of Chao Lung Sukapha. After gaining a foothold in Upper Assam, the Ahom extended their control over a number of indigenous people and came to dominate the valley area south of the river Brahmaputra and east of the river Dikhou. This is a region which at present comprises all of Dibrugarh district and part of Sibsagar district in Assam. At present the Ahom population is most numerous in these two places with some concentration also in Lakhimpur district.

Like the Ahoms, another section of the Tai people migrated to the Chao Phraya valley in the mainland Thailand. The level of interaction between the Tais in the Brahmaputra and Chao Phraya valleys was more intense and wider than that between other Tais in Southeast Asia despite the mountain barriers and this relationship continued for a long time. The Tai people with their rural agriculture-based culture migrated to different parts of Southeast Asia in search of plain cultivable land. In the later period, they molded their culture in conformity with their geographical environment. Nevertheless, there is much similarity of culture among the Tai people around the world. In Assam, even today, it is found that the Tai-Ahoms adhere to their traditional Tai culture along with the priestly class who are said

to follow Tai religious beliefs. These old cultural practices retained by some interior Tai (Ahom) villages are quite similar to that seen in the Tai culture in Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup>

Ethnically the large majority of the indigenous population of North East India belongs to different sub groups of the Mongoloid stock whose other cognate branches are found in South West China and South East Asia. The Assam-Burma border was the meeting place of races, cultures and languages of South and South East Asia. The border region is inhabited by over a dozen distinct ethnic groups spreading over the whole belt of the Patkal range. Some of them are the Singphos (called Kachin in Myanmar), Usus or Yobins, Tangsas, Noctes, Wanchos, Tutsas, Layos, Khamtis, Tai Phakes, Duantias, Shyams, Khamyasgias, Turungs, Bodos, Mons, Deoris and others with a population over a lakh.<sup>5</sup> Similar patterns in culture, customs and habits can be found among the people of north east India, Thailand and Malaysia.

## Looking East Through the Prism of North East

The India-ASEAN region is inhabited by 1.8 billion people and their combine GDP is US \$ 3.8 trillion. The Look East Policy and closer interactions with the ASEAN has accrued huge economic benefits for India. The India-ASEAN trade has grown by 23% in the last 10 years and in 2012-2013 the total trade between India and ASEAN was 80 \$ billion. It is expected that with the signing of the Agreement on Free Trade Area, the total bilateral trade would increase to 100 \$ billion by 2015 and 200 \$ billion by 2020<sup>6</sup>. But North East India which is the gateway to the South East Asian countries has been left out from the opportunities opened up through the Look East Policy.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, the former minister in charge of the region has rightly pointed out that Southeast Asia begins in North East in India, not just in terms of geography but also in terms of ethnicity and culture. This becomes all the more relevant when we think of expanding India's Look East Policy beyond inter governmental relations that is through people to people contact. The relevance of this region can be understood even more deeply through the remark of General J.J Singh, former army chief of staff when he says 'If one were to draw an arc with 1000 kilometers as radius, the circle would encompass eight countries and also include cities like Calcutta, Dhaka, Varanasi, Kathmandu, Gangtok, Thimpu, Mandalay, Chittagong and the



border areas of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the region is of extreme geo strategic importance to India.

North East India because of its geographical location has been virtually secluded from the mainstream India. The region was neglected by the Indian policy makers for a long period of time. However, it is the only part of India that provides direct access to the South East Asian region. Quoting Das, 'North East is the gateway to Myanmar and Myanmar is the gateway to South East Asia.'<sup>8</sup> Thus, if India wants to integrate its north east with the rest, emphasis should be given on the ways through which the region can benefit from the cross border trade. The trade between the two regions can bring down the level of penury, economic backwardness and bring in prosperity in the north east region.

Several measures have been undertaken to boost the trade linkages and connectivity between the two regions. First among these measures has been a proposal to build the 'Asian Highway', the 'Asian Road Link' and 'Natural Gas' pipeline. The "Asian Highway" is supposed to connect Imphal (India), Tamu (Myanmar) road going on to Kalemmyo railway onto Mandalay in Myanmar. Four lane Asian Highway is also sought between New Delhi-Singapore linked to Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Pnom Phek, Bangkok, Vientiane, Yangon, Mandalay, Kalemmyo, Tamu, Dhaka and Kolkata. Road construction has already started from Tamu to Kalemmyo, Myanmar. There is also a plan to construct a 1,360 km Trilateral Highway from Moreh (India) to Mae Sot (Thailand) through Bagan (Myanmar). The Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Facility aimed at establishing connectivity between Indian ports on the eastern side and Sittwe port in Myanmar through a riverine transport corridor and road in Mizoram is envisaged as providing alternate trade route to the North East. The large scale illegal flow of goods through Moreh (Manipur) into other North Eastern states from South East Asia will also become legalized along with the deepening of ties between these countries. Initiatives like Mekong Ganga Corporation that was launched by India on November 10, 2000 at Vientiane, Laos to boost cooperation in tourism, culture and education could also bring enormous benefit to the region.<sup>9</sup>

However the development of trade and commerce in this region can never be a reality without proper connectivity. Although India has signed the Free trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN in 2009<sup>10</sup>, there

are many factors that make trade with South East Asia through North East a grim reality. The region is endowed with minerals, coal, oil and forests with majority being unexplored. Also the trade between India and ASEAN mostly revolves around manufacturing products with little emphasis on agricultural ones<sup>11</sup>. Moreover the existing infrastructure also acts as a serious problem in the region. The large scale trade between Northeast and Southeast Asian Markets require sophisticated markets and infrastructure. At present only Guwahati, Assam's capital is poised with such facilities. The border trade in Moreh is also very unstable and threatens the lives of small traders in Moreh town as the Asian Highway bypasses Moreh town. Interestingly the banking sector in Moreh is also in a dilapidated state. In spite of the Union Government's several efforts to improve the development activities of the region, little progress has been made to achieve the infrastructural deficit. For example the construction of the Stilwell/Ledo Road remains a dream due to the major disagreements between the Indian and Myanmar governments<sup>12</sup>. Despite being a strategic roadway that aims to extend trade linkages with Myanmar and China, there is very little chance of the successful functioning of the road as reopening it might increase insurgency in the North East. Apart from roads, North East India is also connected by rail, air and rivers. Although the Indian governments have launched several ambitious projects, little progress has been achieved so far. In the words of B.D. Ghoshal, 'The great potential of linking this area by trans-national highways, railways, waterways connecting Calcutta with the North East and going on to Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam giving real substance to look East policy has remained unrealized.'<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion

Northeastern side of India can amply benefit from its thriving relations with Southeast Asia. The process of globalization provides the region with intra market accessibility that, in turn, will help these northeastern states in their drive against poverty, economic backwardness and insurgency. However, the region with its ecstatic beauty which also serves as an attractive tourist spot is entangled with several obstacles that thwart the development in the region. Lack of infrastructural development, absence of support and response from the locals, frequent insurgencies, poor governance in the states are some of the issues that needs to be addressed

if India wants the benefit of Look East Policy to trickle down in this region.

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# North East India's Tourism Prospect through Mekong Ganga Cooperation: Utilising Opportunities into Advantages

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*The Look East Policy (LEP) of the early nineties, as a foreign policy pursuit, signifies India's renewed thrust of strengthening its linkages with South East Asia. To facilitate the essence of the Policy India has embarked upon a number of collaborative endeavours with its South East Asian neighbours. The Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative (MGCI) is one of such decisive sub-regional initiatives of Indo-ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) cooperation. The MGCI was formulated in 2000 with the intent to bolster solidarity and harmony in the fields of tourism, culture and education thereby ensuring considerable development of the Mekong region countries. Determinants like geographical proximities, economic complementarities, political commitments, policy coordination and infrastructure development motivate the formation of the grouping. India and the five South East Asian Nations - Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar are the members of the Initiative. In its*

*endeavour to reinvigorate the pace of regional integration the MGCI has accorded intense significance to tourism as it has the viability of stimulating economic development of the member countries. It is pertinent to underscore that increased regional cooperation in the field of tourism facilitates the promotion of landlocked regions into land-linked regions. One of the core aspects of the MGCI is to economically develop its landlocked North East Region (NER) for which the opening of the Region is ardently required. In this lieu North East Region's enthralling scenic beauty can play a vital role in fostering the prospect of tourism. But the ground realities of the Region pose certain crucial challenges to the MGCI for making this tourism potentiality extensively effective. The paper thus attempts at appraising the credibility of the MGCI as a sub-regional initiative in promoting the tourism potential of the NER as an impetus to economic development thereby rejuvenating India's LEP.*

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## Background

The nineties was a phase, which witnessed a plethora of changes inducing rapid economic growth and development of Asian countries, especially in South East Asia and East Asia-a region with vast economic potentials. India, in the context of New World Order recognizing the economics of neighbourhood, revealed its enthusiasm to be an active partner in the process of regional economic integration. This actually provided a fillip to the redefining of the future activities and the territorial compass of the groupings. India in this rapidly changing backdrop under the New Economic Policy embarked upon a concrete and wide-ranging programme of economic reforms aimed at restructuring the economy and liberalization thereby bringing the Indian economy in line with those of the Asia Pacific countries.<sup>1</sup>

For both India and China, Mekong countries provide strategic accessibility to reach into the heartland of Asia Pacific Region. Development assistance and transport linkages are the two basic parameters that constructively engage India and China to the Mekong region, an immensely potential feasibility conceived by the Secretary-General of ASEAN Rodolfo C. Severino. He stated about the implicit credibility and prospects for ASEAN to engage the two giants in constructive and balanced relationships. Economic ties could be deepened through the development of infrastructure and human linkage facilities across the common borders providing further impetus to the boosting of trade and people-to people contacts along with the modernization of transportation, communication and other connectivity linkages. The potential for tourism thus would be considerably high.<sup>2</sup>

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The Mekong-Ganga Project can well be discerned as a vital link rejuvenating cooperation between India and ASEAN. Two great Asian rivers inspired Shri Jaswant Singh, the then Minister for External Affairs, for whom India's Look East Policy reflects a degree of historical inevitability, to propose economic cooperation among India, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. His idea was well appreciated by his South East Asian colleagues when it was mooted on the sidelines of the ASEAN dialogue partnership meeting in Bangkok in July 2000. The atmosphere of cooperation and continuous economic reforms devoid of confrontation would impart the much-needed essence to the substance of the Project and the cooperative equation between India, China and ASEAN would strike an equilibrium ensuring regional stability.<sup>3</sup> Since late 2000, India's ties with the CLMV countries gained a significant boost particularly after the Vientiane Declaration signed in November 2000. In January 2007 India's Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahmad, described Mekong Ganga Cooperation as one of the pertinent pillars of India's Look East Policy.<sup>4</sup>

### Objectives and Activities of MGC

The working mechanism for Mekong Ganga Cooperation consists of the Annual Ministerial Meeting, the Senior Official's Meeting and the five Working Groups namely:

- 1) Working Group on Tourism (Thailand is the lead country)
- 2) Working Group on Education (HRD) (India is the lead country)
- 3) Working Group on Culture (Cambodia is the lead country)
- 4) Working Group on Communication and Transportation (Laos is the lead country)
- 5) Working Group on Plan of Actions (Vietnam is the lead country)

The first Ministerial Meeting of MGC was held in Vientiane on November 10, 2000 and concluded with the "Vientiane Declaration." The declaration underscores the grouping's determination to develop closer relations and better understanding among the six countries so as to strengthen friendship, solidarity and cooperation. The "Vientiane Declaration" outlines the objectives of MGC in four specific sectors of Tourism, Culture, Education and Transport and Communications.<sup>5</sup> In

specific, it mentioned about the launching the Mekong-Ganga Tourism Investment Guide, establishing networks among tourism training institutions and conducting seminars in tourism promotion, encouraging coordinated efforts to expand the export market for the handicrafts and traditional textiles of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation countries, promoting joint research in dance, music and theatrical forms and traditions, conserving, preserving and protecting old manuscripts, heritage sites and artifacts, providing scholarships and translating classics. The Vientiane Declaration in fact advocated the commitment of the member countries to develop transport in the region for strengthening inter and intra-regional linkages between people. The member states are also committed to deepening cooperation in the development of IT infrastructures and networks.

### North East Region's Tourism and MGC

The basic thrust of the MGC is to undertake economic development of the Mekong region by developing the infrastructure facilities. For India, MGC offers immense scope for creating linkages with the Mekong countries by connecting them to the sub-continent's economically backward North Eastern Region. Indian policymakers believe that the development of North East is crucial to the promotion of trade and industrial cooperation with the ASEAN countries and the Mekong countries in particular. Road construction linking the North East and MGC will facilitate quicker overland transportation of goods between the two regions. The Asian Highway on its completion will link Singapore with the Indian Mainland via the Mekong cities and the North East Region.<sup>6</sup>

The unique aspect of the Vientiane Declaration was its emphasis on promoting joint research in the fields like dance, music and theatrical forms and organises round-tables for journalists, writers and experts in literature, performing arts, women's empowerment, health and nutrition and the conservation, preservation and protection of heritage sites and artifacts. Tourism is another field where immense prospects are possible. The Declaration expected the MGC Initiative to conduct preliminary strategic studies for joint marketing, to launch the Mekong-Ganga Tourism Investment Guide, to facilitate the travel of people in the region, to expand multi-modal communication and transportation links for expanding travel and tourism and to promote cultural-religious package tours. The MGC Initiative stimulated the establishment of networking

and twinning arrangements among the colleges and Universities in the region, endorsed for the translation of the classics of MGC countries into other MGC Initiative languages for better understanding and interpretation and assured the participation in book fairs in member- countries on a commercial basis. The inauguration of the Moreh-Tamu-Kalewa Road on 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2001 by the then Minister of External Affairs, Shri Jaswant Singh, had generated enthusiasm for the improvement of the infrastructure facilities and to devise substantive plannings for a multiple transport links between Tamu (India) and Thaton (Thailand) connecting India to the larger rail and road grid in Greater Mekong sub-region. The long-awaited Fourth MGC Initiative Ministerial Meeting was held in New Delhi on 12th October 2006. India's Minister of External Affairs, Shri, Pranab Mukherjee reiterated India's commitment to strengthen India's cultural and commercial ties with the GMS countries. The Hanoi Programme of Action (HPA) was extended by six years from August 2007 to July 2013. India hosted the 6th MGC Ministerial Meeting on September 4, 2012, in New Delhi. In addition to the existing 4 areas of collaboration under MGC, certain new areas were identified at this meeting for forging cooperation. These include health research relevant to the region and sharing of expertise on pandemic management, bringing together the complementarities that exist in the SME sector in India and the Mekong States, aspects related to food security and preserving the rich bio-diversity of our region. India's initiative in Setting up of the Traditional Asian Textiles Museum at Siem Reap, Cambodia was highly appreciated. India announced a commitment of US\$ 1 million annually for the India-CLMV Quick Impact Projects Revolving Fund. This fund would be for short gestation projects that could directly benefit local communities, with results that are immediate and visible. These additional elements were seen as a clear reiteration of members' commitment towards the MGC. The 7th MGC Ministerial Meeting was scheduled to be held in Brunei on July 2, 2013 under the Chairmanship of Lao PDR.<sup>7</sup>

North East India is the epitome of diverse and rich cultural heritage of India and the chain of festivals like Hornbill in Nagaland, Bihu in Assam, Kharchi Puja in Tripura manifest the potentiality of the NER of being the harbinger of economic progress through a comprehensive maneuvering of cultural exchanges with South East Asian neighbours. The MGC Initiative is envisaged to conduct preliminary

strategic studies for joint marketing, to launch the Mekong-Ganga Tourism Investment Guide, to facilitate the travel of people in the NER, to expand multi-modal communication and transportation links for expanding travel and tourism and to promote cultural-religious package tours. To promote tourism intense cooperation is required in sectors like tourism policy planning, human resource development, marketing and environmental preservation. The motto is to develop and expand the tourist destinations, which would share linkages with more than one member-country. Transparency in exchange of tourist information is considerably encouraged.

### Exposure to Hornbill Festival

My visit to Nagaland during the Hornbill Festival in 2012 has enlightened me with the outstanding possession of the region. Nagaland is nestled in the hilly kingdom of the NER. Nagaland bounded by one side by Myanmar and the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur on the others is a cornucopia of Nature's abundance. Its extraterritorial beauty is evident through its unmanicured and coarse woods, its vicious wilderness not leading to gracefully enclosed gardens or parks but bumpy roads. While travelling through the uneven stretches of land one shall have a glimpse of dazzling waterfall escorting us to a nearby village wherein one may experience enthusiastic hospitality. Every corner of Nagaland does reflect an imprint of divine beauty and so are its people who mesmerize the visitors with their warm and informal demeanour conveying their innate competence to make visitors feel like family. The rural life is markedly dynamic and variegated inciting a visitor for an all-embracing study of their lifestyle. Nagaland's engrossing scenic beauty, enthralling music and dancing acumen, exciting sites of historical evidences and above all spectacular hospitality largely overwhelm the tourists.

My exposure to the Hornbill Festival has inculcated an intensive understanding about the richness of the cultural diversities of the region. All the enticing panoramas of Nagaland get a fillip during the Hornbill Festival. Nagaland is a cultural mosaic of multi-ethnicity represented by myriad tribes inhabiting the state. Each community celebrates its respective festivals revolving round the agrarian calendar that makes Nagaland a land of festivals. It was in the year 2000 that the State Government in its thrust to promote tourism initiated an innovative strategy to exploit as well as showcase

the cultural assets of Nagaland through a weeklong festival to coincide with the celebration of Nagaland Statehood Day, which was on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 1963. The Nagaland Hornbill Festival is named in collective reverence to the bird idolized in the cultural ethos of the Nagas to uphold the essence of unity in diversity. The festivals performed through collective celebration of various tribes vividly illustrate the versatility, productivity and ethos of the Naga life stimulating cultural sensitivities, which is undoubtedly unique to the region. The weeklong festival drives all the tribes and sub tribes to the venue of the Festival, which lies at the foothills of towering Mount Jafu in the Kisama Heritage Village. It becomes the magnificent centre-stage of a weeklong medley of cultural performances, indigenous games, craft bazar, music events, fashion, cycling, motor sporting events, kids' carnival, floral galleria, food courts and a series of competitions in various activities. At the Festival one is introduced to the craft artisans in the Craft Pavilion displaying exemplary skills in bamboo, wood, textiles and other craft activities. The Hornbill Festival implants the spirit of involvement and enjoyment to the people irrespective of age and gender and fills the environment with the ardor of amusement like any other major festival in other states of India. This Festival can be a captivating source of tourist enchantment spearheading towards economic prosperity. The indigenous strengths and abilities enlarge the ambit of accrediting the assets of Nagaland and can be utilized for professional opportunities and gains. Tourism can be steered to uplift this region from the quagmire of ambiguities to the virtues of economic advantage through robust people to people contacts.

This experience communicates one of the spectacular possessions of the NER. Certain measures need to be taken and made operative for fructifying the essence of tourism in the region. Those are:

- Promoting awareness of the enormous cultural richness and diversity of the fascinating tourist destinations of the NER to the other MGC countries.
- Undertaking initiatives for organising familiar trips with the participation of the member- countries' officials, tourism agents and mass media circles to study and promote the tourism potential of the NER.
- Encouraging cross-border tour packages with the aim to discover the rich cultural and civilisational affinities of the MGC region.
- Organising wide cultural festivals through MGC Initiative so that the visitors can experience a full spectrum of exciting cultural and traditional events across the region.
- Developing NER tourism through the establishment of tourist booths in international tourism fairs, the publication of North East India Tourism Map, NER travel guides and brochures, multi-media promotional materials to be distributed and circulated in different areas through international events on tourism and organising workshops and seminars through the MGC Initiative so as to highlight the NER as an attractive area for tourism investments.
- Strengthening tourism investments by promoting NER's distinctive tourism products through the MGC Initiative so as to attract investment in the tourism sector of the NER.
- Stimulating cooperation in tourism education and training.
- Sharing experience and information on tourism statistical data and other related information. Facilitating information access with regard to cultural and historical heritage among the MGC countries and exchanging information related to publication in each member- country thereby developing the tourism industry.
- Smoothing the travel of tourists among the member- countries by simplifying tourist visa procedures and removing the barriers impeding tourism growth in order to further develop tourist traffic.
- Promoting eco-tourism by framing guidelines for assessing and monitoring tourism impact on the natural environment. Sharing information on the eco-tourism promotion programmes, air linkages and religious tourism circuits.
- Bolstering public information and awareness, especially at the local community-level, so as to educate the public and gain its acceptance as the environmentally sustainable tourism.
- Utilising the English language skill of the NER as an impetus to boost tourism. NER

can be viewed as a centre of English language proficiency, the international language that students in ASEAN countries are not so conversant with and are aspiring to master.

The development of physical connectivity is a matter of considerable importance in facilitating tourism. This bears a positive orientation as the freedom to travel and communicate eradicates the barricades of close language, culture and tradition as well as opens up newer possibilities for trade, investment with exchange of innovative ideas and information. The crux of integration makes the presence of borders largely irrelevant in this era of globalisation. India too, in its quest to accelerate cooperative endeavours, is venturing into the connectivity drive. The signing of FTA (Free Trade Agreement) between India and ASEAN has undoubtedly facilitated the pace of connectivity initiatives undertaken by India under its Look East Policy. The Mekong Ganga Cooperation initiative can be viewed upon as an undertaking driven by the avowed intension to promote connectivity facilities through cooperation between India and its South East Asian neighbours to a greater extent. India-MGC cooperation could also help balance China's Look West strategy of gaining access to the Indian Ocean through its southwestern province of Yunnan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. China's three largest defence importers are Pakistan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. A China-Bangladesh defence pact was signed and the Chinese involvement in the development of Burmese roads and ports and installation of defence surveillance facilities on Burmese islands near the Andaman's is a very significant endeavor. In fact, Myanmar has emerged as the Sino-Indian strategic signpost on either side of the Malacca divide. Moreover India and Myanmar have extensively cultivated their bilateral cooperation and the China's expanding supremacy as well as Myanmar's ASEAN membership in fact has boosted up Indo-Myanmar cooperation. India had successfully completed the 135 kilometres Kalembo-Kalewa-Tamu road link which connects Manipur with Myanmar, a historic event which marked the "the first official (Indian) delegation to cross the land border since independence," as claimed by the then India's Minister of External Affairs.<sup>8</sup>

### Conclusion

For the successful implementation of the Program of Action a sense of community needs to be evolved within which collective commitment, coordination

and cooperation of the member countries are ardently required. Recent years are witnessing major powers and agencies getting increasingly interested in the GMS. India's MGC Initiative has been conceptualized as an integral part of India's economic diplomacy with strong cultural underpinnings. By encouraging business contacts between people on both sides, the MGC Initiative intends to building bridges and stabilises commercial relations with the least developed countries wherein India's presence was not so dominant over the years. This also seeks to underline the social responsibility of the private sectors and to emphasis on the prospect of reaping benefits in the long run. Some of them, like the economies of Thailand and Vietnam have been booming up rapidly in recent years. In this backdrop the MGC presents an opportunity for the Indian companies, which can provide world standard products at competitive prices to GMS countries, which will also enable Indian companies to enhance their competitiveness on global basis. India has the capability to assist the CLMV countries especially in the agricultural sector, in terms of technology transfer and skills training. Moreover the initiatives like MGC are also expected to facilitate the economic development of India's North East which has continued to present both a political and development challenge to New Delhi. Trade promotion and industrial development in India's NER are required for flourishing overland trade via Myanmar to many MGC countries. By strengthening relations with Myanmar, India could emphasize Pan Buddhist links with the ASEAN. MGC Initiative has the potential to deliver increased volume of trade if the highway linking the countries of the Region would be extended to link Singapore with New Delhi through regional capitals such as Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Phnom Penh, Bangkok and others. These can become nodal points for their cooperation and connectivity. In its outline in Vision 2020 and the Hanoi Action Plan, which provides a detailed roadmap for socio-economic development of the Region, ASEAN remains focused on creating incentives to integrate CLMV countries in the Region. India with its traditional and cultural linkages with this Region has unique advantage and can play a crucial role in realizing this ASEAN vision. However, in the last few years inspite of the high level visits the MGC Initiative has not been competent enough to keep pace with all the initial diplomatic rhetoric. For instance, India's

Ministry of External Affairs has until now not yet designated a single official or desk to focus exclusively on its initiatives with the GMS countries or for the MGC Initiative. Its official website has very limited reach and little to offer in terms of any information or outline on India's policy or activities with regard to the MGC Initiative, which poses as impediment for the realistic pursuit of the MGC Initiative. Focus on open sources, following the ADB's strategy, should be encouraged for developing camaraderie with the GMS countries there is need for greater focus on open sources. In this endeavour India's IT capabilities and experiences could be immensely utilized for cultivation of the GMS and for proactive involvement of the non-governmental agencies. Institutions like the Research and Information System for Non-aligned and Other Developing Countries (RIS), Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) have done some commendable work in holding awareness workshops and in imparting training to GMS compatriots, further strengthening the official MGCI. Secondly, India's IT and pharmaceuticals sectors have witnessed great demand within the MGC Initiative but often the human capital constraint has acted as a deterrent in quality training in these countries. India's credibility in institutional arrangements for bringing about high quality manpower can act as a catalyst in this aspect. In the area of cultural relations, though there have been exchange of artists, scholars, educationists etc. between India and the GMS, they should have a wider access and must not be confined to the respective capitals and big cities alone. And finally, beyond periodical meetings and exchanges of officials, academics and experts for training and exposure, greater emphasis needs to be put on people-to-people contacts for enhancing mutual awareness and on technology transfers for accommodating the huge gaps in our priority areas. So hard work needs to be executed in order to fully utilize these vast potentialities which promise to generate considerable tangible and intangible benefits for both the sides. In principle, the MGCI remains an important symbol of India's trust and India's growing stakes in promoting multilateralism in international relations. To sum up, the idea of the MGCI has been driven by the desire to explore alternatives to the realist paradigm and to emphasize on norms and values becoming the basis of inter-states relations. The MGC Initiative was conceptualized not only to strengthen military and

economic cooperation on the basis of India's engagement with the GMS but to foster the links apart from the many other objectives for mutual benefit. The main areas of cooperation within the MGCI remains culture, education, tourism, and transport and communications. In the words of India's former External Affairs Minister, Shri Jaswant Singh, spoken at their inaugural MGC Initiative meeting in Vientiane on 10th November 2000, leaders had agreed to launch the MGC Initiative, with a "political willingness and aspirations aimed at strengthening our traditional bonds of friendship" and it is in this larger perspective that New Delhi continues to evolve its future initiatives cultural and civilizational linkages between India and these countries. The interactions have also since grown from being purely cultural to economic and military, as also from being purely multilateral towards deepening bilateral initiatives that both strengthen cultural and people to people cooperation, as also their infrastructure within the MGCI.<sup>9</sup>

India faces stiff competition while trading with the ASEAN countries as there is increasing keenness from the whole world to trade with the ASEAN given ASEAN's immense potentialities and prospects. Thus in this competitive atmosphere it is quite difficult for India to cultivate special relationship with ASEAN. In this backdrop India's unique advantage is the historic legacy of its shared religious and cultural ties with the region. India's LEP should thus be oriented to leverage this asset in reinventing India's engagement with South East Asia in its best possible manner. Herein lies the viability of the sub-regional Initiative like Mekong Ganga Cooperation. If a vastly expanded portfolio of relationship-building initiatives is to be financially sustainable, these initiatives must be designed as commercially viable activities financed and managed through public-private partnerships. A field, possibly the most important for relationship building, is specialised higher education engineering, management, law and medicine in particular. India has many excellent institutions in these fields that enjoy global recognition. Moreover, they offer courses in English, the international language that students in ASEAN countries are aspiring to master. An offer to establish such institutions in the ASEAN region will be welcomed.<sup>10</sup>

The cooperation is the key word for the sub-regional initiatives like the MGC Initiative. The respective



repositories of the members need to be exchanged and utilized for the optimum utilization of the available resources thereby enhancing the spectre of reaping benefits. By highlighting the tourism potential of the NER the MGC Initiative can develop the economic prospects of the region. Under the essence of tourism the member- countries gains the scope of a wider intermingling , which stimulates the opportunity of knowing each other deeply and thus the ambit of cooperation is being strengthened. For the successful pursuit of the sub-regional initiatives the member-countries should be tolerant towards fellow members' limitations and should function cooperatively to overcome the obstacles. They should nurture and encourage the quality of respecting mutual proficiencies and abilities. Collaborative endeavours accelerating the essence of solidarity is the motivating spree of development and prosperity of the nation states. The tourism potential of the NER can be utilised as one of the facets of economic development of the Region and as a tool to cultivate the LEP. The MGC Initiative through its objectives and functioning can uphold the relative advantage of the NER and enhances the credibility of the Region in earning international recognition with the firmly rooted prospect of tourism and economic promotion.

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## COMMENTS

### Beyond State 'Securitization': Lessons from the Khalistan Movement

Sreya Maitra Roychoudhury\*

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The achievement of national security is significantly undermined by violent internal conflicts or situations of insurgency in any country. While authoritarian regimes unilaterally use their military to combat such challenges, modern democracies have historically sanctioned the deployment of armed forces on a short-term basis only by declaring them as 'emergencies'. Within the purview of international relations, the use of the military approach has been termed as *securitization a la the Copenhagen School of Security*. India as a consolidated democracy has experienced situations of domestic conflict, and they have been selectively *securitized* through much of the post-independence period. Ironically, the prolonged securitization has not been able to root out the crises, and insecurities have persisted like in the people of India's Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir and more recently, the Maoist belt. This incongruence presents itself as both a *normative and real challenge to India's democratic fabric as well as her national security*. Thus, an argument against the efficacy of the military stance can justifiably be articulated.

The Khalistan movement in Punjab which met with a heavy military response of the State, provides valuable insights in exposing the fallacies of securitization approach as well as urging the state to seek possible alternatives. Prompted by the urge to assert their ethnic identity distinct from the predominant Hindus and the Muslims residing within newly independent India, the Sikhs consistently demanded exclusive status and recognition in terms of territory, language, autonomy in religious practices, extensive cultural and political powers and ultimately a State separate from the Union of India. Such progressive expansion of the nature of demands however, was provoked as much by the rise of extremist and radical Sikh elements as by the inability of the Central leadership

to resolve political grievances through almost three decades. As the crisis reached its climax, the enactment of the Disturbed Areas Acts in Chandigarh and Punjab (1983), the Armed Forces' Special Power Act (1983) and the infamous *Operation Bluestar* (followed by three more such Police, army and para-military operations) signified the operationalization of securitization.

The Indian State learnt an unprecedented lesson from the violent conflict with the Sikhs. Today, the Khalistan movement is a 'closed case' and also a 'success story' in counter-insurgency. However, personal interactions with select members of the intelligentsia in the state reveal that the scars of a hostile treatment by the State have not been lost to time. Moreover, the bitter memories continue to be refreshed by the supporters of the idea of Khalistan, like the Khalistan Tiger Force and Dal Khalsa. They occasionally raise slogans for the creation of an independent State. Also, at anniversaries of anti-Sikh riots of 1984, families of victims demand punishment for all those responsible for the carnage, and express their ire for incomplete judicial probes by the government. The intelligentsia still sympathizes with the right of the Sikhs to demand political recognition for their ethnic distinctive identity, and asserts its repeated denial by the Centre, within the democratic framework of the State. Thus, while there is minimal justification of the insurgency movement, its rationale is not lost in their minds. Moreover, the Indian State viewed the extremist action as subversive and securitized the conflict to safeguard national security. However, a sociological construction of the internal conflict would reveal that to the Sikhs, the Indian State was posing as an existential threat to their collective identity and thus, they sought to 'securitize' it by using force against the State.

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## Beyond State 'Securitization': Lessons from the Khalistan Movement

A policy of accommodating the Sikhs rather than repressing has been dominant in the current policy paradigm. The state is functioning autonomously with its aim at comprehensive development and the interference of the Centre has unprecedentedly reduced, contrary to those crucial decades preceding the crisis. But, experiences from Punjab must be remembered to tackle better the ongoing conflict situations in India. At the level of state policy, there should be a conscious effort to go beyond the military measures of securitization even at the height of the conflict situation. The sociological reasons for a community of citizens becoming a security threat to the State must be carefully

evaluated before carving out policies. The twin issues of issues of 'insecurity' and 'perception of threat' which lie at the root of ethnic nationalism must be comprehensively addressed. Also, emergency political legislations and sustained dialogues with the aggrieved parties will prove useful in preventing their radicalisation. Finally, policies encouraging human rights, distributive justice, good governance and socio-economic opportunities for all would mitigate politicisation of grievances against the State. While ethnic conflicts in India are being tempered at the moment, persistent and sensitive measures aimed at accommodation and integration would render greater peace and security in the long run.

## COMMENTS

### Climate Battle at Warsaw: The Indian Position

*Satabdi Das\**

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The environmental consciousness of mankind in the 21st century has inspired the international community to seal a consensual deal on taking measures to confront climate change and wished that such measures would bear fruit. However, the greatest challenge in this effort is to bring all parties together as although they agree to the urgency of curbing emissions, they contested over the sharing of the 'global common property resource, the atmosphere'.

India has a significant presence in this global environmental politics. Her official position in various international negotiations is guided by the principle of 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR&RC) of the UNFCCC/Kyoto process. However, in the post Kyoto framework, the developed countries tried to remove the difference in the climate responsibilities between them and the developing world. Specially intense pressure was piled on emerging economies like India and China to take more obligations on mitigation actions and to follow a clean growth trajectory.

Against such a backdrop, since the Copenhagen summit of 2009, the world has witnessed a transformation in India's role on the negotiating table from being a mere silent spectator to being a leading voice from the developing world. Before Copenhagen, she made unilateral and voluntary announcement that her per capita GHG emissions would never exceed that of the developed world. This proactive attitude was also evident in the then Environment Minister Jayram Ramesh's words when he announced in Parliament just before Copenhagen summit that India would voluntarily reduce the 'emissions intensity' of its GDP by 20-

25 per cent by 2020 compared to its 2005 level through domestic mitigation actions<sup>1</sup>. At Doha, where the Kyoto protocol managed to survive as countries agreed on the second commitment period of the Kyoto protocol (2013-2020), India had shown greater enthusiasm as well but at the same time reiterated her firm commitment to CBDR.

Basically the principal objective of developing countries in general and India in particular in all climate negotiations, has been to defend the differentiated architecture of the climate regime. The Warsaw climate summit of November, 2013, has proved that trend once again. It was expected that it would provide a preparatory stage for the Paris Conference of Parties in 2015, when a global deal on climate change is expected to be signed, but it took the global community only an inch forward in the fight against climate change. In this summit India once again underscored the significance of historical emissions as one of the crucial parameters in deciding the emission reduction responsibilities of countries under the 2015 agreement. In the run up to the Warsaw summit India agreed that the global agreement should be along the bottom-up approach, that is, each country would volunteer targets for emission reduction based on respective capability instead of a top-down approach but expressed her non negotiable demand that any gap between the volunteered cuts of all countries and the cumulative global agreement should be bridged by those who have historical responsibility to create the problem.

Financial assistance for adaptation is a crucial issue in Warsaw too, as without progress on this issue, it would be problematic for developing countries to advance on other agendas. India has expressed

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here her concern for a clear road map by which the developed countries would ratchet up their funding support. The latter have pledged to provide US \$ 100 billion annually starting 2020, but have so far refused to put forth an interim target. They are yet to provide details about the transfer and generation of these funds as well. India at this juncture made her stand clear on another financial issue that it would not permit the private investments in green technologies from developed world be sold as a replacement for inter-country transfers.

Political battle also took place in Warsaw over the issue of 'loss and damage'. The G77 had asked for a separate new mechanism for it, while the US and Norway demanded it be relegated to just a body under the existing adaptation institutions. Even in the 'contact group on loss and damage' which was a closed door meeting of representatives of various country blocks, the developed countries demanded that the issue be discussed only after 2015. A chaotic situation was created by this. The G77 and China even walked out of the talk exhibiting a rare gesture in the climate negotiations. India's stand on this was to form a window under the existing Green Climate Fund to provide quick resources for loss and damage as a short-term measure but in the long run she was also in favour of a separate new mechanism apart from the 'adaptation' mechanisms.

So with the Warsaw summit the North-South divide has again come into prominence. The developed world as usual has tried to blur the 'Bali firewall' between them and the developing block by not

using the language of differentiation in the draft containing decisions of Warsaw conference. They even demanded that the other bilateral and multilateral actions outside the convention be acknowledged and accounted for without a reference to differentiation between countries. One of such controversial issues was the phasing out of HFCs i.e refrigerant gases that harm the climate. India's position on this was to ensure that any phasing out of the gases must be done under the principles of the UNFCCC. This had found support from China and other G20 countries.

By way of a conclusion it can be said that in Warsaw the Northern clan has basically tried to breach the elements and principles of the UNFCCC by equating all stakeholders in their responsibilities to reduce emissions and to enhance their contribution to technology and financial provisions. Against this backdrop India in coalition with the emerging group of like minded developing nations and the BASIC group has revealed that historical emissions and the principle of CBDR are non negotiable pillars of her strategy. Such strongly held opposing values and interests ultimately have made the Warsaw climate talk an another episode of lost opportunity undermining the multilateral process that was kept alive by the Doha Climate Gateway.

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## COMMENTS

### The Right to Vote: Refugees in India

Maitrayee Guha\*

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Elections in democracies are a time for debates, discussions, promises and hopes. Each political party while formulating its party manifesto, attempts to include issues that tend to attract the attention of maximum number of people in the country. Promises and counter-promises projected by every party before elections bring hope to thousands of people, especially the downtrodden ones, who

languish behind the poverty they live in. Such groups constitute a large section of the Indian polity and include not only Indian citizens but also outsiders. A number of refugees in India also constitute this group. Most of them have come to India from neighbouring countries in South Asia and live in. Many of them live in abject conditions even in the host country.

**The following table gives the names of the countries from where India hosts refugees**

<i>Names of Migrant Groups</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>	<i>Reason Behind Migration</i>	<i>Main Destination Country</i>
Bangladeshi Hindus	Bangladesh	Communal torture in Bangladesh by some of the extremist groups since independence in 1971.	India
Hazaras, ethnic group	Afghanistan	Since the majority of them belong to the Shia group (though they belong to all the three Islamic sects, namely Shias, Sunnis and Ismailis), they are targeted by the Taliban and other ethnic groups.	India, Pakistan, Australia.
Tibetan Buddhists	Tibet, China	Chinese atrocities against Tibetans in trying to dominate over their territory.	India
Sindhis	Pakistan	Ethnic disputes	India
Rohingyas	Myanmar	Ethnic conflicts	Bangladesh, India
Chakmas	Bangladesh	Ethnic conflict and Environmental displacements	India
Sri Lankan Tamils	Sri Lanka	Ethnic conflict	India
Indian Tamils	India	Taken by the British to Sri Lanka as plantation workers where many of them became stateless after Sri Lanka received independence	India

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## The Right to Vote: Refugees in India

Political rights are granted only to citizens in a country. The right to vote is one of the most essential political rights that one can have in a democratic system. Such rights are not granted to outsiders or migrants who are regarded as temporary residents of the host country. The Government of India, however, proposed to grant voting rights to some of the refugees, who have been staying in India for decades. They are some Tibetans (for the first time in fifty -five years that this right has been granted to the children of Tibetans born in India between 1950 and 1987) some Chakmas and Hajong refugees (who were born between 1964 and 1987) who have been living in the country for almost forty years now have finally been granted the right to vote. However there are others like the Afghan refugees, the Rohingyas and the Tamil (both Indian and Sri Lankan) refugees who are feeling deprived because they have not received any such right. India's obvious justification is that these refugees have not been part of the Indian polity for as many years as the others, who have been granted voting rights. Moreover, with these refugees there is still hope that they would return back to their countries of origin once the situation there improves.

It is in this context that the issue of India's signing

of the 1951 Convention of the Status of Refugee<sup>1</sup> also arises. According to India, the Convention, which came into existence to deal with the problem of dealing with the refugees after the two world wars in the West, cannot be put into practice in South Asia.

The need of the hour is to have a policy which will look into the issue of refugees in an impartial manner. It is true that each case is different from the other and each group has significant geopolitical implications for India. Geopolitical demands necessarily involve an analysis of the pros and cons of India's response towards each refugee group. India certainly has to calculate how China would respond when some Tibetans are given voting rights in India or how Sri Lanka would react to India's concern towards the Tamil migrants from that country. Since all these people are related to one another within the context of South Asia, it would perhaps be a positive effort on the part of the Government of India to have a National Policy for Refugees in the country.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction by MARC LANTEIGNE

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2nd Edition

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The phenomenon of China's rise as the next superpower in making has entered its second decade with the same enthusiasm among policy makers and the larger academia. The way China conducts itself in world politics and her future course of conduct is consequently under the scanner. Such continuous observation of China's foreign policy stems from the requirement of formulating a worthwhile China policy. It is at this juncture that the present volume becomes priceless. Marc Lanteigne's second edition of *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction* provides the reader with a nuanced perspective about China's rise as a consequential player in world politics. The volume not only presents a holistic view of China's foreign policy since the 1978 reforms initiated during the presidency of Deng Xiaoping, it also rationalizes the various faces of reformed China's foreign policy and the drivers which brought about the same.

The volume is evidently premised within the bounds of the realist understanding of international relations. The very idea of a potential superpower coupled with a huge interest regarding her future course of actions among nation states indicates towards the existence of an international order which is the arena of power politics. Marc Lanteigne declares his basic assumptions in the introductory pages where he says that, first, China's rise as a consequential power began with the onset of the Deng Xiaoping initiated reform process and second, the twin issues of expansionism and transformation which mark the course of China's foreign policy since her reform. The author underlines these twin issues of transformation and expansionism in all the facets of Chinese foreign policy he talks about in the volume.

The introductory chapter after having established his assumptions advances towards making a realist assessment of China's national power on the basis of hard indicators of power. In the first chapter Marc Lanteigne presents with a multidimensional view regarding the drivers of Chinese foreign policy. He begins by outlining the role played (and will be played) by individual presidents during the respective tenure in their offices and moves on to discuss the role played by the Chinese Communist Party, the National People's Congress (the legislative wing of the Chinese political system) and the military. He also attributes the non-governmental organizations (think-tanks, professional bodies etc.) and the factor of nationalism to be instrumental drivers of Chinese foreign policy. He discusses each of the drivers as each of them happen to influence the formulation of China's foreign policy since the reform of 1978. The second chapter deals with the escalation of China as an economic powerhouse where the author provides a nuanced treatment of the much debated phenomenon of the Beijing consensus and its manifestation in the conduct of her foreign policy. This chapter also deals with China's response towards the process of globalization its inevitable forces, thereby highlighting the skepticism China has regarding the implications of a de-bordered world. It concludes by throwing some light upon the challenges which China's resource diplomacy presents before the country at this juncture. The next chapter deals with multilateralism as a feature of reformed China's foreign policy. It begins by historicizing the skepticism and mistrust China had upon any multilateral body/institution during the tenure of Mao Tse Dong. Her adoption of multilateralism as a chief instrument of foreign policy since the

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reform of 1978; the transformation and resultant expansion which this particular instrument has gone through in the past decades receive a generous treatment in the hands of the author in the rest of the chapter. The next chapter deals with the military and the strategic thinking which, according to the author has shaped the present contours of Chinese foreign policy. Altered international environment leading to an altered strategic thinking and role played by the military in molding China's foreign policy is amply discussed by the author. The subsequent chapters deal with countries and regions as significant theaters of Chinese foreign policy. The chapter where the Sino US relationship is discussed does not end by doing a mere job of compilation. The chapter presents with an invaluable perspective on how one perceives the other while relating with each other. The chapter on peripheral diplomacy, another post reform characteristic of China's foreign policy, talks about the policies after having established the rationale behind the newly adopted stance. The concluding chapter on non Asian regions presents a comprehensive view about China's relations with Africa, Latin America as regions. The last three chapters interestingly presents before the readers the way China is perceived by the developed west and the developing and underdeveloped countries of East and South. The concluding chapters divide the post 1978 Chinese foreign policy into three

halves which roughly mirror the respective tenures of the Chinese presidents beginning with Deng Xiao Ping. This chapter also focuses on the twin issues of transformation and expansionism in the factors/faces of China's foreign policy which have been discussed in the preceding chapters.

This volume presents the reader with not only an eventful trajectory of China's foreign policy since the onset of reform but rationalizes her foreign policy choices in tandem with the four cornerstones of the reform. Marc Lanteigne also employs the element of contrast in order to underline the twin issues of transformation and expansion while discussing each facet of China's foreign policy. The contrast between the pre and post 1978 China helps the reader grasp the transformation which China has undergone and the way she has expanded herself to integrate with the world order.

Although the volume provides the readers with a holistic idea of China's foreign policy and her ascendance as one of the consequential players in world politics, the volume inevitably suffers from overdependence on the realist understanding of power. The elements and faces of Chinese foreign policy discussed by the author speak of the conventional determinants of power. The volume chooses not to bring in the softer aspects of power while demonstrating and rationalizing her ascendance as one of the superpowers in making.

