

Modi's Foreign Policy: Upending the UPA

Rakhahari Chatterji*

With the BJP's coming to power following the 2014 elections and Narendra Modi's elevation to prime ministership there were a lot of expectations and apprehensions regarding governance and the economy but not much about the country's foreign policy. For as chief minister of a state Modi had little to say on foreign policy and although there was a widespread recognition that India's foreign policy needed rejuvenation and revamping, few thought it would be the new premier's priority. By taking the completely out of the box step of inviting the SAARC heads of governments to his swearing-in ceremony Modi has indeed surprised everyone. In fact, the importance and novelty of the act apart, it probably also has a more significant subtext. But before we come to that let us have a brief recap of the state of India's foreign policy lately.

*

About a decade after Prime Minister Narashimha Rao had ushered in the age of globalization in India, right after the turn of the century that is, the foreign press, especially the western press, began to confer the status of an emerging Great Power on India along with China. As it was posting a remarkable and increasing rate of growth in GDP, many in India also began to believe in it. Despite the two wars, in Afghanistan and in Iraq, India was sailing smoothly in international waters preferring to remain unaware of the implications of what was happening in the north across the border, in China that is, and instead, celebrating Bush administration's courting of India (vis-à-vis Pakistan) in the form of boosting India's nuclear energy capacity. But the global financial melt-down of 2008, the unsettling debate over declining US power and the long shadow of a shift in the

global balance of power in favour of China made serious scholars of India's foreign policy sit up and take a critical stock of the situation. What they found was not really rosy.

In an essay on India's foreign policy published in 2009, that is, at the end of UPA I, Harsh V. Pant made a number of interesting and critical points. He said while India wanted to be an emerging great power, its foreign policy faced a 'fundamental crisis'.¹ He felt that India's policy makers were not quite clear about what great power status in global politics entailed. While Pakistan had been a major source of our continuing security concern, our inability to deal with this single hostile neighbour for the last six decades has been lamentable. In fact, according to Pant, India did not have any coherent Pakistan strategy.

Pant also decried the fact that the military was not given its due role in the formulation of defence policy. The BJP government under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee formed after much deliberation a National Security Council in 1999 in order to 'coordinate management of national security, or engender long term planning by generating new and bold ideas'. But neither the BJP government nor the UPA-I which followed allowed the NSC to properly institutionalize itself and play its role effectively as intended. This obviously made it a predominantly a cosmetic institution.

Pant concluded by pointing out that Indian foreign policy, lacking a strategic and long term vision, resorted to ad hoc responses to crises as they emerge. Rather scathingly he alleged, the fact that India did not appear to have a China policy or a Pakistan policy or an Iran policy was not surprising

* Formerly, Professor, Department of Political Science, Calcutta University and UGC Emeritus Fellow. Currently, Advisor, Observer Research Foundation, Kolkata

for, in fact, 'India does not have a foreign policy'.

Like Pant's, another critical survey of India's foreign policy during UPA-I was published around the same time (2009) by two Delhi-based scholars, Jacob and Layton.² They began by taking India's 'strategic elite' (I suppose they meant by it the concerned bureaucrats as well as the academic and journalist commentators on foreign policy) to task for their 'ever compliant nature' complimenting the 'powers that be' (whether it is NDA or UPA) for 'excelling in foreign policy success'. Contrarily, Jacob and Layton pointed out the 'unwillingness', recurrently shown by Indian foreign policy makers, in taking timely decisions on key issues. For instance, during Musharraf regime in Pakistan India refused to seize initiative on Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek etc., to reach a settlement on the ground that it should wait for a more stable Pakistan. Similarly, in Sri Lanka and Nepal flawed policies have led to India's marginalization in key neighbouring countries. Taking a somewhat leftist stand, the authors argued that Indo-US strategic partnership is not befitting a country desirous of major power status. Finally, they complained about the absence of a 'grand vision' in foreign policy which they considered important for a rising power.

Both these pieces indeed make a lot of sense even after a lapse of five years of UPA-II because they raise some very valid and critical points about India's foreign policy which the UPA-II not only left unattended but in fact made even worse. It is true, that a large number of Indian scholars (K. P. Misra and the likes of him, for instance) have seen in Nehru's foreign policy of 'non-alignment' the ultimate instrument with which India can overcome any hurdle, present or future, in international politics. True that from the Indian academia some mild criticisms have occasionally been made, but for thorough critical perspectives on particular instances of our foreign policy lapses one must cite foreign scholars such as Neville Maxwell or Yaacov Vertzberger or more recently, Claude Arpi. The former became famous for his *India's China War* (Jonathan Cape, 1970) in which he critiqued the 1962 war with China in terms of Nehru's moral unilateralism. Vertzberger, in his very important qualitative-quantitative study, *India's Border Conflict with China: A Perceptual Analysis* (Sage, 1982), has looked upon India-China conflict as a conflict between two world views focused on the question of the border. His careful examination of India-China exchanges prior to the war for investigating the role

of perception and misperception makes his study a unique contribution. Claude Arpi in his *Tibet: The Lost Frontier* (Lancer, 2008) has shown how China's 'real politik' ruled over Indian idealism and emotional response in getting recognition of Chinese control over Tibet without paying anything in return. Shashi Tharoor in his more recent book, *Nehru: The Inventor of India*, tells us the story that in 1952, when the US made an overture to India that she should take over the UNSC seat held by Taiwan, Nehru had not only refused but suggested that it be given to China.³ If the story is true, it indeed is consistent with Nehru's high idealism, and genuine empathy for China that Nehru always entertained. But it also betrays 'India's lack of instinct for power' (to borrow Sunil Khilnani's expression) which is the most important ingredient of international politics.

*

It is of course true that during Nehru's time there was a genuine consensus (barring a few critics on the left) over the policy of non-alignment. This approach of a nascent India to the then international politics served some of our purposes very well (as President Jefferson's foreign policy of 'honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none' served the purposes of the emergent sovereign United States' foreign policy for a number of decades very well).⁴ It helped us to shape our relations with the two superpowers, namely, the US and the Soviet Union. It even provided a ray hope for some foreign policy autonomy not only for India, but for all the weak countries of the Third world. It helped to keep the post-World War II bipolar structure of the international system somewhat 'loose' (in Morton Kaplan's sense) such that a country had the choice of not joining either bloc and remain non-aligned. It further helped the United Nations to remain an important actor on the global platform. So far, Nehru's contribution and commitment to non-alignment was of historical importance and deserved recognition and deference.

Yet, it is also clear that non-alignment did not prove to be a good policy for India in handling our neighbourhood. It provided no pragmatic or strategic path to avoid wars with Pakistan or China. None other than Nehru himself had to accept it and admit its failure when in his broken voice on the All India Radio he announced the fall of a part of Assam during the China war: "We were getting out of touch with reality in the modern world and we were living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation." As

Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi was more firm and decisive. Facing a turbulent neighbourhood, she discarded non-alignment and laid it by the wayside when she entered into the Indo-Soviet Defence Pact or ventured to articulate in the 1970s what had been dubbed for a time as 'India's Monroe Doctrine'.

In the context of these developments of the recent past, is it not surprising that when at the Delhi Dialogue held in early 2013 the diplomats, academics and the business community of the ASEAN were urging New Delhi for deeper engagement with the 10-nation grouping, of course with rising China in the background, India's foreign minister, Mr. Salman Khurshid, says that 'India had its own style of reaching out to the world, based on *Nehru's vision of non-alignment*'?⁵ And is it not even more surprising that many foreign policy intellectuals in India, supposedly free thinkers in a liberal democracy, remained stuck with 'non-alignment' turning an idea on trial into a shibboleth? In the 1950s non-alignment was a doctrine of engagement with the world; when used in 2013 it becomes a policy for refusing our responsibilities and missing our opportunities in the global society. Pant had correctly said, it 'is irresponsible and dangerous to cling to ideas that served a different strategic context'.⁶

It can still be admitted that the Non-alignment Movement or whatever is left of it can surely continue to bring together nearly two-third of the world's states for discussing critical issues and that in itself is important provided one remembers its limitations.

*

Jacob and Layton attached somewhat unwarranted importance to a 'grand vision' or an overarching principle guiding foreign policy. Of course, in doing this they do represent a particular line of thinking whose advocates can be found strewn over different periods of history. Even currently, its advocates in India are uncomfortable with whatever Modi is doing in the arena of foreign relations for they do not find these to be sprouting from a 'grand strategy' or a meta-narrative of foreign policy. As a matter of fact, such a grand vision is neither necessary nor is it necessarily helpful. Wilsonian grand vision of 'making the world safe for democracy' or Bushite (G. W.) vision of 'democracy promotion by regime change if necessary' did not help the U.S. much, if at all. On the other hand, pragmatic, imperial Britain never thought it important to express her foreign policy in such high flying terms. What then is

necessary for a good foreign policy is clear pragmatic and strategic thinking, not grand statements of moral intentions. Such thinking can come from a clear understanding of the principles of international politics, and the capacity for making uninhibited inference from one's intuition and foresight. This constitutes what Bismarck called 'political judgment' or 'the ability to hear, before anyone else, the distant hoof-beats of the horse of history'.⁷

*

As we have noted, the years prior to 2009 were somewhat benign for India as she did not have to face major tensions in her relations with the major powers. While this allowed her to direct her attention to economic development (though with alarmingly decreasing success rate during 2009-2014)⁸, her foreign policy establishment apparently did not take this as an opportune moment to reflect on the very important transitions that were definitely under way in the world and to maneuver the course of foreign policy accordingly.

The event of 26/11 (terrorist attack in Bombay) was an early indicator of the complexity of things to come. George W. Bush's Iraq war created a serious long term problem for India by redirecting the U.S. energy and attention to Iraq as a consequence of which the U.S. neglected peace in Afghanistan for several years and allowed the Taliban to regroup. Although since the fall of Musharaff regime, Pakistan has had popularly elected governments which can qualify her as a 'democracy', support for democracy is not strong in Pakistan. As Yogendra Yadav et al showed, Pakistan scored lowest among all South Asian states on a scale measuring support for democracy.⁹ The regrouping of the Taliban has decidedly undermined the Pakistani state and democracy further complicating the task of maintaining stability in the region. As Lucien Crowder, an editor of *Current History*, said in his "Global Progress Report, 2009":

"... achieving security in Afghanistan is tightly linked to establishing order – by what means no one can say – in Pakistan's tribal regions...Pakistan's political flux is so intense that its lawless border regions constitute just one of the headaches that the nation presents to the world...one does not know how the West should approach a putative ally that has become the world's prime incubator of terror."¹⁰

It is apparent that the Taliban, al Qaeda and similar other forces are currently busy targeting Afghanistan or the Karzai regime or any other regime that may succeed depending on the final outcome of the recently held elections. There are clear signs that they have been feeling rejuvenated since the US decision to draw down its forces by the end of 2014. Mollah Omar's name and statements are resurfacing after long hibernation. It is clear that when the US withdraws from Afghanistan they will leave an undefeated enemy. As Vali Nasr, Dean of Johns Hopkins University Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, has recently said, "America has not won this war on the battlefield, nor has the country ended it at the negotiating table. America is just washing its hands of (sic) this war."¹¹ There is a distinct possibility that after the US and Nato forces are gone, the Taliban will not only recapture Afghanistan but will try to unite the FATA region and NWFP of Pakistan with Afghanistan – 'unite', not in the traditional sense but in the sense that they could then use that entire area as their theatre of operations more or less freely.¹² They can even take a leaf out of what the ISIS is doing in Syria and Iraq and try to establish a South Asian Caliphate.¹³ If and when they achieve that, targeting India would become so much easier. Unless ISIS onslaught on Iraq compels the Obama administration to have a rethink on drawdown, the immediate future of Afghanistan will impose an untold burden on India's defence capability.

*

A much larger problem is developing up in the north, in our relations with China. Although often-times the western print media brackets India and China together as exemplary cases of economic growth and as rising global powers, in fact it is China, not India which is already a great power capable of shaping international politics and international trade. Many more American citizens by 2010 believed that China was already number one global economic power.¹⁴ As Fareed Zakaria noted in his *Post-American World*, if there was ever any competition between India and China, it is over. While China has become India's top trading partner replacing the US, the trade relationship remains highly unequal. India is exporting raw materials to China and importing manufactured goods. By 2009, China's economy became four times the size of India's.¹⁵ Today China spends nearly four times that of India on her defence.¹⁶ The Chinese were very reticent about their new status, preferring to follow closely Deng Xiaoping's advice to 'hide

its light under a bushel'. President Hu Jintao in his two-and-half hour speech before the Seventeenth Party Congress in 2007 talked about everything, but neglected foreign policy entirely.

China projected in the early years of this century what Joseph Nye called, 'soft power'. And it made her immensely successful in impressing all, from American investment bankers to African leaders to South Asian governments. But since 2008, China gradually has shed her reticence. The 18th Congress of the CPC (November 2012) and the very significant 3rd Plenary of the 18th Party Congress held in November 2013 generally maintained the tradition of silence on foreign policy. However, the statements of the leaders before as well as after the Party Congress and the Plenary give some indications of the direction of China's foreign policy. While taking over power in March 2013, the new President, Xi Jinping, spoke of the Chinese Dream that 'development is of overriding importance'. But he also mentioned that, China's military should improve its ability to 'win battles and ...protect national sovereignty and security'.¹⁷

In a speech on 30 July 2013 President Xi said, 'To strengthen China's maritime capabilities is of great and fundamental significance in facilitating sound and stable economic growth, safeguarding China's sovereignty, national security, and development interests...'¹⁸ Similarly, he spoke of China's interest in promoting 'regional economic integration' through jointly building a 'Silk Road Economic Belt'.¹⁹

These are apparently innocuous statements. These also reflect the natural desire of a rising great power to make its presence felt in the arena of global politics. But when these statements are viewed side by side with the activities of the Chinese state in recent times they take on added meaning. For instance, China's sovereignty claims on disputed islands in the East China sea or in the South China sea, her declaration of an Air Defence Identification Zone over East China sea, her claim of sovereignty over the entire South China sea, Beijing's authorization of its border police to board and search ships entering into South China sea,²⁰ flexing her naval muscles in the Indian Ocean region, her occasional forays into Indian territory across the Line of Actual Control between India and China, her refusal to issue regular visa to people in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh on the ground of her new sovereignty claims upon that area, the inordinate delays in finalizing the LAC with India. These can surely imply that her emphasis on increasing the strength of her armed

forces, her maritime capabilities or harking back to integration through the construction of 'new silk routes' are targeted towards pushing forward her expanding sovereignty claims and undermining the status quo and peace in her neighbourhood.

Of particular significance for India is China's expanding influence in South Asia. With Pakistan it has an all weather friendship for decades which now allows it to build a naval base in Gwadar port and also a road from Aksai Chin to Gwadar to give it access to the Arabian Sea. Similarly, it is expanding port facilities in Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh and Sittwe in Myanmar which will open the Bay of Bengal to Chinese navy. These apart, China's presence in South Asia in terms of investment and trade is massive.²¹ More recently, she is taking special initiative in popularizing and pushing forward the project called BCIM-Economic Corridor which will connect south-western part of China with Myanmar, India's north-east, Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Therefore, China's rise is not merely as an economic power, but as a political, diplomatic and military power as well. There is no reason why India should not appreciate China's rise and try to benefit from it. But neither can India let herself be subservient to China. This demands a positive, active and multifaceted foreign and defence policy on India's part which Manmohan Singh government failed to come up with.

*

Following the swearing-in ceremony of the Modi government after the Lok Sabha elections 2014 a lot of hopes and expectations have been generated on all fronts including the foreign policy front. It can hardly be gainsaid that foreign, defence as well as nuclear policy areas require a lot of attention and reinvigoration and there is real scope for initiative here for the Modi government.

In the BJP's election manifesto only one page out of 42 was devoted to foreign policy. The party emphasized improving relations with the neighbors, developing a 'web of allies', and building India's soft power.

Without doubt, India's relation with her neighbors was at an all time low by the time Manmohan Singh government left office. That Modi's visit to Nepal on 3-4 August of this year was the first Indian prime ministerial visit to that country after 17 long years or that Sushma Swaraj's visit reconvening the India-

Nepal Joint Commission this July happened after a lapse of 23 years tell the story of our neighbourly engagements in the recent past loud and clear. These re-connections apart, making Bhutan the country of his first foreign visit appears as another signpost of the priorities in Modi government's foreign policy.

We mentioned in the beginning that these foreign policy initiatives of the Modi government during the last three months do have a subtext. The point is that in the long run recent Chinese policies towards South Asia that we have just now mentioned, for instance, the construction of roads and railways from Lhasa towards the Indian and Pakistani borders across the Himalayas, the proposal for connecting India's east and north-east with China, the maritime connectivity from China to ports in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh would likely make the Himalayas irrelevant as a natural barrier. If that happens, South Asia as a geo-political concept would disappear. What Modi might be trying is to stop the erosion of South Asian geo-political identity by reinventing a network of multiple connectivities founded on mutual trust among the South Asian neighbours. Wishing away China's rise or looking the other way or pretending to be 'bhai-bhai' will not work.²² We need to realistically and positively engage with China and with our neighbourhood.

It can be expected that Modi's government will take a lead in promoting bilateral and multilateral initiatives within the SAARC region. Also, resolving the TEESTA waters issue, inventing ways for multilateral river basin management, re-examining the difficulties arising out of non-tariff barriers to trade, re-examining the visa regime for promoting people-to-people connectivity could be other areas where bilateral and multilateral initiatives on India's part would be welcome. Building connectivities with Myanmar (Burma) should also be high on the agenda.

*

This makes Modi government's foreign policy tasks clear but far from simple. After Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi none of our prime ministers prioritized foreign policy. Rajiv Gandhi's misadventure in Sri Lanka was casually undertaken and proved enormously costly. As a result, gradually foreign policy decisions came under the domain of foreign policy bureaucracy. Without any guidelines from political leaders on broad principles and goals, foreign policy decisions became individualistic, episodic and without direction.²³ Having S. M. Krishna and Salman Khurshid in charge of South Block for a good number

of years did not help improve the UPA government's foreign policy image.

Apart from leading foreign policy from the front, taking interest in and control of the foreign policy making apparatus will be a huge responsibility of the new government. The bureaucracy must be led, not allowed to lead. It must also be adequately staffed, which is not the case now.

*

Beyond South Asia, it is very important for us to recalibrate our relationship with the USA. It is necessary for us to make full use of our long, deep, and widespread relationship with that country based on shared democratic, liberal and secular traditions.

With the United States our relationship has been roller-coaster from the beginning. The relationship reached a new high point with the Civil Nuclear Agreement at the end of the UPA government's first term. But it reached a nadir at the end of the UPA's second term with the Devyani Khobragade incident.²⁴ Therefore, there is much to be done to put the relationship back on track.

Personally for Modi there is the denial of visa issue. But Modi has said he will not allow personal matters to cloud state-to-state relationship. There is much in common between the US and India: we share a common political value system. At the individual, family and academic levels Indians have wide network of connections with their counterparts in the US. Strategically too, both nations need each other. The US happens to be our major trade partner. But somehow, there is a fear in India's foreign policy circles about how to handle the relationship. Here maybe, we need to learn a lesson from China, a country which, despite decades of intense conflict and contention with the USA, held its hand for transforming herself from a poor famine-stricken country to the second most powerful country in the world.

Modi is expected to meet President Obama in September. Indians would eagerly wait to see how these two men, apparently very different personalities, will strike a relationship at the level of international politics and global diplomacy.

*

China would certainly agree with Modi when he says, as he did during the campaign trail, that 'terrorism divides, tourism unites'. But China has a twin presence for India: it is an economic opportunity

as well as a strategic challenge. Of course, Modi will have to play economic diplomacy card well with China. We need investment from China, advice and help in infrastructure development from China, but we also need to balance our trade, we need to sell more goods to China. Also, there is the long-pending border issue: it looks increasingly awkward that while China has resolved its border issue with all of her other neighboring states, the issue with India has been kept hanging. How Modi can persuade China to co-operate in these matters will be seen by the Indian electorate carefully.

Modi has visited China several times and in 2011 when he visited China with a business delegation he was warmly received with a red carpet welcome which was in stark contrast with the US denial of visa for him. Modi certainly will remember this. Yet during the election campaign in Arunachal Pradesh he unhesitatingly sent a signal when he said, 'the world does not welcome the mind-set of expansion in today's times...China will also have to leave behind its mind-set of expansion'.²⁵

It is expected that Modi would be more pro-active with regard to the boundary issue and that he would expect similar attitude on China's part. It is important for both sides to realize by now that in settling territorial disputes recourse could be taken to history or the past for understanding a situation but not for solving it. Solution must be dictated by today's needs and tomorrow's hopes. The Chinese ambassador to India in a recently published article in *the Hindu* (28 May 2014) has mentioned that Premier Li in his congratulatory message to Modi has claimed that China and India are 'natural co-operative partners' and hoped that with the new government in India there will be smooth transition of our bilateral relations.

The ambassador expressed the view that the Chinese side is willing to import more products from India for a balanced trade relationship and also to create conducive conditions for the settlement of the boundary question.

With President Xi Jinping's forthcoming visit to India coming closer, warm and positive feelings for Modi's India are publicly emanating from China. Whether such feelings will really result in policy changes on the ground is to be seen.

Of course, in the Indo-Pacific region India would want to develop closer ties with China as well as with US, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Australia.²⁶

This would need a lot of tight-rope walking by Modi government.

*

We need also to strengthen our defence forces, build extensive border roads, diversify our defence purchases, and improve the base of our defence production. Raising the limits of FDI in defence production by the new government is a step in this direction. The Ministry of Defence must be rescued from the passivity and inaction of the days of A. K. Anthony.²⁷

The issues of nuclear power generation and nuclear weapons must also draw the urgent attention of the new government. India entered the Civil Nuclear Agreement with the US and achieved NSG clearance for boosting up her N-power generation capability. India's present N-energy generation is around 4780MW (as of 2012, which is less than 4 per cent of her total energy generation). It was visualized that it could be enhanced to 20,000MW by 2020. Now the goalpost has been drawn closer, made 10,000 MW by 2020. We are not clear how far are we even from that goal. The intervention of the Fukushima disaster and public opposition to N-power plants are factors that are certainly slowing down the process. The unique supplier liability laws that India has enacted under UPA II is also holding back nuclear co-operation with reactor supplying countries. The burden that the law imposes on the supplier would certainly be shifted to the consumers thus raising the cost of power. For Russia, Kodankulam I and II did not come under the new law. Under what conditions Russia agreed to supply reactors for Kodankulam III and IV remain unknown to the public. The new government must take the lead in sharing with the public the energy mix it wants to implement and also in achieving some sort of public consensus on the issue of nuclear energy.

The other issue concerns our nuclear weapons doctrine. The 1999 draft Nuclear Doctrine incorporating No First Use was diluted by 2010 to mean 'no first use only with respect to non-nuclear weapons states'. This dilution makes the policy virtually redundant, for no N-Power contemplates N-attack on a non-N weapons state. For India, this means we retain the freedom for 'first use' against China or Pakistan. But as experts in this area report, there has been no consequent preparation, like military control of operational N-weapons or integrating the armed forces with strategic decision-making apparatus, or conducting military drills

simulating first use.

More important is whether against China or Pakistan, 'first use' must mean, as it does in deterrence doctrine, the ability to launch a massive first strike leaving the enemy incapable for retaliation. Do we have that capacity? Do we want to have that capacity? Or should we think of building up second strike capability or deterrence capability? These are critical decisions which only the political leadership can take.

Apparently, India has gone for massive increases in conventional forces. The result of this has been that China remains unimpressed, and has responded by expanding roads, railways and airfields in Tibet. Pakistan, on the other hand, without having the resources to match India on conventional forces, has gone for enhancing nuclear arsenal. A 2011 *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* projected that within a decade Pakistan would have enough fissile material to make 160-240 warheads which is more than double the expected capacity of India.²⁸ Further, we are clearing for production missiles only after very limited number of tests. That is to say, we urgently need a fresh N-weapons doctrine.

Conclusion

It is necessary to remember that despite absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, it would not be an easy task for the Modi government to do whatever it wants to do. There would be forces within the BJP or within the larger family to which the party belongs which may not see eye-to-eye with the government or with the Prime Minister. There are Hindutva, swadeshi and Hindi enthusiasts within the BJP and its sister organizations which need to be persuaded and maneuvered to support the government's line. Outside the BJP, there would be opposition forces, the bureaucracy, the constituent states, the minorities to put varieties of pressures on the government. It is of course true that domestic policies would come under greater scrutiny than foreign policy; yet it is also true that foreign policy is increasingly becoming intertwined with domestic policy. It would require from the government a high level of skill, determination and clarity of thought in developing and pursuing a foreign policy which will protect and promote national interest in no uncertain terms. But fulfilling this task would also demand that the government remains committed to the values of democracy and liberalism because only such commitment would help it sustain the trust and support of the people. Whatever the government achieves in the foreign policy front, it must contribute

to the strength of the nation in the long term. Foreign Policy goals of any country can be very simply stated: they are security, prosperity and prestige. Towards achieving these goals foreign policy outcomes need not be spectacular, but must be additive. Today's gain must not be tomorrow's loss. In a large, pluralistic, multicultural, federal democracy making and implementing a foreign policy dedicated to both short term and long term public interest is a great challenge for political leadership. Yet, the nation cannot self-destruct itself by refusing the challenge.

This paper is a revised and updated version of the my JAIR Foundation Day Lecture at Press Club, Kolkata, in July 2009 and my lecture at Yunan Academy of Social Sciences, Kunming, in June 2014.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Harsh V. Pant, 'A Rising India's Search for a Foreign Policy,' *Orbis*, (Spring 2009): p. 250-64.
2. Jacob and Layton, 'UPA's Foreign Policy: A Critique.' *Economic and Political Weekly*, (20 June 2009): p. 13-15.
3. Fareed Zakaria, *Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 148fn.
4. President Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, Reginald C. Stuart, *The Half-Way Pacifist: Thomas Jefferson's View of War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 36.
5. The Straits Times/ANN, reported in *The Statesman*, 12 March 2013 (emphasis added).
6. Pant, 253.
7. Pant, 263.
8. See Pratap Bhanu Mehta, 'How India Stumbled: Can New Delhi Get its Groove Back?' *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2012: 64-75; Basharat Peer, 'India's Broken Promise: How a Would-Be Great Power Hobbled Itself,' (Review Essay), *Foreign Affairs*, (May-June 2012): p.158-165.
9. Peter R. DeSouza, Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav, 'Surveying South Asia,' *Journal of Democracy* (January 2008, 19 (1)): p. 90.
10. *Current History*, January, 2009: 10-11.
11. Vali Nasr, 'Inside Story of How the White House Let Diplomacy Fail in Afghanistan,' *Foreign Policy*, March-April 2013: 51.
12. Vali Nasr reports a meeting that Pakistan's former General Kayani had with the White House in October 2010: 'I cannot forget Kayani's reaction when we enthusiastically explained our plan to build up Afghan forces to 400,000 by 2014. His answer was swift and unequivocal: Don't do it. 'You will fail,' he said. 'Then you will leave and that half-trained army will break into militias that will be a problem for Pakistan.' We tried to stand on our ground, but he would have none of it'. *Ibid*.
13. Michael Crowley, 'Iraq's Eternal War,' *Time*, 30 June 2014.
14. A Pew International survey has shown that 41 percent of Americans as against 20 percent in 2004 now say the US is playing a less important and powerful role globally than ten years ago; and 44 percent of Americans believe that China is now the world's leading economic power. *Newsweek*, 11 January 2010: 7.
15. Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 448.
16. China's official annual defence budget in 2013 was \$119.5 billion against India's \$39.2 billion reported the Pentagon on 5 June in its annual report on China submitted to the US Congress. *Times of India*, 6 June 2014.
17. *The Statesman*, 18 March 2013.
18. *Chronicle of Key Remarks and Events* (china.org.cn, November 8, 2013), downloaded 19 August 2014.
19. *Ibid*, Xi Jinping's speech in Kazakhstan, 7 September 2013.
20. *The Statesman*, 30 November 2012.
21. Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World*, 439-50.
22. For an interesting discussion on the subject, Tansen Sen, 'Bhai-Bhai Lie,' a Review Essay in *Foreign Affairs* (July-August 2014) <http://www.foreignaffairs.com>
23. Manjari Chatterjee Miller, 'India's Feeble Foreign Policy,' *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2013:14-19.
24. Devyani Khobragade was a Deputy Consul General at Indian Consulate in New York when she was charged with visa fraud by the US in December 2013. Despite the External Affairs Minister's initial effort to downplay the issue, it created an uproar in India and led to the withdrawal of a US diplomat from India. www.wikipedia.com (downloaded 22 August 2014).
25. In his five-day visit to Japan, while addressing business leaders, Modi has expressed himself in the same vein when without referring to any country he said, 'We have to decide if we want to have 'vikas vaad' (development) or 'vistar vaad' (expansionism) which leads to disintegration...those having ideas of the 18th century, engage in encroachments and enter seas (of others).' Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, however, has downplayed the statement by saying '...I don't know what he is referring to.' *The Statesman*, 2 September 2014.
26. At the time of writing, Modi's Japan tour is under way wherein Modi will try to secure civil nuclear

co-operation from Japan as well as closer defence co-operation. Also, the Australian Prime Minister will visit India soon. Primit Pal Chaudhuri, 'Opportunities and threats: India faces a tricky diplomacy challenge in Japan,' Hindustan Times, 31 August 2014; Manoj Joshi, 'Can Tokyo provide Modi his first big bang moment?' The Economic Times, 29 August 2014.

27. C. Raja Mohan writes, 'It is India's misfortune that A. K. Anthony, India's longest serving defence minister, slammed the brakes on India's global security engagement at the very moment of its greatest opportunity. In the middle of the last decade, Delhi was set in a position to leverage its

good relations with the major powers, all of whom were eager to sell arms to India, and use the size of its growing defence market to lay the foundations for a solid defence industrial base at home, initiate a sweeping transformation of India's armed forces and build enduring strategic partnerships abroad. 'Anthony, however, squandered this extraordinary moment and turned the MoD's back on India's many prospective international partners...' 'An Indefensible Posture,' Indian Express, 8 August 2014.

28. Abhijit Iyer Mitra, 'India's Nuclear Imposture,' New York Times, 11 May 2014.

India's Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Years: Emerging Scenario

Raj Kumar Kothari*

ABSTRACT

Post cold war transformations in the domain of international relations have transcended all geographical and ideological boundaries, and have put questions to long established perceptions and theories. The changed international political architecture has affected India in many respects - economically, geo-strategically and from the perspective of national security.

Domestic and external determinants of India's foreign policy in the post-Soviet years have undergone significant transformations which led to reorientation in its world view and bilateral relations with major powers. The nature and extent of these changes has been so vast that there is ground to argue a case for a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy in the post-cold war years. It is against this backdrop that the present paper throws light on India's rise as an Asian power with having regional and global implications. The paper also focuses on India's relations with strategically and economically important countries from India's foreign policy point of view namely, the United States, Russia and China.

Key Words: India; Foreign Policy; Post-Cold War; Strategy; US; Russia; China.

Introduction

The World War II culminated in the de-facto division of Europe in 1945. Since then the world has moved through the cold war into the globalized world of the twenty first century. The fall of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of a new world order marked by a series of important developments across the globe. The association of G-7 had been transformed into Group of Eight (USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, Italy and Russia). Europe achieved unprecedented success in its economic and political integration. The emerging economies in the developing world - India, China, Brazil and South Africa - made considerable progress. The functioning of the international organizations and institutions, namely, the UNO, WTO, World Bank and IMF have been largely shaped by the uni-polar world order. Among the regional organizations, EU, APEC, ASEAN and SAARC emerged as important actors in world economy. Above all, India has achieved considerable stature and influence in the arena of

global economy and politics. In other words, post cold war developments have been too swift for any conceptual interpretations. These changes have transcended all geographical and ideological boundaries, and have put questions to long established perceptions and theories. The changed international political architecture affected India in all respects - economically, geo-strategically and from the perspective of national security. Thus dramatic changes in the global milieu have been instrumental in post cold war India's foreign policy shift.

In the post-Soviet era, India moved from non-alignment to multi-alignment which means strategic partnership not only with the US but also Russia, China, Japan, South East Asia, Europe and many others. As far as foreign policy strategy is concerned, India had to strike a balance between 'defensive realism' and 'offensive realism'.

Following the strategy of 'defensive realism', New Delhi attempted to gain power for self preservation. (Mearsheimer 2001, 2-3) stated that international life

* Associate Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal.

would continue to be a brutal competition for power as it had always been. He argued that in the absence of a world government to enforce rights, states found it impossible to trust one another. Sovereign states strived for the promotion of national security in order to establish total control over their national environment. By and large the UPA government (2004-2014) under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh followed this line. The NDA led by Atal Behari Vajpayee came to power in 1998 which gave a new orientation to India's foreign policy which was more realistic than moralist. It insisted on reciprocity. Security of the country was its top most priority and on this plea, India conducted nuclear explosions at Pokhran in May 1998. The NDA govt. emphasized the need to exercise nuclear option in the interest of national security. The UPA government in contrast adopted a moderate stand on foreign policy.

In fact, domestic and external determinants of India's foreign policy in the post-Soviet years have undergone significant transformations which led to reorientation in its world view and bilateral relations with major powers. The nature and extent of these changes has been so vast that there is ground to argue a case for a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy in the post-cold war years. It is against this backdrop that the present paper throws light on India's rise as an Asian power with having regional and global implications. Further the paper attempts to focus on India's relations with strategically and economically important countries in the developed and developing world, namely, the United States, Russia and China.

Policy towards the United States

As early as in 1990s, immediately after the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR, India's policy towards the United States was revisited for the first time in the backdrop of the absence of the former Soviet Union. India's bilateral relations with the United States gained a fresh momentum once Bill Clinton assumed office. There was a paradigm shift in US policy towards India too. Global power equations were changed dramatically which compelled India to promote stronger ties with the United States. Earlier, Indo-US relations were viewed through the prism of the Cold War. Since the early 1990s, shift in India's policy towards US in particular and in the West in general was quite evident. Radical economic reforms forced India to substantially liberalize its economy resulting in greater opportunities for economic cooperation and trade with the US. Consequently, Indo-US trade and economic cooperation reached its new height. These

positive developments in bilateral relations were partly affected due to Clinton administration's effort to constrain India's nuclear and missile programme. However, subsequently Clinton administration recognized India's security concerns vis-à-vis its neighbours, China and Pakistan. President Clinton's unanticipated support for India in the 1999 Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan and his visit to India in March 2000 (the first visit by a US President in 22 years) provided new impetus to the bilateral relationship. (Bhure 2010, 114-115) Thereafter, the US engagement with India not only continued but took a further leap during the Presidency of George W Bush jr.

9/11 was another important development that brought India further closer to the US. Thereafter when the United States decided to enter into Afghanistan, India under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee provided its military bases and facilities to the US. US National Security Strategy 2002 stated that 'US interests require a strong relationship with India.' (Srivastav 2009, 2) In fact, relations between India and the United States since the second term of George Bush jr. has been all time high. At present, the two states enjoy unprecedented levels of cooperation in the economic and political fields. They are closer than ever before. The events of 9/11 in fact changed the dynamics of Indo-US defence relations. In an interview with *The Hindu*, published on May 3, 2003, US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage stated about growing Indo-US defence relations. According to him, 'India had been very helpful in assisting with logistics and flights, and what was significant was that this relationship was now astronomically different from what it had been a year ago.' (Sharif 2006, 40)

In January 2004, in a joint statement Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Bush declared that India-United States strategic partnership includes expanding cooperation in the areas of easing restrictions on dual use of technology export to India, increase in civil nuclear and civil space cooperation, as well as expanding dialogue on missile defence. (Bhure 2010, 116) During her visit to New Delhi on March 15, 2005, US Secretary of State Ms. Condoleeza Rice stated: 'the Bush administration was sworn to assist India to become a major world power in the twenty-first century.' (Burns 2007, 132) She further stated: 'the United States would alter its long held framework that tied and balanced its relations with India-Pakistan. We would effectively de-hyphenate our South Asia policy by seeking highly individual

relations with both India and Pakistan.' (Burns 2007, 132) In respect of South Asia, both India and the United States share similar concerns in the region with the exception of Pakistan. This was reflected in the Joint Statement which recognized New Delhi's growing role in strengthening regional and global security. (Chadha 2008, 214-215)

During the second term of George Bush, the United States took greater and deeper initiatives in executing nuclear deal with India. India was outside the purview of NPT and therefore there were many hurdles on the way of executing the deal. In 2006, President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced in New Delhi about the realization of the deal through the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative. This development indicated fundamental shift in Washington's nuclear policy towards New Delhi. Finally, the cooperation between India and the United States reached a new height when they signed the historic India-United States Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement on October 8, 2008, which marked the end of India's nuclear isolation from the global mainstream in the sphere of civil nuclear technology. The 'nuclear deal' reversed US nuclear policy towards India whereby Washington could sell nuclear technology to India. (Bhure 2010, 117-118)

On the whole, the progress between the United States and India under Bush administration had been remarkable. Important achievements were: a historic agreement on civil nuclear energy; closer collaboration on scientific and technological innovation; rapidly increasing trade and commercial links and so on. (Bhure 2010, 119) From the American perspective, New Delhi could play an important role in the present international scenario. India symbolized a pluralistic society where democracy thrives irrespective of contradictions. It served as a viable example of democratic freedom for Afghanistan and Iraq. Democracy thus became a tool for furthering foreign policy objectives. (Chadha 2008, 112)

India adopted a cautious approach when Barack Obama became the President of the United States in January 2009. The initial approach of the Obama administration towards India was lukewarm. India was not even mentioned in the Obama administration's official foreign policy agenda. ('Barack Obama Administration's Foreign Policy Agenda') Later on President Obama declared his policy towards South Asia whereby he continued with the US policy of providing military and economic aid to its key ally Pakistan to fight war against Al-Qaeda. However, unlike in the past the

US had ensured that significant portions of these funds were meant for non-military purposes and not used for anti-India activities. This provided the much needed boost to Indo-US relations under Obama administration.

Meanwhile the Congress led UPA government under Manmohan Singh came to power for the second consecutive term on May 22, 2009 and it was decided that the momentum built in the Indo-US relationship would be continued. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama held their first bilateral talks on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in London on April 2, 2009. Both sides showed deep eagerness to carry forward the Indo-US strategic relationship that had been developed over the last few years. President Obama acknowledged that the United States saw India as a global partner and together the two countries could play an important role in meeting challenges of the twenty first century. (Bhure 2010, 120-121)

Policy towards Russia

The demise of the Soviet Union, precipitated by the abortive August 1991 coup, had traumatic consequences for India in the backdrop of the fact that for about four decades - since the 1950s - New Delhi had developed and maintained very strong political, economic, defence and military cooperation with Moscow. The disappearance of the Soviet Union overnight had dislocated extensive longstanding arrangements for defence supplies to India. Indian defence industries were badly affected by frequent interruptions in the supply of spare parts and equipments. Soviet Union's demise also affected bilateral trade and economic relations between India and Russia in a remarkable way, since Soviet Union was India's major trade and economic partner.

Although India had realigned its foreign policy well before the end of the Cold War, the uncertainties about the future transactions with the states of the former Soviet republics caused nightmares to Indian policy makers. Keeping in mind these difficulties India had to reorient its foreign policy approach towards Russia. Much, however, depended upon Moscow's perceptions of New Delhi. Therefore, some fundamental changes in India's perception of Russia took place. The 'friendship' prices at which Moscow sold and supplied valuable goods and items to New Delhi during the Soviet years became a thing of the past. The credits on highly discounted terms that former Soviet Union provided to India for arms purchase were no longer valid. Further, *rupee* (INR)

payment arrangements were no more valid in the present context in case of most transactions. New Delhi had to readjust itself with these newer challenges and realities since the early 1990s.

In this backdrop, the visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to New Delhi on December 4-7, 2008 provided a good opportunity for the Indian government to fundamentally reassess the strategic significance of the traditional India-Russia partnership. The visit had been important in more than one ways. It took place at a turning point in contemporary history and politics in the backdrop of a major transformation in the international system.

Russia agreed to discuss about the leasing of a nuclear submarine to the Indian navy. Agreements were signed according to which Russia would be constructing four new nuclear power plants in India and on assisting a manned Indian space flight. This apart, Russia had offered to build a new power plant AES-2006, which incorporated a third generation WER-1200 reactor of 1170MW. Russia had also agreed to supply uranium worth \$700 million in order to meet India's acute shortage of nuclear fuel. The Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described the agreements as signifying a 'new milestone in the history of cooperation with Russia'. He further added, 'It is a relationship that has withstood the test of time.' He also said that the terrorist attack on Mumbai posed a threat to all pluralistic societies, including Russia and the two countries could jointly strive to promote world peace.

India extended full support of the Russian position on the situation in the Caucasus region. A joint declaration stated: 'India supports the important role of the Russian Federation in promoting peace and cooperation in the Caucasian region.' With regard to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) of which Russia and India were members, Moscow wanted New Delhi to play a more active role and more constructive participation and contribution. This apart, while Russia had reiterated its support for India's legitimate claim to permanent membership in the expanded UN Security Council, India had voiced its support for Russia's keenness to join the Asia-Europe meeting and East Asia summit mechanisms and various such other international forums.

The joint declaration also suggested that India had adapted itself to the changing dimension of international relations and it must diversify its avenues of cooperation and revitalize its diverse partnerships with all major powers including Russia

on the basis of shared concerns and commonality of interests rather than to focus on its bilateral relations with the US alone. On Afghanistan, India and Russia called for a united international commitment to deal with the threats emanating from the country. In this context India welcomed Russia's initiative¹ to organize an international conference within the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. India supported any regional initiatives undertaken by Russia to resolve Afghan problem. Afghanistan, from India's point of view, being a member of SAARC, could act as a bridge between South Asia and Central Asia. New Delhi was thus opposed to any unilateral initiative taken by the US towards Afghanistan. Washington, on the other hand, had been discouraging Kabul from supporting and siding with SCO.

Indo-Russian bilateral cooperation gained fresh momentum in the light of Indo-US Nuclear Deal signed in 2008. Russia as such had no problem with the nuclear deal and it sided with India in its efforts to convince the nuclear supplier group to lift sanctions imposed upon New Delhi to enable her to receive uninterrupted supply of nuclear fuel. What had, however, been disturbing for Moscow was the way New Delhi and Washington had tied up on strategic issues. Therefore, in the coming years, major challenges before Indian policy makers would be to devise concrete strategy to promote Indo-US relations without disturbing the fundamentals of Indo-Russian relationships.

The unfolding energy war between Russia and the West has a direct bearing on India's national interests. US would have to compete with rising economies like China and India, major energy consumers in the international energy market. Therefore, energy would be the main source of conflict between US and Russia in the coming decades. In the race for Russian energy resources, Asian consumers have important advantages over the US and Europe. Moscow plans to increase exports of crude to Asia from 3 to 30 percent and that of gas from 5 to 25 percent by 2020. India, however, faces stiff competition from other major energy consumers in Asia and will have to work hard to win its share of the Russian energy pie. (Radyuhin 2006, 62)

Scramble for energy has thrown up new challenges for India's foreign policy. In a highly competitive international system, where major oil and gas exporting countries are using energy as a lever to exert influence and enhance their earnings, emerging major consumers like India and China are

restructuring their foreign policies to secure access to the energy resources from outside. In fact, Energy has assumed an important role for sustaining India's high economic growth rate. So far, crude oil – 70 percent of which is imported – has been the principal source of energy. Production of oil has not kept pace with the rising demand; and the situation is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Imports are affected by fluctuations of energy prices in the international market. Thus, import of natural gas is inevitable as per the projected rate of consumption. (Panda 2006, 93-94) Dependence on external sources may put in jeopardy the sharp edges of the 'reformist' economic agenda as well as 'independence' in foreign policy. Conflicts and competition will be the hallmark in the scramble for energy, as India's indigenous sources mismatch the development targets. Therefore, India would have to devise policies for reducing reliance on imported oil and gas supplies with a vision for the future, and developing alternative sources without compromising its hard earned good relationships with several countries.

The NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee had initiated a policy to expand engagements with multinational companies as well as allowed the public sector Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) to participate directly in the global energy market. As a result, ONGC bought equity stakes in oil fields in Syria, Iran, Vietnam, Russia, Myanmar, Angola, Libya, Sudan and Iraq. Accordingly, the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) had also invested in equity stakes in Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in Oman and Iran and continued to negotiate with Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran for direct supply through pipelines. But India's engagements had been constrained by the interests of multinational corporations, the policies of the West and the political fluctuations in Myanmar, Sudan, etc. ONGC had also been facing competition from China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). It was suggested by many that the two national companies would do much better for their respective national energy security goals through cooperation rather than competition in the international energy market. Energy diplomacy was, therefore, closely associated with national security and purely guided by self-interest. (Panda 2006, 94-95)

Considering the fact that in the coming years India's energy need would increase by many times, its dependence on external energy sources would have a direct bearing on its economy and foreign policy. India has to be careful about the twists and turns

in its own energy imports even when the transactions are with a dependable friend like Russia. However, the post cold war era which saw some devaluation in the earlier Indo-Soviet relationship, due to some hasty steps and decisions taken by Russian foreign policy makers, seems to be getting over. The Joint Declaration issued after the Summit meeting of the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2004 was significant in this context. Russia recognized India as a 'Privileged strategic partner' and agreed on joint research and development and production of weapon systems. (Faleiro 2007, 4) From the Indian point of view, this was a right step towards promoting greater self-reliance and possibilities of joint international marketing.

The starting of the first unit of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project in July 2013 under the joint venture initiative between India and Russia has taken bilateral relations between the countries to a new height. (Subramanian, 23-28) In fact, the Kudankulam Nuclear project stands as the model of ideal cooperation between India and Russia.

Policy towards China

There has been considerable debates (Bajpai 2012; Kothari 2010; Batabyal 2010) on how India is going to deal with a rapidly rising China, a country with which it has over 4000 kilometers of disputed boundary as well as strategic and political rivalry that has the potential to go out of control in case of any breach of trust on the part of either side. This question has assumed greater significance particularly during last couple of years with China which is reasserting its territorial claims not only over the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh but also over the 'Finger Point Area' in Sikkim bordering India, Bhutan and China. In spite of steady improvement in economic ties between these two states in the last two decades, in the political and strategic sphere, there lies enduring rivalry towards each other. Ever since the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962, relations between China and India have remained unsettled. Although a very slow but steady progress in bilateral relations has taken place, particularly in the economic field since 1988, relations between India and China have largely remained complex and are fraught with tensions. The tensions that dominated their relations since the late 1950s and continued till the mid-1980s have dissipated but covert suspicions continue to exist. Both India and China have divergent self-images and want to emerge

as major powers in Asia and beyond. Although both India and China will find areas for cooperation, they will nevertheless be at odds on a number of important issues. Numerous differences - some long standing, others of more recent origin - constrained the prospect of any dramatic improvement in the bilateral relationship. The unresolved border dispute between these two states remains an important irritant in their bilateral relations. The discord between India and China is so acute, and the memory of the armed conflict in 1962 between the two is so fresh on the Indian side, that any dramatic improvement in bilateral relations is unlikely in the foreseeable future. (Ganguli, 124) Therefore, it may be stated that any form of improvement in Sino-Indian relations at the present juncture will at best be incremental in nature.

In fact, the competing Indian and Chinese aspirations for leadership in Asia significantly limit the prospects of bilateral cooperation between the two sides in the foreseeable future. A careful analyses of China's foreign and security policy towards India in particular and South Asia in general highlights that China has paid more geostrategic attention towards India than it has been willing to admit publicly. (Tellis 2004, 140) Further, it has put in place an effective policy that makes its relative disregard for India a justifiable entailment of its larger grand strategy. Therefore, the purported Chinese neglect of India is nothing short of a myth.

There are numerous differences, which limits the prospects of improvement in Sino-Indian bilateral ties. One of the most crucial areas of dispute - as stated above - between India and China that remains unsettled even today is the dispute over the Sino-Indian frontier. Both India and China have made competing claims over territories along the disputed frontier in the western and eastern sectors respectively. The dispute over the frontier was one of the reasons that resulted in a brief but bloody armed confrontation between the two states in 1962. Further, as late as 2006, China was unwilling to accept Sikkim's merger with India. China in fact views India very much as a potential challenger to its ambition of emerging as a major power in Asia and the world at large. China's stated desire to have good relations with India is at variance with its uninterrupted efforts to build up Pakistan as a military counterweight to India. China has all along strived to maintain a balance of power in South Asia by assisting Pakistan militarily in order to contain India from achieving superiority over Pakistan. (Tellis 2004, 138) This strategy also provides China with

the strategic claim to the status of a major Asian and world power while India's preoccupation with Pakistan reduces it to the level of a regional power. A grand Chinese design to strategically encircle India has been highlighted by its efforts to build close political, economic and strategic relations with Myanmar, and even Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, besides Pakistan.

From the Chinese perspective, the presence and putative political activities of more than a hundred thousand Tibetans and their spiritual and temporal leader Dalai Lama in India since 1959 constitutes a major source of uneasiness and friction in relations with India. Although New Delhi recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet through the 1954 Agreement with Beijing, China views the granting of political asylum to Dalai Lama and the existence of the Tibetan government in exile at Dharamsala in India with a deep sense of suspicion and distrust. The Chinese leadership has also been deeply concerned by the growth of India's military power, particularly its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities in the aftermath of the 1998 nuclear tests conducted by India. The signing of the India-United States Framework Agreement on Defence on June 28, 2005 and India-US Civilian Nuclear Agreement on March 8, 2008 has further increased the Chinese leadership's concern about India. The major areas of conflict or tension between India and China have been as follows.

The Unsettled Boundary: One of the most important sources of discord in Sino-Indian relations is the unsettled boundary dispute between these two states. Although since 1988, both sides have decided to put the issue of boundary dispute on the backburner while moving forward in other less contentious areas, the lingering dispute between India and China over their boundary remains an important source of irritant in their bilateral relations. As early as 1950, Indian diplomats had encountered Chinese maps that showed certain areas as Chinese territory that India claimed to be its own. It is important to note in this context that India's inheritance from the British colonial empire were the results of a set of colonial border policies. Initially Nehru had brushed off suggestions that this matter be forthrightly discussed with the Chinese. (Subramanian, 23-28) In his view, the inherited boundaries of the British Empire were legal and therefore sacrosanct. This legalistic worldview was in sharp contrast to the Chinese position, which was largely shaped by considerations of power as well as notions of historical grievance.

(Ganguli 2004, 111) This difference in perception among the Indian and the Chinese political leadership in dealing with the question of settling their boundary was one of the factors that resulted in an armed conflict between them in 1962.

During the path breaking visit of late Prime Minister of India Mr Rajiv Gandhi to China in December 23, 1988, the decision to create a high level Joint Working Group (JWG) to deal with the boundary dispute was taken. ("Sino-Indian Joint Press Communiqué", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, December 23, 1988. The JWG was charged with seeking a political settlement of the boundary dispute and other extant problems in bilateral ties. However, it is worth noting that attempts to amicably settle the long-standing border dispute since 1988 has moved at a very sluggish pace. Two important developments did take place in the decade of the 1990's pertaining to the border dispute. First, on during the visit of the former Indian Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao's to China, an "Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the China-India Border Areas was signed between both the sides on September 7, 1993. ("Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India China Border Areas", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, September, 07, 1993. This agreement enjoined the two sides to respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC) along the Himalayan frontier and not to conduct military maneuvers in designated zones even though there is no agreement on the precise position of the LAC in certain sectors. Also on November 29, 1996, during the visit of the then Chinese President Jiang Zemin to New Delhi, India and China signed the 'Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas.' (Ganguli 2004, 124) This agreement includes a series of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) relating to reduction in deployment of troops in border areas, prior notification on troop deployment, and other communication measures to be undertaken by both the sides. Perhaps most important, the two sides agreed not to attack each other's forces across the disputed Himalayan frontier. Both sides, however, failed to reach a common ground on the precise location of the LAC. However, in recent years, despite the seeming progress in Sino-Indian relations, especially on the border question, deep differences continued to persist between the two.

There also had been a major conflict between India and China in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on May 14, 2009 with China digging its heels in and not giving consent to ADB's US \$2.9 billion India development plan unless the mention of Arunachal Pradesh was removed from the plan document. Within this India development plan, a sum of US \$60 million was marked for watershed development project, including flood management in Arunachal Pradesh. (Samanta 2009) All the member states on the board of executive directors of ADB except China supported the funding plans for India. ('China Objected to ADB Loan to India for Arunachal Pradesh') The ADB thereafter asked India to resolve the matter bilaterally provoking a very strong reaction from India. India has categorically told the ADB that it would rather withdraw from the entire plan rather than conceding on China's demands that the word 'Arunachal Pradesh' be removed from the stated ADB plan document for the sake of financial approval. (Samanta 2009) India even stated its desire to look for alternative sources of funding if the matter was not resolved in India's favour.

Tibet factor in Sino-Indian Ties: Tibet remains an important factor as far as China's policy making on the India-China boundary dispute is concerned. Many within the highest echelons of the Chinese political leadership still believe that India prefers an independent Tibet and covertly supports Tibetan separatists. Exercise of absolute control over Tibet would help to make China strong primarily in two ways. First, it would provide China greater security against possible external military threat or attack in future. Second, the exploitation of Tibet's rich mineral and other natural resources was considered vital for China's economic development. 'India-China Competition Revealed in Ongoing. Therefore, development and exploitation of Tibet's natural resources remains crucial for China's overall economic development and its rise as a great power. From India's viewpoint, preservation of Tibet's unique cultural heritage has been of tremendous significance.

Initially India tried to resist but was gradually forced to accommodate China's creation of a new political reality in Tibet i.e. the creation of Tibet under direct political control and military occupation of China. India, by the end of the twentieth century had largely adjusted to the irrevocable loss of its long-extant Tibetan buffer. India did so with considerable reluctance, resentment, and a deep awareness of what it had lost in terms of national security. China, for its part, imposed complete political and military

control over Tibet. A large section of the Tibetans even today are extremely hostile to China's rule over Tibet. Rebellion against Chinese rule in Tibet is an ever-present danger. It has occurred many times since 1950, the last two occasions being in 1988 and March 2008. (Yardley 2008) On the whole, India's policy towards Tibet since 1947 has paid dividend to China.

Other Areas of Discord: Another important source of discord in Sino-Indian relations over the years has been China's close political, military and economic links with almost all of India's neighbours, most notably Pakistan and Myanmar. Pakistan has become an important factor in Sino-Indian relations primarily because of China's decision to supply Pakistan with nuclear and missile technologies and the attempt by Pakistan to exploit these capabilities in prosecuting a low-intensity conflict against India. Both components directly affect India's security because they reinforce India's apprehensions of China as a strategic competitor and as a direct security threat. (Tellis 2004, 146) China has all along strived to maintain a balance of power in South Asia by assisting Pakistan militarily in order to contain India from achieving superiority over Pakistan. This strategy also provides China with the strategic claim to the status of a major Asian and world power while India's preoccupation with Pakistan reduces it to the level of a regional power. Many Western and Indian analysts believe that one of the major motives of Chinese transfer of nuclear and missile technologies to Pakistan was aimed at constraining India.

Areas of Convergence: Trade and economics are the most important areas of convergence between India and China. India has endeavored to expand the volume and composition of bilateral trade with China and has sought to enlarge the number of border outposts through which local, cross-Himalayan trade could be conducted officially. Bilateral trade between India and China has grown over the years from just US \$ 2.33 billion in 2000-01 to US \$25.68 billion in 2006-07. By October 2008, bilateral trade between India and China reached a historic level of US\$ 51.8 billion. ("China Emerges India's Largest Trading Partner in 2008", *The Hindu Business Line*, January 21, 2009) It is interesting to note in this connection that China surpassed the United States to become India's largest trading partner in 2008. However, even in the economic arena, India and China are also extensively competing for finding markets for their manufactured products in Asia and in other parts of the world.

Apart from trade issues, Chinese and Indian interests

also converge with respect to the fight against terrorism, particularly the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, which affects both the states in diverse ways, the necessity of combating the threats emanating from large scale environmental degradation and protecting their respective interests regarding the Intellectual Property Rights under the WTO. As far as combating Islamic fundamentalism is concerned, particularly in the post September 11, 2001, China is very much concerned about the activities of Islamic secessionist groups in its northwestern Xinjiang province, which have close links with Islamic fundamentalist groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Although India has not gone out of its way to express solidarity with China on these issues, Indian policy makers clearly recognize a useful potential for convergent political action, and hence, they have been careful not to foreclose possibilities for collaboration in the future. (Tellis 2004, 142)

Conclusion

The period during 1989-1991 was a watershed in the history of the twentieth century. In a series of events, the erstwhile USSR and the East European socialist countries collapsed. The ideological struggle between capitalism and communism melted and paved the way for globalization. The end of Cold War heralded realignment of countries in global relations. India engaged new friends and tried to maintain persistent relations with old friends. The government of India introduced the policies of economic liberalization. The period of early 1990s witnessed burgeoning economic and political relations. These developments broadly laid the foundation of India's post-cold war foreign policy, though there were some fundamental differences in the foreign policy approach of the NDA and UPA governments. The UPA, in contrast to the NDA, adopted an approach that emphasized patient negotiations and accommodation rather than coercion and force. (Bajpai 2012, 99) Against this backdrop, India's relations with three key countries in the international system - United States, Russia and China - were developed.

During the Bush administration, Indo-US relations acquired a security dimension. Military exercises at regular interval took place along with access to civilian and military technology. Both the countries started treating each other as 'natural allies'. United States realized that India could play an important role in America's Asia policy which was indeed a paradigm shift in US policy towards India. With regard to Russia, Indo-Russian relations were at a very low profile in the early years after the Cold

War. However, gradually the relationship took a new turn whereby India and Russia strengthened defence and economic cooperation in a significant way. As far as China was concerned, India adopted a very cautious approach. What is however noteworthy is that despite having political differences, India-China economic relations reached a new height. Viewed in this context, there has been a paradigm shift in India's foreign policy in the post-cold war years.

To conclude, India has been changing fast. It is now increasingly recognized as an emerging power that is seeking its due place and role in regional and global affairs. India is deeply affected by all major international developments including the recent economic and financial crises. Unlike in earlier periods, India is rapidly integrating itself into the international system. During last two decades, India has developed its economic and military capability to a significant level in shaping regional and global affairs. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (assumed office in May 2014) it is expected that India's relations with US, Russia and China will be revisited in accordance with its vital national interests, especially keeping in mind the fact that in the present century the gravity of power politics has shifted to Asia.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A. Batabyal, 'Engagement and Rivalry: Sino-Indian Relations in the Twenty First Century' in Raj Kumar Kothari (ed.) *India's Foreign Policy in the New Millennium* (New Delhi: Academic Excellence, 2010), pp. 196-220.
2. A. Tellis, 'China and India in Asia,' in Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (ed.) *The India-China Relationship: Rivalry and Engagement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
3. 'Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India China Border Areas,' Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Beijing, September 7, 1993.
4. 'Barack Obama Administrations' Foreign Policy Agenda'. Accessed on November 13, 2009.
5. 'China emerges India's largest trading partner in 2008.' *The Hindu Business Line*, January 21, 2009.
6. 'China objected to ADB loan to India for Arunachal Pradesh: Krishna.' *India News*, July 10, 2009.
7. C. Devonshire Ellis 'China's String of Pearls Strategy' *China Briefing*, March 18, 2009.
8. E. Faleiro, 'South Asia and the Asian Resurgence' *South Asia Politics*, No. 6 (2007), pp. 3-7.
9. J. Malhotra, 'For India's Tibet Turn, China to Amend its Sikkim Map' *The Indian Express*, June 25, 2003.
10. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001)
11. J. Yardley, 'Monk Protest in Tibet Draw Chinese Security,' *The New York Times*, March 14, 2010.
12. Kanti Bajpai, 'The UPA's Foreign Policy, 2004-9" in Lawrence Saez and Gurharpal Singh (ed.) *New Dimensions of Indian Politics: The UPA in Power* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 99-112.
13. M. Malik, 'India-China Competition Revealed in Ongoing Border Disputes'
14. Nicholas Burns, 'America's Strategic Opportunity with India: The New US-India Partnership,' *Foreign Affairs*, No. 86 (2007), pp. 129-48.
15. P. D. Samanta, 'India-China face-off Worsens Over ADB Loan for Arunachal,' *The Indian Express*, May 15, 2009.
16. R. Bhure, 'Are Indo-US Relations on Upward Trajectory?' in Raj Kumar Kothari (ed.) *India's Foreign Policy in the New Millennium* (New Delhi: Academic Excellence, 2010), pp. 114-129.
17. Raj Kumar Kothari, 'Recent Trends in Sino-Indian Relations: Emerging Concerns' in Raj Kumar Kothari (ed.) *India's Foreign Policy in the New Millennium* (New Delhi: Academic Excellence, 2010), pp. 221-242.
18. S. Ganguli, 'India and China: Border Issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security,' in Francine R. Frankel and Harry Harding (ed.) *The India-China Relationship: Rivalry and Engagement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 121-138.
19. S. Panda, 'Global Energy and Alliances: Challenges for India,' *India Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (2006), pp. 92-123.
20. S. K. Srivastav, 'Contours of the India-United States Strategic Partnership.'
21. S. Ramachandran, 'China toys with India's Borders,' *Asia Times Online*, June 27, 2008.
22. S. Sharif, 'The United States and India,' *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2006), pp. 21-29.
23. 'Sino-Indian Joint Press Communiqué', (Ministry

- of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Beijing). December 23, 1988.
24. T. S. Subramanian, 'Kudankulam: Ready to Run.' *Frontline*, Vol. 30, No. 15 (2013) pp. 23-28.
25. V. Chadha, *Indo-US Relations: Divergence to*
- Convergence* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2008).
26. V. Radyuhin, 'Energy War' *Frontline*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2007), pp. 59-62.

An Analysis of the Rise and Development of the USA, China and Russia in Contemporary Times with Special Reference to Russia's Takeover of Crimea

Anindita Malas*

ABSTRACT

Today's world is more concerned with the military and economic superiority than peaceful co-existence of the countries. So naturally, the balance of power is also getting changed frequently with the rise of new powers in the international platform and these newly emerging powers are forming new groups among themselves, thus changing the power-equation drastically. For instance, today's world is a multi-polar world which is greatly influenced by the dominance of the USA which has become the order of the day, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the rise of the People's Republic of China in the global scenario have brought into limelight the concept of 'G-3' – which mainly signifies the dominance of two major powers in the international affairs, i.e. the USA and China. But the emergence of the Russian Federation as a major power in both military and economic spheres has again raised question about the stability of the 'G-3' world. Moreover, Russia's occupation of Crimea in most recent times has provided a severe shock to the western world, which, under the leadership of the USA, has imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia in response. But all these have failed to deter Russia from occupying Crimea, which is now a federal unit under the control of the Putin-government. Besides, China is also now maintaining cordial relationships with Russia and sharing a common platform with it in the forum of BRICS.

Keywords: G-3, USA, China, Russia, Globalization, Crimea.

Introduction

After the end of Cold War in 1990s, the fall of the erstwhile Soviet Union basically shattered the Communist world and witnessed the beginning of an era of *Globalization* marked by economic liberalization, privatization and foreign direct investments, which is a typical western concept and which have knit all around it a web of consumerism, economic and cultural integration and interdependence in which the backward, non-western nations are getting entrapped. However today world is mainly concerned with a US-dominated multi-polar global structure where many of the non-western countries are on the rise. Among them, the so called 'peaceful rise' of China has shaken the foundation of the West, which now occupies world's second position in terms of both military and economy. On the other hand, Japan, India, Brazil etc. are some

of the rising economies which play significant roles in shaping and changing the power-equation in the international arena. However, the rise of the Russian Federation, which ranks world's third in terms of military and eighth by economy, has also become a matter of concern for the western world now-a-days, especially after the inclusion of Crimea in the Russian Federation. So the concept of 'Group of Two' or 'G-3', which mainly indicates the co-existence of the two great powers, namely the United States and the People's Republic of China, is facing challenges from the Russian Federation, which has largely come out of its Cold War-time traumatic experiences and is now one of the major emerging powers of the day. This paper tends to focus on the change in power-balance which is prominent after the gradual rise of Russia, and which might affect the balance

* Research Scholar, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University.

existing between the USA and China, thus changing the idea from G-3 to G-3.

What is G-3?

Before going into further analysis, one must be well aware about the notion of 'G-3'. The idea of 'G-3' was first introduced by *Fred Bergsten*, an eminent scholar, in 2005 and was gradually popularized by *Zbigniew Brzezinski* and others. The concept actually signifies the dominance two most powerful countries of the world – i.e. the *United States* and the *People's Republic of China*. At the same time the idea also denotes that the USA and China – both being the members of the UN Security Council – can join hands and maintain the status quo and the global peace by addressing the emerging security threats to the international political system. However, China refuses to accept this notion of 'G-3', as we can find in the EU Summit, 2009 when *Wen Jiabao*, the then Chinese Prime Minister totally rejected this concept of 'Group of Two' by saying, '*It is totally ungrounded and wrong to talk about the dominance of two countries in international affairs*'.

However, it is undeniable that the rise of China both in military and economic spheres has created deep concern for the US-dominated western world. Since the end of the Cold war till today – the period is heavily influenced by the western culture, education, norms and especially by western ideas of democracy, freedom and economic liberalization. In this globalized era, the economies of all the countries are intertwined through the ideas of foreign direct investments, mutual cooperation, and therefore the economic prosperity or disaster at one part of the world will have their respective ramifications on the other parts as well. As a result, backward countries of the *Third World* are facing lots of troubles as they have to depend on foreign aids and loans coming from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which are tied with hard conditions, and thus these poor countries are getting trapped into what is known as '*Debt Trap*' being unable to return these loans. Thus, Globalization has hammered at the root of a poor country's sovereignty and made it dependent upon the western world for its survival.

China: The Brightest Star in the Sky of Asia?

Here the role of *China* deserves mention. Among the Asian countries, China is the only one which can compete with the growing economic and military capabilities of the USA; in fact some of the scholars are of the opinion that by 2030 China might overpower the United States, both economically and

militarily. After the formation of the People's Republic of China under the conservative leadership of *Mao Zedong* in 1949, China has witnessed lots of ups and downs in its way to success. However, after the rise of *Deng Xiaoping* in 1978, China resorted to active economic engagement, because it understood that overseas investment is essential for further development of the Chinese economy. No doubt that the Communist rule in China has today given way to economic liberalization, but the control is still in the hands of the Communist Party of China, which only allows the maintenance of a Socialist Market Economy in the country, where the Chinese government has put certain restrictions over the issue of economic liberalization and also on the FDIs. The world-market is now getting flooded with cheap Chinese goods, and thus various countries of East Asia like Japan, North Korea and also that of Southeast Asia are now heavily dependent upon Chinese investments and aids. In fact, China is now the second largest trading partner of the USA, and much of the foreign direct investments of the USA come from China. However, the USA has accused China of currency manipulation by resorting to arbitrary devaluation and appreciation of Yuan, thus paving way for a kind of '*Currency-War*' which might evolve between the two in near future.

Militarily, China's position is only next to the USA. Especially, China's '*Blue Water Navy*' is really a matter of concern for the countries like the United States, Japan, Philippines and others who are highly alert of China's naval expansion which is supposed to have gone beyond Taiwan till Africa. In fact, it is also suspected that China is developing *Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)*, *twin turboprop aircraft* in order to counter US influence in the region (Taiwan). Besides, it is reported that nearly 1500 other missiles are being directed against Taiwan, which may also affect the Japanese islands, especially the Okinawa Island having the US military base – thus encroaching into *Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)*. Moreover, China has been alleged of investing enormously in *Pakistan's nuclear programme* and also for selling conventional weapons like JF-17 aircraft, K-8 jet trainers, T-85 tanks, including the J-10 fighter jets etc. to Pakistan, thus adding fuel to the Kashmir issue. Regarding the water disputes also, China has its claims over the islands and shoals of the South China Sea and the East China Sea, which create problems of China with Japan, Philippines, Vietnam and other countries, and in fact the involvement of the USA in the South China Sea-issue has made China more concern regarding its claims. Moreover,

Pentagon reports that the Chinese government has announced a big increase in its military expenditure up to \$132 billion this year (2014), which is nearly 12% more than its previous expenditures. So all these clearly indicate the gradual rise of an 'aggressive China' in the international spheres, though China has assured the world saying that it is just moving to the path of a 'Benign Rise'!

That's why most of the scholars are now the skeptic of the US-dominance in the international affairs, and are now more concerned about the rise of the PRC, thus giving space to the concept of 'G-3' in recent years.

Russia's Emergence into the Scene: Changing the Equation

The situation has now become more complicated for the West after the considerable progress made by the Russian Federation in the post-Cold War era. As mentioned earlier, the Russian economy occupies the eighth position in the world, whereas militarily it stands next only to the USA and the PRC. Moreover, Russia now has world's largest reserves of natural gas, the second largest reserves of coal and the eighth largest oil reserves. Therefore, it is evident that the influence of Russia in the international affairs has increased to a great extent.

Scholars have talked about the presence of mainly three *schools of thought* in Russia – the Liberal School, the Realist School and the Nationalist School. While the Liberal School speaks in favour of western ideas and culture, the scholars of the Realist and the Nationalist Schools are out and out against the US-dominated global order. After the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the formation of the Russian Federation, the country had to pass through a tough time. Still today, the ethnic problems exist in the areas of Chechnya, Georgia, Armenia-Azerbaijan and other areas surrounding Russia, which pose severe challenge to the national integrity of the country. However, today's Russia has been able to overcome most of these hurdles; especially the country is now well-equipped with both the conventional weapons and the nuclear arsenals. Besides, Russia maintains its presence in the regional organizations like BRICS, G-20 and also participates in the summit meetings with the ASEAN. Moreover, like the PRC, the Russian Federation is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). So, the increasing influence of Russia on the global affairs can be well-felt in recent years. For instance, Russia has criticized the USA for the financial crisis of 2008-09, and also for the unilateral

actions taken by the US-led NATO force in Egypt, Libya, Syria and other parts of the Middle East since 2011. In fact, the USA was not been able to declare war against the Assad-government in Syria just because of the interference of Russia.

The Crimea Tension

However, the inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation can, perhaps, be looked upon as the most severe blow that shook the strong foundation of the western powers in this twenty-first century ever since after the end of the Cold war. Crimea had been an autonomous Republic under Ukraine until February, 2014 after which it was included into the Russian Federation as a federal unit through a referendum in March 2014. However, this was not approved by many of the western nations, besides the UN General Assembly passing resolution invalidating the referendum. Countries like the Great Britain, Germany, Japan and others had condemned Russia's military aggression in Crimea and China remarked, 'We respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.' Moreover, Russia was *expelled from the Group of 8 (G 8)*, and severe sanctions imposed upon the Russian economy by the USA and the European Union made the situation even more critical. According to some source, nearly 40,000 Russian armies have been deployed by the Russian government to maintain its hold over Ukraine.

However, the matter took even a more serious turn when *Malaysia Airlines flight MH17* was shot down on the soil of Ukraine by some supposedly pro-Russian separatists on July 2014, which was again followed by the crashing down of a Ukrainian SU-25 fighter plane by the Russian jets. People from almost every corner of the world has condemned the Putin-government for these shocking and inhumane military exercises, with the USA announcing the expansion of sanctions on the two banks, energy companies and defence companies of Russia. In turn, Russia has also warned the USA by saying that it will not grant visas to the US-citizens if the situation goes like this. So, one can easily recall the tense and awful days of the Cold War-period, when the erstwhile Soviet Union and the USA were deeply engaged in hostile relationships with each other, and which finally led to the disintegration of the USSR.

Will Russia Get Disintegrated Again? Or is it Re-unifying!

The situation has drastically changed now. Though it seems that a Cold War-like situation has arisen again, but one must not forget here that today's

Russia is more mature as a nation that still bears the traumatic memory of the Soviet-disintegration. It is now much stronger in both the economic and military terms and also in terms of natural resources. In fact, from the above discussion it is clear that Russia is actually *trying to recover those areas* which it had lost at the end of the Cold War. So instead of getting disintegrated, Russia seems to get re-unified by occupying its lost territories.

Above all, what is more important here is the China-factor, which acts as a balancer in this regard. Both Russia and China are anti-west in their outlook, and therefore do not support wholeheartedly the phenomenon of Globalization. Moreover, both of these countries endorse the idea of non-interference, which is a mark of protest against the interventionist-attitude of the United States. So it seems that the *US-unilateralism* is being challenged by the idea of '*Multilateralism*', of which Russia and China are two leading proponents. As stated above, both of them have jointly protested against the air-strikes launched by the USA, France and others in the Middle East during the on-going incident of Arab Spring. In the Syria-case also, both these powers together opposed the military move taken by the USA, and thus the saved the world from the fury of another war. Besides, both Russia and China, being the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the USA can no longer go for any unilateral initiatives, and the burning example of which is the passage of the UN Resolution against Russia invalidating the Crimea-referendum, but it failed to stop the Russian army from occupying the territory of Crimea. So all these clearly indicate the shift in balance from the West to the East, where the Russia's takeover of Crimea adds a new dimension.

An Evaluation: A Shift from G-2 to G-3 ?

The concept of G-3 is mainly centered on the rise and development of the USA and the PRC in the contemporary period, which gained importance mainly after the fall of the Soviet Union and the consequent rise of the United States and China in the international arena. However, today the rise of the Russian Federation and its powerful military exercises in various parts of the world has forced the scholars to turn their attention towards this '*Rising Star*' in the sky of Eurasia. It must be mentioned in this regard, that a cooperative co-existence between the USA and the PRC, which forms the premises of the concept of 'G-3', might not be possible in reality, but we can well predict a powerful conglomeration of the Chinese and the Russian forces in near future

that will definitely be a matter of concern for the West, and which might ultimately challenge and destroy the US-unilateralism and establish the foundation stone of the Oriental-supremacy over the ruins of the US-suzerainty. So we can now talk about the rise of a 'Group of 3' consisting of the USA, China and Russia, where Russia and China will play leading roles in shifting the power-balance from 'G-2' to 'G-3'. In fact, Russia's \$ 400 billion-deal to supply natural gas to China, which is signed on May 2014, is a clear indication of this shift.

Conclusion

Finally to end with, the idea of 'G-3' itself is a controversial one, since China has never acknowledged this idea and has always tried to emphasize upon its 'Peaceful Rise' image. Meanwhile, the emergence of the idea of 'G-3' is mere a possibility, though not impossible. After the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a globalized era in the 1990s, China has been acting as the main competitor of the USA with its rising military and economic power. Single-handed China protested against the west-dominated global structure, though it is now an active member of the WTO (like Russia) and also takes part in various meetings and summits involving both western and non-western nations. At this critical juncture, the emergence of Russia as a major power on the world-stage has provided an impetus to this anti-western attitude of the PRC. Here mention must be made of the organization of BRICS, which has provided a common platform to the developing countries, besides China and Russia. In fact this year in *BRICS Summit 2014* the BRICS members, besides signing a \$100 billion deal for constructing a Development Bank, have severely criticized the economic sanctions imposed by the West on Russia, and thus expressed their support for the Putin-government. Therefore, one can well assume that the concept of 'G-3' is not far ahead, which is now a big concern for the West, since Russia today is much more developed and China is also showing signs of friendship towards it. So, the shift from 'G-2' to 'G-3' can actually lead to the dawn of a 'new world order' under the leadership of China and Russia. But whether this will again create a *Cold War-like situation between Russia and China* in near future is yet to be known.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cameron, Fraser, 'US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Global Hegemon or Reluctant Sheriff,' (UK: Psychology Press, 2002), pp.115-130, 149-170.

JAIR: Journal of International Relations

2. John J Jr. 'China's Quest for Asia.' *Policy Review*, (2005: 29).
3. Christopher Layne, 'China's Challenge to US Hegemony.' *Current History*, (Jan 2008), 107:705.
4. Jeffrey, Mankoff, '*Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics*,' United States: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011, pp.177-218.
5. Anthony McGrew, *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*.

An Analysis of the Rise and Development of the USA

- (UK: Routledge Publisher. 1998), pp.106-135.
6. V Harsh. Pant, 'The Emerging Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific.' *RUSI Journal; Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies*, (01 Jun.2007:48).
7. *The Statesman*, 23-24 March 2012.
8. Wegren, Stophenk, 'Return to Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain, (USA : Rowmaen of Little Field, 2012), pp. 235-317

India Pakistan Security Dilemma and the Prospects for an Integrated South Asian Regional Community

Bishnupriya Roy Choudhury*

ABSTRACT

The dawn of the new millennium heralded the beginning of a new chapter in the constantly evolving history of human civilization. Following the collapse of the monolithic Soviet Union in 1991, the vision of the emergence of the 'New World Order', was quite opaque. However, in the absence of a clear picture of the future direction, there emerged a unique structure - the proliferation of Regionalism, spearheaded by a powerful triad, championed by the Asia - Pacific community, the E.U. and the North Atlantic trading bloc. And gradually the notion of Regional security and development became intertwined with the notion of Regional Associations. In South Asia, the bitter animosity between India and Pakistan had for long, squandered the prospects of regional collaboration. And even after the establishment of the SAARC in 1985, the intransigent attitude of the SAARC member states have seriously undermined the prospects of the SAARC.

Keywords: *India, Pakistan, South Asia, Regionalism, Security, Subcontinent, SAARC, Insurmountable problems, Bilateral relations, Neighbours, Continued relevance.*

International Relations is fundamentally an integrated analysis of the varied relationship that exists among the nation states and the other non-state actors in the international community. Regionalism, on the other hand, has emerged as one of the inescapable realities defining the contours of international politics in contemporary times. In fact, the essence of regional cooperation has evolved as one of the most crucial aspects of international relations in the last half of the 20th century. Inter-state rivalries, across the border hostilities, intransigent and hostile relations have often been mitigated through the regional associations, which have advanced by leaps and bounds in the present era, as symbolised by the triumphs of the European Union (EU) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Indubitably, enhanced regional collaboration can definitely go a long way in restoring peace and amity in the trouble - torn world today.¹

The Legacy of Cooperation in South Asia

The Region of South Asia has been no exception in the realm of international politics. Following the establishment of the South Asian Association for

Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, it was hoped that this association would assist in strengthening the ties among the original seven member nations, and would ultimately lead to the establishment of a stable and secure South Asia. In South Asia, the evolution of the idea of regional cooperation can be traced back to the decades of the 1920s itself. The notion of a Pan Asian Community, and the idea of Pan Asianism, which was the avowed principle of India's foreign policy, ever since her independence, acted as a major fillip for the evolution and proliferation of the vision of regional cooperation in South Asia.²The first Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947, the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development In South and South East Asia inaugurated in 1951, the Asian African Conference at Bandung in 1955, were indeed certain concerted efforts that were undertaken to present the image of united Asia to the entire world.

It is unfortunate that inspite of such earnest endeavours, the looming shadow of the Cold War shattered the aspirations of establishing a permanent regional integrated organisation in the Asian

* Assistant Professor, Dpt. of Political Science, Behala College

continent. However, in spite of the entire region of South and South East Asia becoming embroiled in several super power sponsored military pacts and economic alliances, the five major South East Asian nations gradually resolved to set aside their differences and join hands in the creation of the ASEAN in 1967.³ And emboldened by the successes of the nascent South East Asian Cooperative venture, the South Asian nations also renewed their efforts in the field of establishing cooperative regional organisations.

The idea of regional cooperation in South Asia was first initiated by the President of Bangladesh, Zia-ur-Rehman, who on his visit to Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in 1977-78, sought to explore the possibility of regional economic cooperation among the South Asian nations. In May 1980, Zia-ur-Rehman issued a formal call for SAARC regional cooperation, and his call received a positive response from all the future SAARC members - India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. After a series of meetings of the foreign secretaries and foreign ministers of the seven South Asian countries, a path breaking meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Pakistan in July 1983. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Declaration on South Asian Regional Cooperation was signed. In December 1985, the heads of states and governments of seven South Asian Countries viz Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka held a summit meeting at Dhaka, and the SAARC was finally established.⁴

The Objectives of the SAARC - Pathway for the Future

The SAARC charter, a comprehensive document, clearly states the aims and objectives of the regional institution. The objectives as enumerated in the charter include the promotion of the welfare of the people of South Asia, the acceleration of economic growth, the promotion and strengthening of collective self reliance, the contribution to mutual trust, and the understanding and expectations of one another's problem in the region. The SAARC charter consists of 10 fundamental articles. Among them, Article X is of prime significance. It states that :

- i) Decisions at all levels shall be taken on the basis of unanimity.
- ii) Bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from deliberations.⁵

The crux of the provisions, as stipulated in

Article X of the SAARC charter, has been the subject of great controversy. In the ambit of the SAARC, though the emphasis has been on multilateral negotiations and harmonious relations among the member states, one cannot simply ignore the fact that the bilateral issues which create animosity among the members can't be avoided and not discussed at all. And according to many noted analysts, it has been this Article, which has impeded the smooth and effective functioning of the SAARC, to a great extent.⁶

In spite of the plethora of problems plaguing the very notion of an integrated regional association in South Asia, it would be grievously erroneous to turn a blind eye to the achievements of the SAARC, in the years gone by. The last 17 SAARC summits, concluding with the last one being held in Addu city, Maldives in November 2011, have all reiterated the fact that the SAARC has always been committed to building bridges between the different member nations, closing the space between intent and implementation, and ensuring the all round development of the entire region. It is also earnestly desired that the 18th SAARC summit to be hosted by Nepal in November 2014, under the aegis of Arjun Bahadur Thapa, the 12th Secretary General of the SAARC, would go a long way in translating the goals of the association into objective reality.

Challenges Confronting the SAARC - The India - Pakistan Imbroglio

Formed on December 8, 1985, the SAARC has completed almost three decades of existence, and has entered a new millennium. However, in spite of the hopes and aspirations, SAARC continues to remain moribund due to the existence of several impediments. In fact, the relation among the member states and the hostilities existing between them are fundamentally responsible for the regressal of the SAARC.

It is essential to note that an effective process of regional cooperation stands on the pillars of tolerance, mutual trust, submissiveness and the feeling of give and take, and not on hostility and an absolute lack of cohesion. Unfortunately, this atmosphere of bonhomie and mutual adjustment seems completely absent in the realm of the SAARC. A number of factors can be attributed for this non compromising and rigid stance of the SAARC.⁷ The paramount factor which has perhaps emerged as the main stumbling block for the effective functioning of the SAARC is the security misperception in the field of geo strategic

realities. The presence of India as the overarching power entity in the subcontinent, the initiation of an arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in this strategically volatile region, the centrality of India's position in the region and its vast size, population, resources and her economic and military power as compared to her South Asian neighbours, has kept almost all the neighbours of India fearful of the latter's hegemonistic designs in the region. The divergences in the political systems of the South Asian countries, the talent anti Indianism prevalent among the other member states, have rendered the SAARC into an anachronism in the present era.⁸ The divergences in this region have been most profound in clashes of 'ego centric' policies and 'divergent national interests' among members, who may otherwise be committed to the basic principles of the SAARC charter. Most of the countries of South Asia consider India to be their main concern, and they very clearly express their desire to maintain friendly relations with the external powers, especially China, essentially with a view to limit their dependence on India.⁹

If one begins with a general value judgment, it becomes increasingly evident that compared to all other regional associations and groups, the SAARC has made very little progress in achieving economic and developmental cooperation in substance or in tangible results. An analysis of the relations between India and her neighbours both in the terms of collective regional interactions and in the perspective of a bilateral framework, is absolutely essential in this regard. South Asia is passing through a turbulent phase today. Old problems continue to spawn new crises in various forms and intensity. And nowhere has this crisis been more apparent than in the field of India - Pakistan relations.

The defining problem of India and Pakistan's mutual hostility has been the one regional issue that has loomed over the entire vast Indian subcontinent. Due to this, any resolution of the region's many lesser disputes or the emergence of a concrete and effective framework for regional cooperation, remains more of a dream than a practical reality. It is definitely the issue of Kashmir, which has defied any attempts at resolution, and cast its shadow over any prospects of amicable relations between the two neighbours.¹⁰

The partition of India, and the creation of the two separate states of India and Pakistan, founded primarily on the acceptance of the truly dangerous notion of the 'Two Nation Theory', set into motion

a series of events which continue to perpetrate insecurity and hostility across the border, even till this day. The relations between India and Pakistan which have been marked by tension and acrimony over the issue of Kashmir have worsened following the massive arms race that began between them and pushed the entire region of South Asia on the brink of an absolute nuclear disaster.¹¹ The internecine clashes, skirmishes and conflicts beginning in 1947, the full scale India - Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, the Kargil conflict of 1999 were further exacerbated by the nuclearisation of the entire region. The reciprocal nuclear blasts conducted by both India and Pakistan in May 1998, not only plunged the entire region into the abyss of a nuclear holocaust, but also severed, perhaps forever, the tenuous possibility of a strong and a powerful SAARC. The India - Pakistan arms race, which can be construed as direct fallout of the lingering dispute over Kashmir, had essentially ban a function of -

- i. The mutual threat perceptions of the elites in the two states
- ii. Pakistan's quest for parity with India
- iii. The quality and quantity of transfer of economic and military resources, as a result of the policies and actions of the extra - regional powers. Particularly the erstwhile Soviet Union, the U.S., and the Peoples' Republic of China.

One of the most profound impacts of the Cold War hostilities between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union was played out in the arena of South Asia, involving the two of regional South Asian rivals India and Pakistan. India received military aid from the former Soviet Russia, while USA gradually evolved as Pakistan's chief arms and economic benefactor. The Cold War reached its inevitable conclusion. However USA's aid and succour to Pakistan continued and continues unabated even till this day. India - Pakistan relations have reached its nadir following the infiltration of armed terrorists and militants from across the Line of Control (LOC) into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. This cross border terrorism, innumerable acts of militant violence, have shattered the lives of millions, and have torn asunder the ethereal beauty of the pristine state. Till date, thousands of people have died during fighting between insurgents and the government as well as thousands of civilians who have died as a result of being targeted by various armed groups.¹² The main terrorist groups involved in fighting with the Indian

military in the state include the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, the Haukat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, the HizbulMujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Al badr, etc. According to several analysis, around 40,000 (Indian estimates) civilians, separatist guerilla fighters and Indian Security personnel have died from the time period of 1989 to 2009, in both the Kashmir Valley and Jammu. Not only in the Kashmir Valley, these terrorist groups have wreaked havoc throughout India, with the L-e-T being the main operative behind the December 2001 attacks on the Indian Parliament, the November 2008 bombings in Mumbai, along with the Feb 2010 bombing of a German bakery in Pune.¹³

To further vitiate the entire atmosphere, the nuclearisation of the entire region has proved to be a cataclysmic event in the domain of India - Pakistan relations. With the dawn of the 21st century, the people of South Asia have woken up to the horrifying spectacle of a nuclear sceptre hanging over their hands.¹⁴

Added to this simmering pot of hostility and bloodshed, has been the emerging factor of Afghanistan in the domains of regional politics, as well as international political equations. Afghanistan has always been the tragic victim of super power rivalries, and the external powers have eternally manipulated Afghanistan and their courageous people to further their narrow geo-strategic interests. The Afghanistan War, beginning in 2001, had the major objectives of toppling the ultra conservative and religious ruling faction of the Taliban, and rebuilding the core institutions of the Afghan state. In this 'War Against Terrorism' being fought in Afghanistan as a response to the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. enlisted the support of Pakistan as its major ally in its war efforts. This led to enhanced U.S. military and financial aid to Pakistan. Hence this not only seriously unnerved the political - security analysts in New Delhi, it also led to India's vigorous efforts to have a vocal and active say in the emerging fortunes of the new Afghanistan. U.S. on its Part, began to actively encourage India to play a very vigorous role in the restructuring and rebuilding of the ravaged state of Afghanistan. Thereupon, Afghanistan also began to emerge as a chief bone of contention between the strategic rivals India and Pakistan.¹⁵

Building Bridges

Events in the field of international relations and international politics among nation - states in the

world community have often been greatly influenced by the change of guard or a regime change in the countries. Numerous international variables act as systemic pressure in influencing policy makers to adopt a strategy of nuclear weaponisation. In addition the part played by various internal factors in shaping this process cannot entirely be discarded. Prominent groups, that represent broad opinion of the citizens, have often debated over the issue of national security and postulate opinions on whether nuclear weapons are essential for safeguarding of the country's security requirements.¹⁶ Domestic tumult and international turmoil invariably influence each other. This interconnection tends to destabilize and debilitate the political system. Both the internal and external spheres of a polity can feed upon each other in a vicious cycle and induce internal destabilization or external conflicts. In view of this, it is crucial to recognize the fact that the foreign policy of a country is not merely shaped by external factors but also its international milieu. Hence national security strategy and foreign policy are always the projection of the internal dynamics of a policy. In this perspective, strong domestic support is a precondition for achieving greater effectiveness of both. In this context, the appreciation of the crisis prone nature of Indo-Pak adversarial relations, which is epitomized by the several emergencies that have occurred between the two countries in the short history of their liberation, points to the need to manage bilateral relations in a dexterous manner. Hence, the omnipresence of the Pakistan factor in India's strategic calculus and foreign policy perception cannot be divided. Although India's external security and defence policies in their theoretical formalities and official pronouncements have been described as holistic and security specific, in practice the Pakistan factor has played such a predominant role that they look very much Pakistan-centric.¹⁷

With the beginning of the decade of 2010, the relationship between the two neighbours India and Pakistan continued to be oscillating between the steady and the stormy. Over the year 2013, the India-Pakistan border incidents were a series of armed skirmishes along the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed Kashmir area. Starting from the mid-January 2013, they have been described as the 'worst bout of fighting in the region in nearly 10 years.' In fact 2013 was not a great year for India-Pakistan relations. What defined the year was primarily the marked uptick in the number of cross-border skirmishes, involving Pakistani and Indian troops. Looking forward to 2014, there were few reasons

to be optimistic. Certain analysts have expressed the hope that Pakistan's shedding of its old triumvirate of leaders might precipitate the atmosphere more conducive ties. The newly appointed Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, and the newly anointed Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi have both expressed their earnest desires to engineer long lasting resolution to the protracted conflict. In fact, just after being sworn in on 26th May 2014, India's new Prime Minister has sat down for talks with his counterpart. It followed Nawaz Sharif to attend Narendra Modi's swearing-in-ceremony. As far as Pakistan's internal political dynamics is concerned, the state has for decades been besieged by the tribal insurgency operating in North Waziristan. In the past decade, North Waziristan has become a sanctuary for an array of militant groups, including the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network and the Al-Qaida.

So, in the final analysis, it can be surmised that both India and Pakistan have been plagued by the scourge of terrorism, albeit from different sources. Thus, it would be extremely prudent for both the beleaguered nations to come together, form a united front to comfort terrorism.

The embittered relationship that has completely derailed the peace initiatives and the collaborative ventures between the two nations, must be put aside in order to ensure the overall development of the entire region of South Asia.¹⁸

SAARC - Looking Ahead

Regionalism has often been offered as a panacea for the amelioration for all the ills of that particular region. In this perspective, it was expected that in South Asia the creation of the SAARC would address all the problems in the region. Setting apart the bilateral differences and political divergences, there is a comprehensive economic angle and an area of intense financial collaboration. And nowhere would this be more apparent than in the negotiations and discussions related to the formation of the SAPTA and the SAFTA.

Economic collaboration and financial co-operation have often been cited as the twin pillars of globalization in the 21st century. In this respect, the ASEAN and the EU have scaled new heights of prosperity, and in spite of recurrent differences among the relevant member states, these regional associations have ensured the economic upliftment of the concerned regions. In the case of the SAARC

it has unfortunately not been the same. The Proposal for putting into force the South Asian Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA) was adopted in the seventh SAARC summit in 1997, was a landmark agreement. It was desired that the conclusion of SAPTA, would ultimately culminate in the creation of a free trade area or the SAFTA, as early as possible. However, in spite of the inescapable reality that trade can become one of the true acceleration of growth in particular region, it was failed to achieve its desired result in ambit of South Asia.¹⁹

The apparent lack of success in the realisations of the concrete objectives as enumerated in the SAARC, have led many scholars to question the continued relevance of the regional institution. The India-Pakistan security dilemma and indeed the bilateral hostilities existing between the member states should not be construed as the final nail in the coffin. In reality, the entry of war ravaged Afghanistan as the eighth member of the SAARC in 2007, points to the associations continued importance what is pertinent is how the change of guards and the evolving foreign policies of all the member states affect the functioning of it.

India perceived hegemonistic role has always troubled the other smaller nations of the region. Very recently, greatly perturbed by the decisions of Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Myanmar to join the traditional allies of China such as Pakistan and Iran in discussing space pacts with China, the former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh had asked the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to prepare a strategy to counter China's perceived lead over India in space diplomacy. On 31st June, 2014, India's new P.M. Narendra Modi asked ISRO to build a satellite and gift it to all the other member states of the SAARC. It is to be noted that India's proposal for 'an eye in the sky' over South Asia, would encounter varying degrees of trepidation from the other states, given their already existing India phobia.²⁰

One of the primary factors which can be lead to the progress of South Asian regional co-operation is the emphasis on building strong, viable relations between the member states. All the countries in this region must boldly seize the initiative and concentrate on building bridges among themselves, which on turn would have a positive spillover in the realm of regional co-operation. In the ultimate analysis, South Asia must leave behind its legacy of confrontation, and stringently adhere to the traditions of co-operation, development, peace and security.

And only in this way the SAARC will be able to realise its fundamental objectives, and play a vital role in ensuring the overall socio-economic-political regeneration and resuscitation of the entire region of South Asia.²¹

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya, *The Making of India's Foreign Policy*, Allied Publishers Limited, New Delhi, 1970, pp 75-79.
2. Rehman Sobhan, 'Regional co-operation in South Asia: A Quest for Identity', *South Asia Survey*, 5:1 (1998), pp 26-29.
3. Davinder Kumar Madaan, 'SAARC: Origin and Development', in B.C.Upreti's(ed), *SAARC: Dynamics of Regional Co-operation*,(Vol-I), Kalinga Publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp 150-156.
4. S.D.Muni and Anuradha Muni, *Regional Co-operation in South Asia*, (National Publishing House: New Delhi, 1984), pp 17-20.
5. Ross Masood Hussain, 'SAARC 1985-1995: A Review and Analysis of Progress', in Eric Gonsalves and Nancy Jetly(eds) *The Dynamic of Regional Co-operation*.
6. S.K. Chaturbedi, 'SAARC: A feeble Attempt of Regional Co-operation', in B.C. Upreti(ed) *SAARC: Dynamic of Regional Co-operation in South Asia: Nature, Scope and Perceptions*(Vol-II), Kalinga Publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp 49-62.
7. Lakshman Kadirgamar, 'South Asian Co-operation In The Twenty First Century, Opportunities and Challenges', *South Asia Survey*, 5:1, 1998 pp. 34-36.
8. n.9, pp 54-59.
9. A.P. Rana, 'New Directions in The study of SAARC: Evaluating the Bases of Regional Co-operation in South Asia,' *South Asia Survey*, 10:1, 1-6, 2003, pp 18-22.
10. Arun Kumar Banerji, 'The India-Pakistan Arms Race and The Quest for security', in Arun Kumar Banerji(ed) *Arms Race: Disarmament and Security: Some Perspectives*, (K.P. Bagchi Publications: Kolkata, 1991), pp 34-38.
11. J.N. Dixit, 'Prospects of South Asian Co-operation in the Transformed World - Post II, September', *South Asian Survey*, 10:1, January-June, 2003, pp 44-48.
12. A.K.M. Abdus Sobur, 'Evolving a Theoretical Perspective on Human Security: The South Asian Context', in P.R. Chari and Sonika Gupta(eds), *Human Security in South Asia: Energy, Gender Migration and Globalisation*, (Social Science Press: New Delhi, 2003), pp 35-41.
13. Sanjeev Kumar H.M., 'Pakistan Factor in India's Domestic Politics', *South Asian Survey*, Vol 18, No.1, March 2011, pp 63-67.
14. Rajpal Budania, *India's National Security Dilemma: The Pakistan Factor and India's Policy Response*, (Indus Publications: New Delhi, 2001), pp 38-42.
15. M.S. John, 'India-pakistan Conflict Dynamics: Prospects for Resolution', in Rajan Harshe and K.M. Seethi(eds) *Engaging with the World: Critical Reflections on Indian Foreign Policy*, (Orient Longman: New Delhi, 2005), pp 260-274.
16. Deepa Ollapally, 'India: The Ambivalent Power in Asia', *International Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 34, July-Oct 2011, pp 201-205.
17. n.16, pp 202-204.
18. *The Telegraph*, 22nd March, 2014.
19. Jacques Hymans, 'Indian's Soft Power and Vulnerability', *India Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July-September, 2009, pp 234-265.
20. Manjeet Pardesi, 'Southeast Asia in Indian Foreign Policy-Positioning India as a major power in Asia', in Sumit Ganguly(ed) *India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect*, (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2010), pp 106-131.
21. *The Telegraph*, 1st July, 2014.

Peace-Building in Sri Lanka and India's Role

Asima Sahu*

ABSTRACT

In view of Sri Lanka's geographical proximity and ethnic linkages, it always figures in India's security configuration, both external as well as internal. India's Sri Lanka policy has been marked by myriad twists and turns in the post-colonial era. In regard to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, India's policy had shifted from active engagement (1983-1990) to a near hands-off policy in the aftermath of the brutal assassination of the former Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, India, Peace-Building.

Introduction

Sri Lanka's strategic salience can be gauged from the fact that it is adjacent to the shipping lanes that cater to 80 per cent of China's and 65 per cent of India's oil needs. In recognition of its importance in the emerging Indian Ocean strategic scenario Sri Lanka had attended the Shanghai Cooperation Council meeting as a dialogue partner. As China's large chunk of trade pass through the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka used it to its advantage. It had procured sophisticated arms and ammunitions as well as diplomatic support in exchange of strategic concessions. While the Sri Lankan State waged an all-out war against the Tamil militants, China not only generously supplied weapons but it also encouraged Pakistan to train Sri Lankan Air Force pilots and supply small arms. While China sold Jian-7 fighters, anti-aircraft guns and JY-11 3D air surveillance radars to the Sri Lankan army, Pakistan took care of the small arm requirements.

External Linkages

India's unwillingness to pro-actively engage in Sri Lanka's war against Tamils created opportunity for China to enter the arena. The support and assistance extended by China to Sri Lankan State in its war against the Tamil militants ensured for the former to acquire a lot of strategic space and credibility in the latter.

The intensity of relations between Beijing and Colombo has got a tremendous boost only in recent

years. In the present context, the bilateral relations between the two countries have been cast within the broad structure of the 'China-Sri Lanka All-round Cooperation Partnership of Sincere Mutual Support and Ever-Lasting Friendship' proclaimed in 2005. Sri Lanka is seen as an "important hub on the Maritime Silk Road" by China. The Chinese involvement in Sri Lanka ranges from infrastructure development, economic aid, oil exploration, investments, trade, and a strong diplomatic support to the island state at the time of its need, especially in the context of human rights accountability issue that emerged after the end of 'Elam War IV'.

Chinese investment in infrastructure development in Sri Lanka has expanded rapidly, including the strategically situated commercial deep-sea port in Hambantota which is President Rajapakse's home constituency and the two-phase coal power plant in Norochcholai. Other significant infrastructural projects supported by China in the island state include Katunayake-Colombo Expressway, Maththala Airport, Colombo South Harbour Expansion Project and the Center for Performing Arts in Colombo. Statistically speaking, funding from China accounts for more than half of Sri Lanka's construction and development loans. In value terms, it is estimated at over USD six billion –more than any other country.

Infrastructural development bearing deep strategic implications is the main Chinese footprint in Sri Lanka that has roused considerable attention in India. The most talked about project is Hambantota port. The

* Reader, Dept. of Political Science, Ravenshaw University, Orissa

first phase of the port was completed in 2010 by the China Harbour Engineering Co. Ltd at a cost of \$360 million. Colombo attempts to project that "the Chinese interest in the Hambantota port is purely commercial". However, the harbor is strategically located not only for the Chinese merchant vessels and cargo carriers sailing to and from Africa and the Middle East to make a stopover, but can also be used by any military fleet. A strong foothold for the Chinese in Hambantota would allow them to have dominance over a vast area of the Indian Ocean extending from Australia in the east, Africa in the West and up to Antarctica in the south. It may not be difficult for China to closely monitor all ships-military and non-military-that shuttles between east and west coasts of India encircling Sri Lanka.

India's geo-strategic thinkers' community are apprehensive that the warming of ties between China and Rajapaksa government could result in major Chinese naval assets being developed in Sri Lanka, as part of a strategy centering on India's encirclement. Analysts maintain that Sri Lanka intends to accrue benefit from playing India and China off against each other at any available opportunity. China is at present offering to provide financing and technical expertise to the government in Colombo, which is engaged in the arduous multi-million dollar reconstruction programme. In future, the Chinese sphere of influence in Sri Lanka is going to increase by all means.

Post-Conflict Scenario

The end of the ethnic conflict engendered the hope of creating sustainable peace. It created a space for addressing the root causes of this conflict. Rajpaksa's Govt was confronted with multiple challenges which can be categorized into two: immediate humanitarian and human rights issues and the long-term political settlement with devolution of power to the conflict ravaged regions, revival of democratic institutions and checks and balances, and recognition and institution of multiculturalism. India, the US and EU and the United Nations were very much concerned about the settlement of internally displaced people and the curbing of the flow of the refugees.

The termination of the armed ethnic conflict witnessed the emergence of a major humanitarian challenge, with nearly 3,00,000 Tamil civilians housed in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).The Govt. of India undertook a robust programme of assistance to assist these IDPs resume their normal

lives as quickly as possible. In June 2009 , Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had announced a grant of INR 5 billion (SLR 12 billion) for relief and rehabilitation in Sri Lanka.

India also consistently advocated the need for IDPs to be resettled to their original habitations as early as possible. To help in this regard, India provided shelter assistance for constructing temporary housing for IDPs. In addition to this, agricultural implements were supplied to assist resettling families commence their livelihood generating activities. As the need of de-mining was a major stumbling-block on the pace of resettlement, the Govt. of India totally financed seven Indian de-mining teams, which took up the task in various sectors in northern Sri Lanka to accelerate resettlement.

With the shift away from relief and rehabilitation to reconstruction and development, the Govt. of India laid stress upon the housing requirements of the IDPs.

Since agriculture is the principal means of livelihood in the areas affected by the conflict, India supported this sector through a wide-ranging programme for agricultural renewal.

Sri Lanka is one of the major recipients of development credit given by India. These are being used for repair and up gradation of various damaged railway links and renovation of Airport, Harbours and power plants. India also continues to assist a large number of smaller development projects in areas like education, health, transport connectivity, small and medium enterprise development and training in many parts of the country through its grant funding.

India and Sri Lanka enjoy a robust trade and investment relationship, with bilateral trade growing rapidly in the last decade and a number of leading Indian private sector companies investing in Sri Lanka and establishing a presence there. Sri Lanka is India's largest trading partner in South Asia. India in turn is Sri Lanka's largest trade partner globally. Trade between the two countries increased particularly rapidly after the entry into force of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement in March 2000.Over the next eight years, bilateral trade multiplied nearly fivefold. In 2012, India-Sri Lanka bilateral trade volume stood at USD 4.002bn, compared to USD 4.86 bn in 2011, a decline of 17.59 per cent. India has also emerged as the No. 1 source country as far as Foreign Direct Investment and tourist arrivals are concerned.

Following a downturn in 2009 on account of the global economic recession, trade rebounded in 2010.

India was the largest source of foreign direct investment for Sri Lanka in 2010 (US \$110 million). Sri Lanka has long been a priority destination for direct investment from India. India is among the four largest overall investors in Sri Lanka with cumulative investments over US\$600 million. India's main investments are in the areas of petroleum retail, hospitals, telecom, vanaspati, copper and other metal industries, real estate, telecommunication, hospitality & tourism, banking and financial services, IT and food processing. The last few years have also witnessed an increasing trend of Sri Lankan investments into India.

Both the countries are engaged in deliberations to ink Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to elevate their bilateral FTA to the next higher level. This would chiefly include the service sector. The key sectors that would reap benefits from CEPA are tourism, computer software, advertising, financial and non-financial services, health, retail services and tourism. This will create avenues of employment.

Redesigning the Architecture of the State in Sri Lanka

For four long years since the defeat of the LTTE, there was no visible progress on the long over-due issue of the provincial autonomy for the Tamil minorities. Contrarily the intensification of Sinhalisation and increasing militarization of the North led to a lot of anger and fear amongst the Tamil population. The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in its report in Nov. 2011 observed that 'despite the lapse of two years since the ending of the conflict, the violence, suspicion and sense of discrimination are still prevalent in social and political life.'

The end of the civil war in 2009 provided a rare opportunity for Mahinda Rajapaksa to heal the wounds of war and usher in a more forward-looking policy on nation building. But subsequent policies belied the expectations. Instead of respecting diversity and upholding pluralist traditions, the government policy turned out to be one of unbridled majoritarianism. The Rajapaksha government instead of working towards a genuine reconciliation with the Tamil populace, showed insensitivity to their hopes and aspirations. His govt. continued to soak itself in the glory of 'triumphalism' and this led to

the strengthening of ultra-Sinhali-Buddhist nationalist sentiments. It needs no stress that the end of the LTTE is not the end of the ethnic conflict.

Colombo was deliberately delaying democratic process in the Northern Province. It was Indian insistence that finally led to provincial council elections. On September 21, 2013 elections were held in three provinces of Sri Lanka-the Sinhala majority North Western Province (NWP) and the Central Province (CP) and the Tamil-dominated Northern Province. While the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) returned to power in NWP and CP, with nearly 60 percent votes, it suffered a humiliating defeat in the NP. The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) secured a landslide victory, winning 30 of the 38 seats, polling 78 percent of the votes. C V Wigneswaran, the Chief Minister designate, topped the preference votes with a tally of 1,80,000 votes. The provincial council elections followed tremendous international pressure on the Sri Lankan government to restore democracy. The unprecedented turnout and the landslide victory of the TNA convincingly proved that not only was the alliance the most representative organization, it was also willing to work within the existing constitutional framework.

The resolution passed by Sri Lanka's Northern Provincial Council (NPC) asking for an international probe into the war crimes, allegedly committed by the security forces during the final weeks of the ethnic conflict, exposed the lack of reconciliation between the State and the Tamil Minority. Nearly 40,000 Tamils were allegedly killed during the final phase of the conflict. There is photographic evidence of such crimes like the killing of slain LTTE Chief Prabhakaran's teenaged son. While claiming that no such genocide occurred, the Sri Lankan government has been oblivious to the need for a credible investigation, which will alone put a lid on the charges that it is not bothered about the gross human rights violations.

Reconciliation is a must to bring the Sinhalese and the Tamils back on a common platform. In South Africa, it was the Truth and Justice Commission, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that brought reconciliation between the black majority and the white minority. However, no such attempt has been made in Sri Lanka, perhaps, because a powerful section believes that after the obliteration of the LTTE, there is no need to be considerate towards the Tamils. Such an attitude will not be effective, as a community scorned is a community provoked.

Colombo's policy towards the Tamils in the post-LTTE period is based on the premise that rapid economic development will enable the government to win the Tamils to its side. The UPFA campaign in the recent provincial elections highlighted the rehabilitation of the internally displaced people and the return to normalcy in the Tamil areas. The Tamils proved through the ballot box that man does not live by bread alone. Reconciliation can take place not by economic development alone, but by respecting diversity and pluralism.

The six-month old NPC is facing numerous difficulties. CV Wigneswaran, Chief Minister of Northern Province of Sri Lanka lamented in a public speech on January 10, 2014 organized by a Colombo-based think tank that Colombo is not appreciative of the essence of issues of governance in his province. The Chief Minister had opined that Sri Lanka Army (SLA) is hindering governance in the northern province and that post-war context demands a different approach to governance. Wigneswaran has further highlighted that militarization is affecting resettlement of the internally displaced Tamils, the SLA has taken over private land and even agricultural activities and as a result "locals have to purchase produce from their own land cultivated by Army". The Chief Minister has also spoken on his recurring difference with the provincial Governor, Maj Gen (retd) G.A.Chandrasiri inter-alia alleging inadequate administrative structure and staff with the province as well as his administrative staff being 'used to the Governor's ways' are posing hurdles. The effort made by the TNA to get the military Governor replaced by a civilian have not succeeded so far.

The essence of the problem which the Chief Minister has highlighted is that there is dualism in administration in the province and that the officials of the provincial administration are often facing contradictory or overlapping instructions from the provincial government and the Governor. Some may view this as an outcome of a structural problem of the 13th Amendment. This aspect seems to have got accentuated in the Northern province as against other provinces in Sri Lanka, because of the fundamental differences between the Rajapakse regime and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) on the issue of devolution and rights of Tamils on the one hand and the Army and the TNA on the other, rendering the functioning of the northern provincial government difficult. This, according to the Chief Minister, is affecting the implementation of the policies. There

are, however, reports that the present governor is not unpopular with the provincial bureaucracy including Mrs. R. Wijiyaludchumi, the Chief Secretary. On the contrary, there are media reports that the chief secretary has been receiving threats for not being cooperative with the TNA executive.

The problems are systemic because of the very limited political and administrative devolution effected to the northern province by the Rajapakse government. Development programmes in the Northern Province is formulated and implemented by the Presidential Task Force and people's representatives cannot make any inputs into them. The jobs created as a result of these projects have not gone to the local Tamils, but mainly to the Sinhalese.

It is, therefore, essential to codify the executive instructions for administering the northern province under some statutory rules issued at the provincial level with concurrence of the central government. The proposed executive instructions may apply to all the provinces. Such a measure may even be supported by the UNP and some of the other non-Tamil political parties. This may seem an apparent anomaly with statutory rules to be operative in the province suggested to be issued with central government concurrence (which should be exercised through the governor). However, there may not exist any alternative because of some grey areas in the devolution process and the de-facto overlapping jurisdiction being exercised by the northern province's chief minister and the governor, as cited above. The statutory rules should not leave any scope for cognizance of directives or advice from the provincial governor to the provincial officials. Article 154 of Sri Lanka's Constitution read with the 13th Amendment does not seem to pose any impediment in this regard. The only point of interface should be at the provincial apex level, i.e., between the chief minister and the governor. Unresolved or contentious issues thereafter may only be mediated at the level of the central government under a consensus. Without such an institutional arrangement, a virtual subversion of the limited devolution to the northern province would actually be taking place.

The issues at stake are significant from the standpoint of economic empowerment of the agrarian Tamil people, ensuring sustainable means of livelihood for them and overall development of their violence ravaged province, and most importantly the unity of the country. Not only the Tamil parties of Sri Lanka but some of the mainstream political parties

of that country including the progressive elements like Sri Lanka Sama Samaja and Nava Sama Samaja Party have an important role to play towards ensuring that the limited devolution process in Sri Lanka.

A mature handling on the part of Wigneswaran will be necessary so that the constitutional structure is not eroded and a constant dialogue ensues between the provincial political executive and the Rajapakse administration. Attempts by the Wigneswaran government to pressurise the centre by invoking Article 154B to withdraw the governor is unlikely to yield desirable outcomes. In fact the focus should be on effective governance in the existing limited functional areas devolved.

The Govt. of Sri Lanka must adopt pro-active measures to diminish the salience of the ethnic issue in Sri Lankan politics for all times to come. Sincere efforts have to be undertaken to enhance the proportion of the Tamils in all segments of the government services. The Govt. has been mulling over the three-language formula for quite sometime ; it has to be implemented earnestly and effectively. Inter-ethnic and inter-cultural interaction must be given a boost. The Sri Lankan State should be proactive in mainstreaming the minorities without compromising their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

India's Role

India must aim at durable peace in Sri Lanka in its own security interest. Any prolonged conflict or discontentment would create space for extra-regional powers' intervention.

Though there is a feeling among certain sections in India regarding its lack of leverage over Colombo, the TNA and many 'moderate' civil society activists in Sri Lanka maintain that India can pressurize the Rajapaksa Government as it has a credible international voice and an increasing global role. They hold the view that dialogue with the Tamil leaders is important and the cumulative grievances of the Tamils have to be addressed for establishment of durable peace and stability. They argue that India's continued support to the Rajapaksa Government should not be at the cost of the Tamil community.

India can play the role of the facilitator for arriving at a political solution between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil community. Indian diplomacy faces the challenge of enabling a meaningful process of reconciliation. India can use its leverage with political groups in Sri Lanka provided there is right

political will in this direction.

China, along with India and Russia, was instrumental in defeating the UN resolution in May 2009 censuring Sri Lanka. However, in March 2012, not satisfied with Colombo's sincerity in carrying forward assurances on reconciliation and in finding long-term political settlement, India was compelled to vote in favour of the US-sponsored resolution. But, China once again supported Sri Lanka in voting against the resolution. India's vote against Sri Lanka in the UN Human Rights Council in March ,2012 was intended to step up pressure on Sri Lanka to address the legitimate concerns of its Tamil minorities. Sri Lanka's disappointment with India was very much conspicuous when India voted in favour of UNHRC resolution as well. India must impress upon the Sri Lankan government that if it falters on fulfilling the genuine human security concerns of the Tamil minorities, it will feel compelled to support Human Rights Resolutions targeting Sri Lanka.

It is time India took a bolder stand on the issue of reconciliation. In March, the UN Human Rights Council is expected to pass a resolution on Sri Lanka. Two earlier resolutions, backed by India, have made it obligatory for the island-nation to honour its commitments on reconciliation. The US and the UK want an international probe into the human rights violations before the ethnic crisis ended in 2009. India should convey Colombo that denials of war crimes alone will not suffice. It has to take tangible steps to hasten the process of reconciliation. Otherwise, Sri Lanka will have to face international opprobrium for what was allegedly done.

As the International Crisis Group, in its briefing note, has pointed out, 'Failure is most obvious with respect to accountability of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the final phase of the civil war, but also by the lack of devolution of power, ongoing militarization of the north and the east, and deepening authoritarianism in the country.' The UN High Commissioner in her report to the UN General Assembly has highlighted that Colombo has not 'adequately engaged civil societies in support of a more consultative and inclusive reconciliation process.' The report also makes a mention of 'extra-judicial killings, abductions and enforced disappearance in the past year' and drew attention to the urgency of UN involvement to 'combat impunity'.

India must convince different sections in Sri Lanka of the crucial need for reconciliation, fundamentally in the interest of the latter. For this, India has to

reach out to the opposition, the monks and the Muslim community.

In the last two years India has committed over \$1,100 million in economic assistance programmes for Sri Lanka. These programmes must be assessed in regard to the extent to which the Sri Lankan authorities are engaged with the issue of reconciliation. The quantum of assistance should be determined in accordance with this. India should frame an extensive programme of co-operation with Sri Lanka with a view to radically transforming its economy. However, this has to be linked to Sri Lanka's positive progress on reconciliation.

India has to work hard to win over the trust of the Tamil leadership in Sri Lanka. They should be reassured of India's commitment towards the realisation of the legitimate aspirations within a united framework of the Sri Lankan State. The Tamil leadership in Sri Lanka should be persuaded to accept the peace overtures if and when extended by the Sri Lankan Government and to abjure any intention to adopt extremist designs.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Behuria, Ashok, Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka: Time to Move Beyond Complacency, *Strategic Analysis*, vol 35, no 5, (September 2011), pp. 739-744.
2. Partha S. Ghosh, *Ethnicity versus Nationalism: The Devolution Discourse in Sri Lanka*, (Sage., New Delhi: 2003)
3. B.M. Jain, *India in the new South Asia*, *Strategic*,

Military and Economic Concerns in the Age of Nuclear Diplomacy, (New Delhi: Viva Books, 2011)

4. Liyanage, Sumanasiri, *The Tamil National Question in Sri Lanka: Current Dynamics and Future Trends in Smruti S Pattanaik(ed.)*, *South Asia: Envisioning a Regional Future*, New Delhi, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2011
5. David M., Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance? Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*, (Oxford : New Delhi, 2011)
6. Rajasingham, Darini, *One Year After Terrorism: Sri Lanka Needs to Demilitarise Reconstruction and Development for Sustainable Peace*, *Strategic Analysis*, vol 34, no 5 , (September 2010)
7. Jayanta Kumar Ray, *India's Foreign Relations, 1947-2007*, (Routledge: New Delhi, 2011)
8. Senanayake, Darini Rajasingham, *From National Security to Human Security: The Challenge of Winning Peace in Sri Lanka*, *Strategic Analysis*, vol 33, no 6, November, (2009) pp 820-827.
9. Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2009)
10. Sridharan, E. (ed.) (2011), *International Relations Theory and South Asia*, (New Delhi : Oxford, 2011)
11. Suryanarayan, V (2014), *War is Over but Ethnic Reconciliation Eludes Sri Lanka in Maneesha Tikekar (ed.)*, *Constitutionalism and Democracy in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014)
12. _____(2014), *Discontent in North Sri Lanka*, *The New Indian Express*, 5 March.
13. _____(2013), *Hopes and Fears in Sri Lanka*, *The New Indian Express*, 3 October.

Emerging Trends in Sino-Bangladesh Relations: A Cause of Concern for India?

Debjani Ghosal*

ABSTARCT

Diplomatic relations were established between China and Bangladesh on October 4, 1975. However improvements in Sino-Bangladesh relations began from 1977 during the tenure of Zia-ur Rahman and has been continued since during the rule of former President Ershad and former Prime Minsiter Begum Khaleda Zia. During the tenure of the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed the relations have reached the zenith of success. China offers assistance to Bangladesh in the field of defence, trade, roads and highway construction, development of the Chittagong port, infrastructure development and nuclear technology. Such growing Sino-Bangladesh partnership is a cause of concern for India.

Keywords: India, China, Bangladesh, Diplomatic Relations, Regionalism, Trends.

At the time of independence Bangladesh was friendly with India and Soviet Union and was subject to delayed recognition by U.S. and China. U.S. recognized Bangladesh in early 1972. China was against the liberation and emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation state during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. No wonder, that China did not accord diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh till 1975 i.e. nearly four years after the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign state. During General Zia's regime a solid foundation of a Bangladesh-China relation was established. China-Bangladesh established formal diplomatic relations on 4 October, 1975. Immediately after recognition, China offered concessionary trade to Bangladesh. Zia-ur Rahman visited China in 1977 and China expressed outmost interest in building friendly relation with Bangladesh. During his visit various bilateral treaties were signed in economic, military and cultural aspects. As a consequence, volume of bilateral trade increased significantly. China also extended a helping hand in reconstructing the infrastructure of Bangladesh. Bangladesh also received an extended defense aid from China and between 1975-80 China supplied 78% of Bangladesh's arms import. Soon, Bangladesh-China relations rolled on to the context of China supporting Bangladesh in her dispute with India. China unhesitantly rendered her support to Bangladesh on Farakka issue.¹

However since then successive governments in Bangladesh followed the policy of building close relations with China. By mid-1980s, China could succeed not only in building close commercial and cultural ties with Bangladesh, but also began to supply much needed military aid and equipment. In 1984, the then Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang, in his annual major speech described Bangladesh as one of the "five friendly Countries" in Asia. The landmark visit of then Bangladesh President H. M. Ershad took place in July 1987.² President Ershad had a record number of six Chinese trips in his entire presidential tenure. Chinese top leaders including former President Li Xiannian and former Prime Minister Li Peng visited Bangladesh during that time.³ However, political and strategic realities soon took over and China made serious attempts to keep away Bangladesh from India's influence. The location of Bangladesh has helped China to reach out to South East Asia while the fact that Bangladesh as an Islamic country, has helped China to establish close relations with the countries of the Middle East. South East Asia provides a market for Chinese goods and is a source of open market purchases of rice, where as Middle East has been a source of economic assistance and is an outlet for migrant workers from Bangladesh.⁴

In 2002, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led four party coalition government in Bangladesh adopted a 'Look East' policy to maximize economic

* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Sciences, Bethune College, Kolkata.

and strategic gains that could emerge from closer relations with eastern countries, especially China. This shift in policy was primarily aimed at trade diversification. Bangladesh also sought closer relations with China in lieu of its status quo with India. Bangladesh's tilt towards China needs to be understood in terms of the psychological threat it (Bangladesh) perceives from India so that closer ties with China provide Bangladesh with a sense of security against India.⁵ The then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao made his maiden visit to Bangladesh during Begum Khaleda Zia's tenure in 2005 – the year that was declared 'Bangladesh-China Friendship Year' and resulted in the culmination of nine different bilateral agreements to increase mutual cooperation.

Significance of the Agreement

During Wen Jiabao's visit to Bangladesh in April, 2005 a 13-point Joint Communiqué on further strengthening of bilateral relations was signed, along with five agreements and two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). China also offered to assist Bangladesh in water management, nuclear energy, trade and investment, training of security and defence personnel, as well as infrastructural development. The Joint Declaration agreed to promote development, multidimensional and multilevel trade, and economic cooperation, while also allowing the Joint Economic and Trade Commission to develop and expand potential bilateral trade. Both sides agreed to a preferential duty arrangement to boost the import and export of commodities between the two countries. Recognizing the overwhelming trade imbalance in its own favour, China promised to take steps to rectify the situation through, for example, granting Chinese business persons subsidies for Bangladeshi imports. In addition, the two countries signed the Bangladesh China Cooperation Agreement on the Peaceful Usage of Nuclear Energy, whereby China would assist Bangladesh in the peaceful development of nuclear energy for power generation, medicinal and other developmental uses. The three MoUs signed between them addressed cooperation in the field of agriculture, digital telephone projects, and the management of the Barakpuria coalmine, highlighting China's contribution towards infrastructural development in Bangladesh. The Greater Dhaka power project was also to be implemented with supplier's credit from China. Furthermore, the two countries agreed upon a direct air link between Beijing and Dhaka via Kunming and exchanged a letter on cooperation on the use of water resources.⁶ Overall, Jiabao said that China

and Bangladesh were committed to establishing "a comprehensive and cooperative partnership of long term friendship, equality, and mutual benefits".⁷

The Bangladesh-China Defence Co-operation Agreement was signed between Bangladesh and China during the then Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to China from December 23-27, 2002. The visit was a significant landmark in bilateral relations as three treaties and a Memorandum of Understanding were signed covering military, economic, and technological cooperation between the two countries. China promised Bangladesh a 100 million Yuan, in addition to the previously sanctioned interest free 50 million Yuan for constructing the sixth Bangladesh-China friendship bridge on the river Dholessori. In addition, China converted the \$24 million interest free loan, for the construction of an international conference centre at Dhaka, into a grant and pledged its support for Bangladesh's tourism and agriculture sectors. During talks, Bangladesh also expressed its support for the One-China policy.⁸

Sino-Bangladesh Military Cooperation

The Bangladeshi officials said that the purpose of the Defence agreement was to meet the present day need of Bangladesh's defence forces. They also said that this new agreement was signed to help institutionalize the existing accords in the defence sector and also to rationalize the existing piecemeal agreements to enhance cooperation in training, maintenance and some areas in production. The officials also said that the defence umbrella agreement was not directed against any other country and it would not in any way affect Bangladesh's relations with India.⁹ In 2006 China supplied 65 artillery guns, 114 missiles and related systems to Bangladesh. Most of the tanks (T-59, T-62, T-69, T-79), armoured personnel carriers (APCs), artillery pieces, small arms and personal weapons in Bangladesh army are of Chinese origin.¹⁰

The links between the Chinese Navy and the Bangladesh Navy are truly wide-ranging. These raise questions on the scope, direction and intentions of Bangladesh navy. The Chinese platforms in its possession include the 053-H1 Jianghu I class frigates with 4x HY2 missiles, Huang Feng Class missile boats, Type-024 missile boats, Huchuan and P-4 class torpedo boats, Hainan class sub chasers, Shanghai class gun boats and Yuchin class LCUs. The BNS Khalid Bin Walid has been retrofitted with HQ-7 SAM from China. Admiral Zhang Lianzhong, former Commander of PLA (People's Liberation Army) Navy

had promised full cooperation in the sophisticated naval management. PLA Navy can be expected to 'pamper' and 'pressurize' Bangladesh Navy to open its facilities for use as a countervailing force against the Indian Navy. The wide disparities in the India-Bangladesh naval order of battle provide a perfect setting for the friendly entry. It in turn will greatly facilitate smooth operation of Chinese frigates and submarines in the North Andaman Sea.¹¹ In an attempt to strengthen Dhaka's naval strength, China has agreed to sell submarines to Bangladesh's Navy. In February 2014, the two countries signed \$203 million deal that offers Bangladesh two Ming Class submarines. The move was scorned by India which could not help hide its dismay at the rising tide of Sino-Bangladeshi defence cooperation. Indeed a senior official recently took Beijing to task questioning the 'necessity' of the pact with Bangladesh. Delhi's main concern is that these submarines may intrude into Indian waters. These events seem to raise alarm in India as the Indian Navy now plans to boost its presence in the Bay of Bengal.¹² In response to the imminent deal, the Indian Navy has taken a number of counterbalancing steps. First, India is going to install missile batteries on the island of Sagar, adjacent to the Bangladesh coastline. Moreover, a deep-sea port is slated for construction there so that the massive naval vessels can dock. Furthermore, the Navy plans to build bases on the Sagar Island for land-to-ship as well as surface-to-air missiles. The Indian Ministry of Defense has also been funneling a staggering amount of money to reinvigorate its overall postures in the Bay of Bengal. Indian concern is understandable since enhanced Chinese presence nearby continues to cause strategic anxiety in Delhi. Indeed, the Indian response is largely tailored at the more strategic concern on China rather than the diminutive effect with Bangladesh. As Paul J. Smith, Professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College, explained: 'I don't think the issue is the possession of submarines per se; it is China's increasing influence in Bangladesh (including possibilities that China may be able to transform Chittagong into 'Gwadar East')'. This is what military planners in India are really worried about.' Gwadar is a strategic Pakistani port-affording access to the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The port, which is especially strategic for its importance in the global shipping trade, has come under fire in India as a result of Pakistan's welcoming of significant Chinese investment and operational control.¹³

Insofar the Bangladeshi Air Force in Concerned, it

has thus far received 16 F-7BGs, F7 and Q 5 fighters and PT 6 trainers from China, Bangladesh has set up a missile launch pad near the Chittagong Port with assistance from China. The maiden test was carried out on May 12, 2008 with active participation of Chinese experts. Land attack anti-ship cruise missile C-802A was test fired shortly afterwards from the frigate, BNS Osman¹⁴ near Kutubdia island in the Bay of Bengal. This missile is said to have a strike range of 120 kms. During her March 2010, visit to China Sheikh Hasina referring to Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2002, requested the Chinese government to provide two frigates with three helicopters under long term loan assistance and also called for extending support to her government's endeavours in tackling the challenges of climate change.¹⁵

China's dependence on Bangladesh for energy

Energy is vital for the development of a nation and has been called a strategic commodity. China's emerging social needs make it heavily dependent upon energy to underpin necessary growth rates, which enable the success of government policies aimed at improving the living standards of its population. Plans to urbanize 400 million people before 2030 will increase energy demand about three and a half times more than if this population remained in rural areas. A rapidly increasing energy supply is fundamental to China's future.¹⁶ China values Bangladesh for its immense natural gas reserves where Bangladesh's geographical proximity to Myanmar makes these reserves accessible to China through pipelines. Dhaka has granted China exploration rights for developing its natural gas fields at Barakpuria, which hold an estimated reserve of 390 million tonnes over an area of 6.69 square kilometres. China has channeled massive investment towards the development of these gas fields that are some of the world's largest reserves of best quality bituminous coal, which is ash free and with little sulphur content.¹⁷ The construction of the second unit of the Barakpuria Coal-Fired Power Plant Project, was also taken up by China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC), which is expected to provide reliable energy to the northwestern regions of Bangladesh, thereby playing an important role in the development of the Bangladesh's economy.¹⁸ The greater Dhaka power project was also implemented with supplier's side credit from China. In June 2006, Bangladesh discovered another coal reserve in the northern district of Dinajpur which China could also help develop.¹⁹

Road Links and infrastructural developments

China and Bangladesh are developing road links between Kunming and Chittagong via Myanmar, and the air route connecting Kunming and Dhaka is already operational, providing great scope for boosting trade, business, and tourism between the two countries. The 900 km. Kunming Highway will facilitate greater trade. This would not only overcome the long sea passage from the east coast of China through Singapore (for trans-shipment) to Bangladesh, but would also lower transport costs and add to the economy of Yunnan province. This also fits well in their joint initiative of improving Chittagong port infrastructure that can now be put to dual use for merchant vessels and also for the navies of the two countries.²⁰ China has also provided assistance for the construction of a water treatment plant in Dhaka and a sewage plant. To quote the former Bangladesh Ambassador to China, Ashfaqur Rahman, 'The two countries have engaged bilaterally in intensive cooperation making China one of our most important partners in development. A large portion of our infrastructural development including roads and bridges, power plants, mining and industrial establishments were built with Chinese assistance and technology.'²¹

Sino-Bangladesh cooperation in the field of nuclear technology

The nuclearization of South Asia has created some interesting dynamics in relation to the security of this region. Underlying the new realities is a dialectical relationship between the now-expanded security parameters of the region, and the continuation of the Pakistan-India conflictual relationship, centering on Kashmir, as the defining characteristic of the region's disunity. In fact, the Pak-India relationship defines the future security milieu of the whole of South Asia, post the region's nuclearization.²² With both Pakistan and India not only testing their nuclear devices but also developing their missile capabilities, the whole nuclear debate has moved beyond the Pakistan-India bilateral relationship to a regional milieu. After all, the reach of the two countries' missiles, India's Agni and Pakistan's Ghauri, has brought the whole of South Asia and the bordering region of West Asia within the nuclear dynamics. Now, both Pakistan and India must consider the security requirements of all their neighbours in South Asia since any nuclear exchange or accident may well impact them directly - and will most certainly impact them indirectly in any event. Bangladesh being the immediate neighbour

of India sharing borders with India, lies in the immediate line of threat in case of the break out of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan.²³

One additional dimension of China-Bangladesh relations needs close examination. It relates to nuclear tie-up. China's interest in the Bangladesh's nuclear establishment goes back to the year 2000 when Khaleda Zia was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. At that time Zhongyuan Engineering Corporation offered to supply a 300 MW nuclear power plant under its technical collaboration programme. It also offered supplier's credit to import Chinese equipment and electro-mechanical products²⁴ Unlike India and Pakistan, Bangladesh is a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bangladesh feels that it has every right to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Bangladesh currently operates three small research reactors but still has hopes to build the Roopur nuclear power plant at Ishwardi in Pabna. Lacking the funds to do so, they are seeking soft loans and help from China. Bangladesh and China signed an agreement in 2005 for cooperation in exploration of nuclear materials and construction of a new nuclear power plant. By means of the above agreement Bangladesh has decided to build a 600-1000 MW nuclear power plant at Roopur in Pabna by 2015 to meet acute electricity shortages. There is political and popular support for the plant. In May 2009, Russia and Bangladesh concluded a MoU to build the Pabna nuclear plant. Scientists from Russia's Rosatom atomic energy agency offered all possible assistance in this regard. The plan has been approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global nuclear watchdog. South Korea has also agreed to finance a part of the Pabna nuclear plant, whose estimated costing would be US \$ 2 billion. Even Pakistan in 2008 offered assistance to Bangladesh in the development of its nuclear energy program. China has offered to transfer atomic science to Bangladesh in exchange for access to major naval bases in the Bay of Bengal.²⁵ After the signing of the Indo-US civil nuclear deal in 2008 and other international approvals, India has announced major nuclear energy generation initiatives backed by countries such as France, Russia, Japan, apart from America. Given the paramount space that India occupies in the South Asian region, others nations are following suit, though not without misgivings by the global community that dual use nuclear technology could be pilfered for clandestine nuclear weapons programs. Some call it the bandwagon effect,

the impact of India's growing nuclear energy program, is being felt in neighboring countries, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan.²⁶

Sino-Bangladesh Economic and Trade Cooperation

In November 1983, a joint committee on economy, trade, science and technology between China and Bangladesh was set up. The joint committee held its meetings in the capitals of the two countries turn by turn. Under the recommendation of the commission, A Long Term Trade Agreement (LTTA) was signed between the two countries, which provides Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment to each other for a five year period. As a result trade volume and economic cooperation increased significantly. China's major imports from Bangladesh are raw materials, like leather, raw jute chemical fertilizer etc. China's major exports to Bangladesh are textiles, machinery, electronic products, cement fertilizer, tyres, raw silk, maize etc. During Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to China in 1995, important accords were signed concerning Chinese assistance in the development of gas and energy resources, and management of water resources.²⁷

In 1996 the two countries signed the Agreement on Encouraging and Protecting Investment, the Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Agreement on the Prevention of Tax Evasion. In January 2002, the two countries signed an Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation, Certificate of handover of the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Executive Program of the Cultural Agreement for 2001-2003 and four other agreements. In December 2002, the two countries signed an Exchange of Letters regarding the loan used for the project of Bangladesh-China Friendship International Conference Centre to be converted into a grand Agreement of Economic and Technical Cooperation.²⁸

During her March 2010 China visit the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasian Wajed also sought short and long term Chinese assistance, grants and approval of State-to-State loan on ODA basis for implementing seven projects in Bangladesh's agriculture, power and infrastructure sectors.²⁹ These are grants for construction of:- (a) Chinese Exhibition Centre with car parking facilities; (b) Construction of road and rail infrastructure connecting Chittagong with Kunming through Gundum of Myanmar; (c) Construction of eighth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge; (d) Water Purification Project in Pagla; (e) Financial and Technical support for construction of

power plant in Bangladesh; (f) strengthening organizational co-operation between China National Hybrid Rice Research Centre and Bangladesh Rice Research Institutes (BRRI) and (g) Waiving Chinese loan.³⁰

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought Chinese support and co-operation in the following areas also: (a) Modernizing flood forecasting and warning centre; (b) River dredging projects; (c) Satellite launching and setting up remote sensing satellite; (d) Increasing stipend for Bangladeshi students up to 150 and (e) Providing scholarship facilities to the foreign service officials.³¹

Bangladesh sought Chinese assistance in constructing a highway passing through Myanmar to Yunnan province of China. A rail network passing through the same area has also been proposed. Bangladesh also went out of the way to persuade China to further develop and use the Chittagong port and develop a deep sea port at Sonadia Island. A Chinese role in the development of Chittagong is particularly worrisome to India, since it would be similar to China's involvement in the development of Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka and Gwadar in Baluchistan and Sittwe in Myanmar. China reportedly has access to the Myanmar naval base in Hanggyi Island and has established a monitoring station at Coco Island, north of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Through these ports, China is trying to fulfil two objectives - encircle India as part of its 'string of pearls', and gain other openings to sea.³²

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed's June 2014, visit to China has further deepened the bilateral relations between Dhaka and Beijing opening up new avenues in the area of economic cooperation. On June 9, 2014, Premier Li Keqiang held talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Li Keqiang said that China and Bangladesh are traditionally friendly neighbours who have respected each other, understood each other and supported each other. Bangladesh is an important cooperative partner of China in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean region. China is ready to take the opportunity of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two nations in the next year to consolidate political mutual trust, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, intensify bilateral exchanges in various fields, and constantly push forward China-Bangladesh comprehensive cooperative partnership. Hasina's visit opened up a new horizon to strengthen mutual cooperation in the areas of trade and investment,

power generation, communications and transport and combating natural disasters. Several important agreements were signed between the two countries: (a) Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between China and Bangladesh; (b) Joint Venture Agreement on Establishment of a 1320 MW Coal-based Ultra Critical Power Plant at Patuakhali; (c) A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the government of the two countries for construction of a much awaited tunnel under Karnaphuli River which would be a great step for facilitating the country's trade and business as well as execution of BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) corridor. (d) Another MOU was signed between China Harbour and Engineering Company and Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) for establishment of a Chinese economic and investment zone in Chittagong where China has showed interest to relocate its industries; (e) China also agreed to facilitate more Bangladeshi students to study in China with scholarship schemes and also agreed to conduct culture and language exchange programmes.

China's assistance in the development of Chittagong Port

Bangladesh's Chittagong port is the country's principal seaport, currently handling around 92 percent of its import-export trade. The cash-strapped government in Dhaka does not have the finances needed to modernize the port and China, a long standing ally, agreed to help fund upgrades. China offered its support to develop its strategically-significant deep-sea port in Chittagong during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed's visit to China in March, 2010.³³ Bangladeshi authorities along with their Chinese counterparts set out an \$ 8.7 billion development plan to raise bulk cargo handling capacity to 100 million tons and containers handling of three million 20 feet equivalent unit containers annually by 2055. The ambitious plan also involves the development of a deep sea port and a road connecting Bangladesh to China via Myanmar.³⁴ Bangladesh has also offered China naval access to its prized Chittagong port, which India has long but unsuccessfully sought. India needs access to Chittagong port in order to have its planned natural gas imports from Myanmar shipped to its north east region.³⁵ For China, access to Chittagong ties in neatly with its apparent "string of pearls strategy," having also invested hugely in the development of Gwadar port in Pakistan. As per a 2002 Pentagon Report titled Energy Futures in Asia, access to Chittagong assists

China in protecting "the sea lanes of communication through which a huge volume of oil is expected to flow."³⁶ In return, Bangladesh could earn economic benefits through substantial transit fees. In addition, it could gain certain bargaining power against India. Since Chittagong port handles the majority of the country's trade, the scheme would appear to make rational business sense from China's perspective and the planned new connecting roadway. In 2008, Bangladesh set up a missile launch pad near Chittagong Port with assistance from China. These developments are too serious to ignore. While Bangladesh says that it is trying to establish an equal relationship between India and China, it is clearly trying to benefit by leveraging its geo-strategic position between Asia's two rising powers. This may be a happy situation for Bangladesh and even for China. But India would not benefit in equal measure. In fact, a Chinese presence in Chittagong would present a major security concern for India.³⁷ Bangladesh's decision to allow China use of the Chittagong port may pose a major security dilemma for India. It is very difficult to assess the extent to which Chinese engagement with Bangladesh is innocuous and when it would start infringing on important security interests of India. If the growth of Islamic extremism and terrorism in Bangladesh is a threat to Indian security, then the presence of powers with which India's interests have the potential to clash is also of security concern. It is from this perspective that the recent trends in Bangladesh-China relations need to be assessed.³⁸

The strengthening of Sino-Bangladeshi relations is a matter of strategic concern for both India and the US. The then foreign minister of Bangladesh, Dipu Moni stated publicly that China's involvement in building a deep sea port was only for economic purposes.³⁹ She said that Bangladesh was acting as a "bridge" between China and India and would never let its territory be used for military attacks. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the plans were part of her government's strategy to connect Bangladesh to the greater Asian region in order to develop its markets and promote economic growth "in the interest of the people of this country."⁴⁰ Realizing the need for a deep sea port in the future, Bangladesh is also planning a port on Sonadia Island in the Bay of Bengal, south of Chittagong. It has already approached China for assistance to build this multi-billion dollar deep sea port. When finished, the Sonadia port is expected to cater to the growing business needs of Bangladesh, as well as China and India. But it will take years before the new port

can be completed and made operational. Until then, Bangladesh's economic hopes are tied to the fate of Chittagong port.⁴¹

Talks of China getting 'military basing rights' in the Chittagong belt

There is a talk of China getting 'military basing rights' in the Chittagong belt. As and when the 'wish' is fulfilled, China stands to acquire the ability to monitor army deployment in north-east India. Additionally, several strategic Indian Air Force bases at Bagdogra, Hashimara and Tezpur, to just name a few, and Indian military aircraft deployed in the region will come under a Bangladesh-China electronic and radar surveillance network.⁴²

North-East insurgent groups receive assistance from China, Bangladesh and Pakistan

Insurgency in India's north-east is a major security threat. These north-east insurgent groups receive active assistance from across the border. Bangladesh, Pakistan as well as China provide various forms of assistance to these insurgent groups. Available evidence suggests that many terrorist groups combine their movement with narcotics trafficking, which provides significant financiers for terrorism in parts of the north-east. These groups have also developed complex network to sustain this trade. For example in Assam, the combination that is active in the north-east comprises the insurgent groups, the Guwahati-based coal mafia, drug traders and middlemen. The tri-junction of Indian, Bangladeshi and Myanmar border near Lawangtlai in Southern Mizoram is a virtual free port for the biggest concentration of clandestine arms in South Asia. Weapons from Russian Kalashnikovs to Chinese AK-47s, American M-16s to German HK-33s are easily available in this market. This is important because of its proximity to Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh, one of the biggest arms' markets in South Asia.⁴³ Chittagong is already serving as 'delivery port' for Chinese arms meant for various Indian insurgent groups particularly, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) which have sanctuaries in Bangladesh. ULFA has reportedly shifted its base to China recently though its leadership continues to nurture business interests set up in Dhaka with the patronage of ISI and Bangladesh intelligence over two-three decades ago. China has maintained contacts with ULFA in Dhaka. It is also in touch with another north-east insurgent outfit like National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), which is fighting for 'independence' in the province of Nagaland. NSCN has been in talks with Delhi for

over many years. Yet, China has been allowing them (as also ULFA) to procure arms, ammunition and communication equipment from Yunnan.⁴⁴

The Siliguri Corridor: From a regional security perspective, China's engagement with Bangladesh for access and bases has the potential to alter the security scenario, trigger regional tensions and much more. Illegal migrants and infiltrators from Bangladesh can easily cross over to India through this corridor. Similarly members of Indian Insurgent Groups like ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) and NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) as well members of other groups cross over to Bangladesh after committing crimes in India. Bangladesh serves as a safe-haven for these north-east insurgent groups. From an Indian perspective, the growing Bangladesh-China military contacts will make the Siliguri corridor vulnerable for the first time since India became independent in 1947. Often described as the 'Chicken Neck', this 200 km. long and 40 km. wide corridor connects mainland India by rail, road and air with its north-eastern region of seven provinces. One of these provinces is Arunachal Pradesh. China has been claiming some 90,000 square kilometres of Arunachal as its own and this has become a constant source of tension in the China-India relations. China has also been claiming Tawang, the home to an ancient Buddhist monastery, in Arunachal Pradesh. Chinese army marched into Tawang during the 1962 war. Though much water has since flown into the Brahmaputra, the very claim over Tawang increases Siliguri corridor's vulnerability. There is a significant PLA deployment along the borders, on the Arunachal side, which is to the east of Siliguri, and on the Bhutan side to the north of Siliguri. It is in the south of Siliguri, that PLA has never had a direct or indirect presence. The Sino-Bangladesh friendship is bridging the 'void', in a manner of speaking, because Siliguri corridor figures prominently in the Sino doctrine and in its friendship with Bangladesh with the arm-twisting of India to allow a trade route through the corridor.⁴⁵

China's co-operation with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar

China, for example was instrumental in helping to establish Pakistan's arms industry. China has also long supplied the Pakistani military with a range of military systems, including tanks, naval combatants, and combat aircraft. For example, China and Pakistan currently co-produce the K-8 trainer and the JF-17 Thunder/FC-1 Xiaolong, a few examples of Chinese weapons co-produced with foreign partners.⁴⁶ Perhaps

of greatest concern is the likelihood of Chinese assistance with missiles and nuclear weapons. China has supplied Pakistan with the M-11 series of short-range ballistic missiles. China has helped Pakistan build two nuclear reactors at the Chasma site in the Punjab Province and is considering building two more nuclear reactors at the same site. Beijing must weigh potential negative international reaction to such a move, however, because it is a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which forbids nuclear transfers to countries that are not signatories of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. It has the option of seeking a waiver of the prohibition or proceeding in spite of the prohibition. In addition, A. Q. Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist, claims that the PRC helped Pakistan develop its nuclear weapons, including the provision of nuclear materials.⁴⁷ While this claim has not been officially corroborated or acknowledged, the story is a reminder of the close Sino-Pakistani ties in strategic systems.

China is one of the few states to support the regime in Myanmar. This is due to a combination of geopolitical and economic considerations. Myanmar's Irrawaddy Valley has long been a strategic path into China. The Burma Road of World War II is merely the most well known example, and a version of the Silk Route transited the Irrawaddy into Yunnan as well. Moreover, Myanmar has potential oil and natural gas reserves. The ability to access those oil reserves would again limit Chinese vulnerability to interdiction of its sea lines. Not surprisingly, China is helping to construct oil pipelines across Myanmar and into China. It is also helping to construct new port facilities in Sittwe, Dawei, and Mergui.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Myanmar, lying to the east of India, constitutes yet another potential area of worry for Indian strategic planners. Strategically, Myanmar and China have been engaged in a variety of security cooperation measures. The PRC is the largest source of arms for the Burmese military, supplying a variety of systems, including trucks, artillery, and communications equipment.⁴⁹ Chinese support has been sustained, even after Burmese crackdowns in 2009, which led several thousand refugees to flee Myanmar into southern China.⁵⁰ In return, Burmese willingness to allow the PLA access to its territory potentially allows China to maintain a close watch on Indian military developments. Of particular interest are the Coco Islands, from which China can watch Indian space and missile launches.⁵¹

Most of the ports the PRC is helping to develop, be at Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka),

Sittwe (Myanmar) or Chittagong, can have a dual use, by hosting both merchant and military vessels. The deep-sea water port of Gwadar, of which the first phase of construction has been completed, is projected to undergo militarization by the Pakistani Navy, which means that Chinese surface and sub-surface platforms could easily be stationed there. China's aggressive economic and strategic moves in South Asia to expand its sphere of regional influence by surrounding India with a "string of pearls" are obviously a source of worry for India as it could eventually undermine India's pre-eminence in the region and potentially give rise to an economic and security threat. Added to these worries is the Chinese military build-up. Its medium range nuclear ballistic missiles like DF-21 and DF-21A covers most of India and the surrounding seas as well as the Indian Ocean. New Delhi fears that China will use the strategically significant deep sea port located at Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, the Sittwe port in Myanmar, the strategically significant deep-sea port of Chittagong in Bangladesh to carry out operations against India. China's friendly relations with Myanmar and the Chinese military advantage in Myanmar is well known and needs no emphasis. The prospect of a Chinese naval presence on both the western and eastern seaboard is viewed with great suspicion by India. Chinese moves in and around our neighbourhood, according to many strategic thinkers in India, amounts to the "strategic encirclement of India". They believe that China's aim is to contain India by allying with neighbouring countries and preventing New Delhi from competing with Beijing's influence in South Asia.

Conclusion

China feared that if India becomes a "hegemon" in South Asia then Chinese interests in the region would be hampered. So it started assisting Bangladesh in every sphere. It is important to note that since Bangladesh is major recipient of Chinese arms, there seems to be a larger game plan of China to encircle India, together with Pakistan and Myanmar. Bangladesh's Armed Forces today are predominantly equipped with Chinese military hardware. The Bangladesh Army's tanks and light tanks are of Chinese origin. The Bangladesh Navy's frigates and patrol crafts are mostly Chinese. The Bangladesh Air Force's combat aircrafts are all Chinese. In short China has forged Bangladesh into a military-equipment client state like Pakistan. China has assisted Bangladesh in the field of road, highway construction, infrastructural development and has helped

Bangladesh in the field of peaceful use of nuclear technology. Since 1980's onwards China provided Bangladesh with economic and trade concessions and there were tremendous improvements in economic relations between the two countries. China has also offered Bangladesh in the development of the strategically significant port at Chittagong. China has tremendous domestic energy requirements (oil, coal, gas etc.). It looks upon Bangladesh as a favourable supplier of energy to meet China's domestic requirements.

China's engagement with nations around India and primarily Bangladesh could alter the balance of power, affect India's strategic posture and impinge on its standing as a regional stable power leading to competition and a possible conflict. The various forms of Chinese assistance to Bangladesh have caused jitters in India - the huge country next door which some Bangladeshis still call 'Big Brother'. India is concerned because a similar story is unfolding in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and in Burma - where China is also building roads and deep sea ports. Indian defense experts fear that China is surrounding India with ports. They call it China's 'string of pearls'. 'This is not a fear, this is a fact,' says Professor Shrikant Kondapalli of Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. He believes China is 'setting up shop' in smaller countries around the Indian Ocean because of oil. An estimated 80% of oil for China's resource-hungry economy comes from the Middle East and Africa, via the Indian Ocean. Rapidly-growing India also needs oil, and it stands directly in the middle of China's supply route. The Indians fear that although these deep sea ports will be for trade, China could call them in for military or strategic purposes if oil becomes scarce.⁵² When you put together all these jigsaw puzzles it becomes clear that Chinese focus in Indian Ocean is not just for trade,' says Professor Kondapalli. 'It is a grand design for the 21st Century.'

There is a constant fear factor working in the mind of Bangladesh which perceives India as a threat. This fear factor has been used by China to cultivate friendly ties with Bangladesh in order to counter India. Bangladesh's insecurity emerges from its identity conflict and suspicion. Bangladesh is also concerned about India's hegemony in the region. Though India helped Bangladesh gain independence, India's claims that it was solely motivated by humanitarian considerations were viewed subsequently with suspicion and incredulity in Bangladesh. Bangladesh feels, India was motivated by a strategic interest in dividing its arch enemy, Pakistan and

proving the Two-Nation Theory wrong. The emergence of Bangladesh was considered by India both as a military and ideological victory over Pakistan. Therefore, India's 'big brother' attitude aroused a deep, though dormant, psychological fear among Bangladeshis. Both the civil and military forces in Bangladesh have misgivings and suspicions about India's real motives. They feel that India's real aim is to emerge as the sole dominant power in the subcontinent and to install pro-India governments in Bangladesh that would be subservient to its interest.⁵³ Therefore Bangladesh has tried to balance India's overarching geographical presence by cultivating close relations with countries like China, Pakistan and other smaller South Asian countries as well as with SAARC members.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Bhumitra Chakma, 'Bangladesh-China Relations: Determinants and Inter linkages', in Abul kalam (ed.) Bangladesh: Internal Dynamics and External Linkages, (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1996), p. 264.
2. R. Chakrabarti, 'China and Bangladesh', China Report, Volume 30, No. 2, (1994), p.155
3. Bhumitra Chakma, "Bangladesh-China Relations: Determinants and Inter linkages", op.cit. no. 1, p. 267.
4. M.H. Syed, Encyclopaedia of SAARC Nations, (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications 2003), p.153
5. Dr. Kazi Chesham and Mohammad Mahabubur, Sino-Bangla relations and Bangladesh's Look East Policy, The Daily Star, Dhaka, May 23, 2005, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/05/23/d505231501126.htm> (accessed on June 2, 2014)
6. 'Joint Communiqué between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the People's Republic of China,' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, 8 April 2005, http://www.mofa.gov.bd/press_release_1.htm (accessed on May 6, 2014)
7. China, Bangladesh hail bilateral relationship: Joint Communiqué, People's Daily, (9 April 2005).
8. Dr. Kazi Chesham and Mohammad Mahabubur, op.cit no.5, <http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/05/23/d505231501126.htm> (accessed on June 2, 2014)
9. Dr. Subhash Kapila, Bangladesh-China Defence Co-operation Agreement's Strategic Implications: An Analysis, http://www.saag.org/common/uploaded_files/paper582.html, (accessed on July 6, 2011)
10. Dynamics of China-Bangladesh Relations, <http://www.defence.pk/forums/bangladesh-defence/47912-dynamics-china-bangladesh-relations.html>

- (accessed on August 4, 2011)
11. Dr. Subhash Kapila, Bangladesh-China Defence Co-operation Agreement's Strategic Implications: An Analysis, http://www.saag.org/common/uploaded_files/paper582.html, (accessed on July 6, 2011)
 12. China Making A Play At Bangladesh? March, 1, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanmiller/2014/01/03/china-making-a-play-at-bangladesh/> (accessed on July 6, 2014)
 13. China Making A Play At Bangladesh? March, 1, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanmiller/2014/01/03/china-making-a-play-at-bangladesh/> (accessed on July 4, 2014)
 14. BNS Osman (commissioned 1989) is a 1500-ton Chinese built Jianghu class warship. The C-802A missile is a modified version of Chinese Ying Ji-802 (western version SACCADE). The weight was reduced from 815 kg to 715 kg to increase the strike range.
 15. <http://www.ebangladesh.com/2010/03/20/milestone-achievements-of-pm-hasina-in-china-visit/> (accessed on July 8, 2014)
 16. BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2011, London 2011, www.bp.com/assets/bp_internet/globebp/globebp_uk_english/reports_and_publication/statistical_energy_review_2011/STAGING/local_assets/pdf/statistical_review_of_world_energy_full_report_2011.pdf (accessed on March 3, 2014), p.9
 17. Tarique Niazi, 'China's March on South Asia,' Association for Asian Research, 6 March 2005. <http://www.asianresearch.org/articles/2613.html> (accessed on March 2014)
 18. 'CMC continues to explore opportunities in South Asia,' People's Daily, Beijing, 27 March 27, 2006
 19. 'Energy security dependent on proper use of coal reserves,' The Financial Express, Ahmadabad, September 1, 2006
 20. Sharif M. Hossain and Ishtiaque Selim, 'Sino-Bangladesh Economic Relations: Prospects and Challenges', BISS Journal, Volume 27, No 4, (October 2006), pp.354-355.
 21. 'Pursuing a Win-Win Situation' Interview with Ashfaqur Rahman, Beijing Review, (No.52), 12 May 12, 2005.
 22. http://www.issi.org.pk/old-site/ss_Detail.php?dataId=54 (accessed on July 5, 2014)
 23. *ibid.*
 24. Dynamics of China-Bangladesh Relations, http://policyresearchgroup.com/regional_weekly/hot_topics/540.html (accessed on May 3, 2014)
 25. <http://www.icanw.org/bangladesh> (accessed on June 6, 2014)
 26. *ibid.*
 27. <http://wakeupbd.wordpress.com/2011/02/14/strategic-implications-of-bangladesh-china-relations/>
 28. www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Jrp/pdf/132_2pdf, p.30 (accessed on May 8, 2014)
 29. <http://www.ebangladesh.com/2010/03/20/milestone-achievements-of-pm-hasina-in-china-visit/> (accessed on April 8, 2014)
 30. *ibid.*
 31. *ibid.*
 32. *ibid.*
 33. Ananth Krishnan, China offers to develop Chittagong port, The Hindu, Chennai, March 20, 2010
 34. J. Mohan Malik, 'China's Strategy of Containing India,' Power and Interest, News Report, February 6, 2007, <http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/China/Malik-Dr.-Mohan/Chinas-Strategy-of-Containing-India> (accessed on May 3, 2014)
 35. 'China to build Chittagong naval base in Bangladesh,' India Defence, June 12, 2006. <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/2076> (accessed on May 3, 2014)
 36. 'China builds up strategic Sea Lanes,' The Washington Post, 18 January 2005. Available at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20050117-115550-1929r.htm> (accessed on May 3, 2014)
 37. Ananth Krishnan, China offers to develop Chittagong Port, *op.cit.* no.33
 38. Anand Kumar, Chinese Puzzle in India-Bangladesh Relations, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChinesePuzzleinIndia-BangladeshRelations_akumar_190410 (accessed on August 7, 2011)
 39. Ananth Krishnan, China offers to develop Chittagong Port, *op.cit.* no.33
 40. Mihir Roy, 'Maritime Security and Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean', Journal of Indian Ocean Studies, Society of Indian Ocean Studies, New Delhi, Vol. 18, No. 1, (April, 2010), p.5
 41. Anbarasan Ethirajan, Bangladesh pins hope on Chittagong port, September 3, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-19462142>
 42. <http://www.ukessays.com/essays/history/chinas-growing-presence-in-the-indian-neighbourhood-history-essay.php> (Accessed on March 16, 2014)
 43. Kanchan Laxman and Sanjay K. Jha, "India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders", <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article7.htm> (accessed on March 16, 2014)
 44. Dynamics of China-Bangladesh Relations, *op.cit.*

- no. 24
45. Dynamics of China–Bangladesh Relations, *op. cit.* no. 24
 46. K. Alan Kronstadt, ‘Pakistan–US Relations,’ Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, February 6 2009, p. 47, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33498.pdf> (accessed on July 2, 2014)
 47. R. Jeffrey Smith and Joby Warrick, ‘A Nuclear Power’s Act of Proliferation,’ The Washington Post, November 13, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/12/AR2009111211060.html> (accessed on July 12, 2014)
 48. Tim Luard, ‘Buyers Line Up for China’s Arms,’ BBC News, June 16, 2006, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5086416.stm> (accessed on July 8, 2011), and ‘China’s K-8 Jets: A Killer for Myanmar,’ Defense Industry Daily, June 30, 2010, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/Chinas-K-8-Jets-A-Killer-for-Myanmar-06457> (accessed on April 20, 2014).
 49. *ibid.*
 50. Hannah Beech, ‘Why Violence Erupted on the China–Burma Border,’ Time, August 31, 2009, at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1919559,00.html> (accessed 8th July 8, 2011) and Larry Kagan, ‘Border War Rattles China–Myanmar Ties,’ Asia Times, September 1, 2009, at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/KI01Ae04.html (accessed on July 8, 2014).
 51. *ibid.*
 52. Mukul Devichand, ‘Is Chittagong one of China’s ‘String of Pearls’? May 17, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8687917.stm> (accessed on 7 July, 2014)
 53. V.K. Vinayaraj, India as a Threat: Bangladesh Perceptions, South Asian Survey, Indian Council for South Asian Cooperation, Sage, Vol. 16, No. 1, (Jan–June 2009), New Delhi, p. 113.

Democratic Politics in Indonesia: Impact of the Presidential Election 2014

Mainak Putatunda*

ABSTRACT

The Indonesian Presidential election was held on 9th July, 2014. A most important event in the history of modern Indonesia since this is for the first time that a democratically elected president was handing over power to another candidate, also chosen through a free and fair election. For a country long under authoritarian rule after independence, it is truly a watershed moment. The presidential election, by all parties concerned was the most keenly fought election in the history of the country, with the two candidates being Prabowo Subianto of the Gerindra led coalition comprising of Golkar, PD, PPP, PAN etc. Prabowo is a former army general and commander of the army's Special Forces KOPASSUS. Facing him was Joko Widodo, the former governor of Jakarta and contesting on a PDI-P ticket, supported by PKB, NASDEM and Hanura. Although the official result of the election will not be announced before 22nd July, the quick count method, which is a tried and tested survey method used previously with good accuracy, declared Joko Widodo the winner of the election, receiving about 52% of the votes polled. Widodo was the favorite of both Indonesian liberal media and of the majority of international media who were long predicting such a result. Widodo seems to be the very embodiment of the aspirations of the Indonesian middle class and the business class who want a more liberalized economy. Widodo's personal charm, his easy approach and humble background made him a common man's favorite leader. His popularity and people's aspiration that has surged with his rise is reminiscent of Barack Obama in 2004. However, the task before him will not be easy. Indonesian economy is past the stage of high growth of 6% which was fuelled by demand for its oil and other natural resources. Even the huge market available in the country, driven by its large population is not being able to attract investors. Inflation now stands at 8.6%, economic growth has slowed and the current account deficit stands at 4.4% of GDP.¹ Indonesia, once considered a MINT country (a member of a group of promising newly emerging economies, comprising of Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), is now facing a severe depletion of investor's faith. The economic nationalism prevalent in the rhetoric of the political leaders and their open hatred for neoliberal policies has kept many investors edgy about the country. The country also faces a shortage of developed infrastructure such as adequate health facilities, proper transport facilities and educational institutions. Moreover, the endemic corruption among the government and military is a severe cause of worry that is also hindering the growth of the country and not allowing its citizens to enjoy better governance. The rise of increasingly intolerant political Islam is also a cause for grave concern as it is consistently undermining the syncretism that is the hallmark of the culture of Indonesia. Therefore, the task before Widodo is not easy in the least. He will have to apply policies that are a judicious mix of modern reforms and traditional considerations.

Keywords : Indonesia, Democracy, Election.

Indonesia was one of the first nations to be colonized by the Dutch due its wealth of spices and coffee production capabilities. The Indonesia that the Dutch conquered was a patchwork of numerous sultanates, all quite independent with a multiracial society following mostly a mystic version of Islam, a result of the unique blend of ancient Hindu ideals and Muslim beliefs. This society was ruled by the traditional 'Adat' laws and the rulers were thought

to be semi-divine entities with mystical powers. There was no concept of a representative government and the traditional Javanese belief system emphasized avoidance of conflict, working through consensus and respect towards elders and people in higher social positions. As in many other colonies, the idea of democracy was first brought to the land by the Dutch through their education system, though it was meant for a very small section of the society. Following

* Pursuing M.Phil in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

again a familiar colonial pattern, the first expressions of a national consciousness were articulated through social reform movements in early 20th century such as 'Bodi Kaniago' and 'Sarekat Islam'. These movements gradually led to the establishment of political parties such as the PNI, who were soon joined by the communist PKI. The Second World War and Japanese occupation of Indonesia gave a great opportunity to the Indonesian nationalists. Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta and Sultan Sjahrir, the three principal leaders of the nationalist struggle decided to co-operate with the Japanese but at the same time, carry on clandestinely with the independence movement. After the Japanese left in 1945, the Dutch wanted to reinstate their colonial system, which was bitterly opposed by the Indonesians. A four year long war of independence followed after which the nationalists were victorious and Indonesia gained independence in 1949. A period of parliamentary democracy followed which proved to be a failed experiment due to the great number of political parties vying for power and the resulting political deadlocks in the parliament. Sukarno, who was till then only a figurehead president, took the opportunity to assert his vision of a strong, unified Indonesia based on the tenets of 'Pancasila' and reinstatement of the 1945 Constitution which gave overarching power to the president. Therefore, from 1956, the parliament stood adjourned as Sukarno focused on working group representations and solving political questions and debates through the traditional Javanese systems of 'Mushwara' and 'Mufakat', meaning deliberation and consensus.

Sukarno espoused a non-aligned policy which alienated him from the prospect of western financial aid. The delicate condition of economy therefore forced him to accept soviet and Chinese aid. The disillusionment of the people and the military with Sukarno forced him further to have strong connections with the communist party PKI. Feeling threatened, the military, which considered itself the custodian of Indonesian unity and interests, staged a coup in October 1965, which ultimately replaced Sukarno with the military general Suharto as president in 1967. Suharto brought about important changes in the economy and foreign policy as he took a pro-western view and liberalized the economy but in the domestic policy front, not much changed. His ascendance to power was immediately followed by a brutal repression of communist forces and the Chinese minority, who were allegedly communist sympathizers. The policy of functional group representation was given a further fillip with the

formation of 'Golongan Karya' or GOLKAR which was an umbrella body for all functional groups, including the military, with fixed quotas of seats in the parliament. Thus, under Suharto, elections became a farcical show, held every five years. In 1973, Suharto banned all other parties but Golkar and two other newly formed parties, PDI and PPP. He hoarded all the Islamist parties under the banner of PPP and all liberal parties under PDI. Some of the most important political developments that still have a resounding effect in Indonesian politics took place during Suharto period which lasted till 1998. During this period, the military emerged as the most potent force in politics, officially operating in the civilian sphere through the concept of 'Dwifungsi' or dual function. Moreover, use of local thugs and organized crime groups by military leaders and influential bureaucrats as well as political leaders for economic gain began from this period. This nexus between criminals, called 'Preman' and military-political leaders led to unbridled corruption, crony capitalism and nepotism in Indonesia, although the windfall gains from its petroleum resources post the 1973 oil price hike kept the economy floating. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 hit the Indonesian economy hard and laid bare the gross mismanagement of resources, eventually leading to Suharto's downfall in 1998.

Suharto was succeeded by Habibie, who was a technocrat in the Suharto government. Habibie's rule brought about important reforms such as freedom to form political parties, freedom of speech and press, an end to the functional group representations in the parliament and reintroduction of free and fair elections but his rule was fraught with problems since the resurgent political forces in Indonesia distrusted a former Suharto minion. He had to resign in October 1999, to be replaced by a noted civil society figure, Abdurrahman Wahid. Wahid attempted to control the military, to decentralize the administration and most importantly, he allowed for a referendum in the Indonesian occupied East Timor. However, he was not wholly successful in his effort to contain the military, as was seen after the referendum in East Timor, where the military severely 'punished' the Timorese for choosing to be independent. He was also unable to control the menace of corruption and had to be impeached by the parliament in July 2001. Wahid was succeeded by another leader of the pro-democracy movement, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Megawati was widely regarded as a just leader but she proved to be an indecisive administrator, unable to control the factionalism in the ruling coalition. This, in turn, led Megawati to

be increasingly dependent on the army, which saw a resurgence in their political role. The human rights situation steadily deteriorated during her tenure and her term ended amid allegations of large scale corruption. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) became the next president after his election victory in October 2004. Although the election was a relatively fair one, there were allegations regarding compromises made by SBY with radical Islamic groups. There is also a feeling that he has not been able to stymie the rot of corruption from Indonesian politics.

The most interesting features that can be seen in Indonesian politics today have, in many ways, evolved from those present in the Suharto era. These include the highly dramatized election campaigns, use of paramilitary or militias to intimidate opponents and the nexus of corruption ever-present in the government. But there have also been some interesting new developments. Foremost among them is the role being played by political Islam after being suppressed by both Sukarno and Suharto for a long period. The attempt to court influential Islamic groups like Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah is an example of this Islamic political resurgence. A more worrying trend is the borderline acceptance for the more radical Islamic groups and an indifference towards incidents of minority baiting. Another factor that has evolved in the post Suharto period is the emergence of private militias which are used by both political parties and influential businessmen and industrialists to crush dissident voices. Although one can argue that such groups are a historical legacy of the youth groups like 'Pemuda Pancasila', which were formed during Sukarno era and operated throughout Suharto period with active support of the government and the military, their recent incarnations in the form of armed militias called 'Satgas' indicate a low level of confidence even among the elite in the forces of the government and the military. Decentralization of Indonesian politics has led to further entrenchment of such uncivil elements like the 'Satga', the 'Preman' and radical Islamic groups in the political process.

The Relevance of Political Islam in Indonesian Politics

80%-90% of all Indonesians are Muslims. During the national election of 1955, the total votes received by all Islamic parties were 44%. In 2004 elections, they received 41%. But in the 2009 legislative elections, they received only 29.2%. This sharp decline in their electoral fortune has triggered a debate about

the relevance of political Islam in Indonesia and whether Indonesia is progressing towards becoming a secular democracy. It can't be denied that the vote share of Islamic parties, i.e. parties who emphasize imposition of Sharia laws to varying degrees, has dwindled. Even in the April 2014 legislative election, they collectively received a meager 32% of the votes.² Moreover, old and established Muslim organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama, which boasted huge networks of schools and charitable organizations are losing their members and funds. However, it will be premature to say that political Islam has lost its relevance in Indonesia. A more detailed analysis reveals that the principal reason behind their declining votes is that now mainstream secular political parties have started paying attention to the Islamic demands and are stealing the thunder of Islamic parties by borrowing their rhetoric. If anything, during recent times, Indonesian society as a whole have become more conservative, which explains this newfound zeal for Islamization of politics. The age old 'Abangan' or syncretic elements are becoming less pronounced in society and the conservative 'Santri' elements are getting stronger. As far as organizations like Nahdatul Ulama are concerned, they are losing their shine mostly because the government has become much more responsive to people's needs and is trying to implement pro-poor policies since the fall of Suharto regime. Even during the 2014 presidential election just concluded, Jokowi and Prabowo, the two main contenders had to try hard to establish their credentials as devout Muslims. Jokowi had to make a trip of Mecca on Haj pilgrimage and show the pictures in media and Prabowo had to face embarrassment because his brother and mother are Christians.³ It should also be noticed that a parallel process of Islamization is going on in Indonesian politics and society both within and outside the ambit of direct political activities. Recently some highly religious local laws based on Sharia have been passed in Indonesia. The government has also initiated a ban on Pornography and a controversial education bill has been introduced. Not only that, a growing acceptance for religious violence is growing in Indonesia. Organizations such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam) are taking part in burning Churches, moral policing, clash with minorities and extortion of non-Muslim businessmen with impunity.⁴ In fact, FPI and another such organization FYI, happens to be two of the most vocal supporters of Prabowo. Some of the Islamic political parties, such as PKS happen to be very well organized, which lent their support to

Prabowo which definitely gave him an edge over Widodo.

The Issue of Corruption in Recent Times

By almost all the well-recognized corruption indexes, Indonesia fares very poorly. Although on the face of it, the old nexus of KKN (Corruption, Cronyism and Nepotism) has broken but in reality the old networks of corruption are proving very hard to uproot. Corruption in Indonesia is prevalent in mainly three sectors, the military, the civil service and the political parties. Regarding the military, it must be said that the Indonesian state pays one of the poorest salaries to its armed forces. In order to keep themselves, therefore, at local level, army officers and soldiers resort to smuggling activities, human trafficking and extortion. This is an age-old tradition of the Indonesian army which continues from the time of freedom struggle against the Dutch, when this was the sole way for the army to provide for itself. However, this malpractice is not limited to lower ranks of the army. Corruption is present on a far grander scale in the upper echelons. Quite often it is the senior officers who own the major corporations in Indonesia and influence foreign companies who invest in the country, especially in the profitable minerals extraction activities.

As far as the civil service is concerned, it is also poorly paid and inefficient, a result of the Suharto era policy of appointing loyal Golkar members to various posts in the civil service. Presently, permanent jobs are in short supply in Indonesia, therefore there is acute demand for government jobs and people are willing to pay huge sums of money to secure such jobs.⁵ World Bank in a 2003 report has commented about Indonesia's corruption thus, "the prevailing bureaucratic culture of secrecy creates a veil behind which corruption flourishes".⁶ Civil servants are gatekeepers to the resources belonging in the community. Utilizing this position, the civil servants in Indonesia accept kickbacks, petty bribes and 'speed money' i.e. bribe taken to speed up a government sanction or licensing process. The degradation of civil service is nothing new. During Suharto era, the civil service was a bloated body of 4 million people, all of whom were Golkar members. However, corruption during Suharto era was a simpler process. A foreign investor needed only to pay bribe to a particular official and in return received an unwritten guarantee that he won't be bothered for bribes again. Although it was true that Suharto's family (his wife was called Madam Ten Percent, an allusion to the usual kickbacks expected by the

family) looted the nation and an elite group of politicians, military officers and Chinese businessmen supported them and received a share of the loot, it was still much more hassle free compared to the present system of decentralized corruption. The decentralization of administration after the fall of Suharto to the regional and district level has opened more opportunities for civil servants of all ranks to extract more out of investors. According to the famous PT Freeport mining company it has paid \$ 15 million to the various levels of civil servants and military to gain contracts.⁷ What exists in Indonesian civil service now can be described as a 'patron-client system' where the senior officials, who wield enormous power for resource allocation actively encourage lower level officials to take bribes, otherwise they won't be able to maintain their profitable positions. Often, promotions depend on a particular candidate's ability to take bribe and not on his or her ability as an administrator. Along with these 'favorable' conditions for corrupt practices, there exist the very real financial considerations of a newly appointed civil servant. A survey has revealed that in order to get a government job in Indonesia, a candidate has to shell out, on an average, Rp. 27.4 billion, which is worth almost two and half year's salary of that candidate since newly appointed civil servants in Indonesia seldom receive more than \$100 as monthly salary.⁸ In such a situation, there is no other way for him to pay his debts which he had incurred to secure the job but to accept bribes. Thus, a vicious cycle of corruption operates in Indonesian civil service. Civil servants, as a whole expect a kickback anywhere between 30%-50% for goods and services that are bought through local government agencies. Even more alarming is perhaps the fact that the civil servants in many cases start to think of themselves as the member of the noble 'Priyayi' class and consider the citizens as their serfs who would bring them 'tokens' of gratitude if they want any work done. Therefore, they do not consider accepting bribes as a crime at all, but their right. Seeing this all prevalent form of bureaucratic corruption, Indonesia Corruption Watch's Chairman Danang Widoyoko's comment seems apt. He said, "Corruption in Indonesia is just like Coca-Cola".⁹ The complex regulatory mechanisms of the Indonesian bureaucratic system often lead large scale companies to stay out of the proper channels of government completely. However, it is the small and medium size enterprises who suffer the most in such a condition.

Corruption also affects the Indonesian polity and

economy through the financial irregularities and malpractices carried out by the Indonesian political parties. These parties are not free from the worldwide transformation from mass based and mass funded parties to electoral elite parties, where a small client base is the principal financier. The political parties in Indonesia used to receive substantial state subsidies during the New Order regime. Even after the fall of the Suharto regime, these subsidies continued but it was a very controversial issue. Finally during Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency, fund allocation came to be decided on the basis of votes received by that party. SBY later introduced seat based funding which drastically reduced the fund allocation to parties. For some smaller parties, funding stopped altogether. During SBY's second term the amount was fixed to Rp.1 million every year for each political party.¹⁰ It is not really practical to think that electoral expenses of a national party can be carried out from this sum. It seems even more inadequate when we think of the separate elections at three levels of government and the party's need to expand their organization at local level. Therefore, indirect government assistance grew. What this essentially meant was that the elected candidates of a certain party were required to pay substantially for the expenses of the party. As the elected officials themselves were not very handsomely paid, such demands naturally led them to adhere to more corrupt practices.

The result of this continuing bewildering maze of corruption is the steady flight of foreign investors from Indonesia who consider it too difficult a place to operate in despite the country's amazing market potential. However, there are rays of hope amidst this darkness of corruption. There is a growing awareness among citizens about the need to stop corruption in the country. Popular demand for anti-corruption measures have led to increasing discussion of the issue in mainstream media and finally these demands were respected in 2003 through the formation of the Anti Corruption Commission (KPK). The KPK has considerable autonomy in dealing with allegations of corruption and has the ability to issue wiretapping orders, detaining orders etc. KPK has been very successful so far in battling corruption allegations against top bureaucrats and politicians. However, a 100% conviction rate of KP does pose some doubts about its function and its method of selecting targets.¹¹ Despite this, the Indonesian people are strongly in support of KPK, which was evident in the Gecko v/s Crocodile themed protests,¹²

signifying the heroic attempts of the poorly funded and understaffed KPK to fight corruption in the mighty Indonesian police.

Role of Military

Military has always played a very important role in Indonesian politics, especially during the Suharto period. But after the fall of the New Order regime, the military's position in the government has become much weaker. In 2004, the military lost its 38 reserved seats in the parliament, a vestige of the functional group politics in Indonesia during the Suharto period. But despite these positive changes, the army remains very poorly paid and therefore, inevitably corrupt. Moreover, president SBY, himself a former army general, has blocked most of the reforms in army command structure and any investigation about the army's corruption or human rights violations.¹³ Appointment of favorite military officers to top government position continued during SBY period, a clear sign of Nepotism. Despite all these, it may be claimed that the military has acted quite tamely during the length of SBY period and has not attempted to get involved too much in politics. But it must be remembered that being an ex army general, SBY could take an informal and personal approach in dealing with the army. He recruited those army officials for government post who were his batch mates in the officer's training college. This kind of an approach will not work with civilian defense ministers.

Civil Society in Indonesia and its Impact on politics

A major effect of the change in the political structure in Indonesia in the post-Suharto period can be seen in the field of civil society. It has been both the agent of democratic change and itself has been subject to such changes. Civil society, although very visible during the transition period from Suharto's New Order Regime, which was ousted in 1998, was not the principal reason behind his downfall. Economic reasons and subsequent loss of control over the civilian and military elite are given more primacy. However, the international donor agencies and the media had hoped that the civil society organization, especially those leading the student's movement would be the driver of change post new order. However, during post Suharto phase, money politics, corruption and the government's failure to restore the economy after the financial crisis did not let Indonesia to develop into an ideal western liberal democracy. This leads to questions about the

teleological view on civil society and the positive co-relation between a vibrant civil society and democracy. In fact, a civil society is bound by the state structure it operates in. In case of Indonesia, whose social elements are in a state of conflict, use of violence as answer to social-political problems is common and often, it is not always possible to exercise such violence within the framework of state institutions.

From this argument it appears that to understand the dynamics and prospects of the democratic transition in Indonesia, it is not enough to only focus on the pro-democracy and non-violent actors.¹⁴

Fukuyama has argued that in South East Asia, civil society should be interpreted from a cultural angle free from the western notion of a 'public space' based on legal rights. The discourse on Asian Values went in this vein, stressing the unique culture of South East Asia, however, this discourse has been largely put to rest after the Asian Economic Crisis. In Indonesia, the discourse on civil society is directed both by its traditionally adaptive Islamic legacy and also by knowledge of the present discourse on civil society in the world. Therefore, the indigenous concepts of Civil Society, Masyarakat Sipil and Masyarakat Warga both focus on autonomy of society towards the state and believe in the universality of the idea of civil society and its applicability in Indonesia. Masyarakat Madani is a more traditional Islamic take on civil society.¹⁵ It emphasizes the virtues of the seventh century Medina societal system, established by Muhammad and holds Islam as the source of the values of civil society.

However, in the post-Suharto era Indonesia, the impact of such Islamic ideals is questionable. The society, although quite devout in nature, is more influenced by political penetration in the civil sphere than anything else. In this context, the tendency of Indonesian political parties and even the defense ministry to form militias is particularly worrisome. Such militias often exist outside the ambits of the state and legal authority. However, they still enjoy endorsements from top government and military officials. HANSIP and PAM SWAKARSA are examples of such paramilitary forces which exist in the shadow region of government and society.¹⁶ These militia forces are not only used to maintain law and order when the state police POLRI needs support but they are also used to intimidate electoral opponents and to carry on illegal activities such as smuggling and extortion on behalf of some military or political leader. Not only this, almost every political party in

Indonesia has their own paramilitary forces. These paramilitary forces, called 'Satgas', are present everywhere in the Indonesian political scene. The Satgas usually play a part in controlling the crowd during electoral rallies. But they are also used to intimidate opponents and are even used as a private army of influential leaders and their industrialist friends. The high rate of unemployment makes the Satgas a good option for Indonesian youth. PDI-P already has over 30000 Satgas. Other parties such as Golkar, PPP and PKS also have a substantial number of them.¹⁷ The Satgas often clash with each other, making the law and order situation precarious. Often they become linked with the local illegal activities and the thugs or 'Preman'. The growing importance of legislative positions at district level after the decentralization of administration has further increased the use of Satgas. Such paramilitary units can be answerable to political bosses but they can also be independent units, as is the case of PDI-P.

The Build-up towards the Presidential Election 2014

The Indonesian presidential election of 2014 is the most hotly contested election in the history of the country which became free from the clutches of authoritarian rule in 1998. It is also the first time that a democratically elected president, Suisilo Bambang Yodhoyono, is leaving office after completing full term and his successor is being chosen through an election. The election is being fought between Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo. Subianto is a former general and commander of the KOPASSUS or the special forces of Indonesian Army and the leader of the Gerindra party led coalition. Hatta Rajasa, the leader of the PAN party, is Prabowo's running mate and the vice presidential candidate. Facing him is Joko Widodo, present governor of Jakarta and erstwhile mayor of Solo, who is contesting on a PDI-P ticket. His running mate is Jusuf Kalla, erstwhile president of Golkar. In the legislative elections fought in April 2014, PDI-P emerged as the single largest party, winning 18.95% of the seats in the parliament or DPR, followed by Golkar (14.75%) and Gerindra(11.81%).¹⁸ The PDI-P, led by the former president, Megawati Sukarnoputri came first in the legislative assembly elections, still did not have much reason to celebrate as they were expecting better results. It is widely believed in Indonesian political circles that the eroding popularity of the erratic Megawati, who came a distant fifth on the race for presidency as predicted by many polling agencies, is behind the lesser than satisfactory performance of PDI-P. Moreover, the

uncertainty over the announcement of the name of their presidential candidate before the legislative election and the announcement of the popular Widodo's name very late have impacted the electoral prospects of the party. Almost all of Indonesia's major political parties have joined one or the other coalition. Almost all of the Islamic parties, including PAN, PPP, PKS and PBB are supporting Prabowo's claim for presidency. He is also receiving support from President Yudhoyono's own party Partai Demokrat or PD. Most significantly, Prabowo has managed to secure the support of Golkar, the erstwhile electoral vehicle of Suharto which remains the wealthiest and most well-organized party in Indonesia at the ground level. The PDI-P on the other hand has managed to garner support from PKB, Hanura and NASMDEM.

If we consider the results of the April election, we will see that Prabowo is enjoying the support of more than 60% of the DPR, according to his pre-election coalition. Prabowo also enjoyed some significant advantages over Jokowi, as Joko Widodo is almost universally known. Firstly, he enjoys the support of his tycoon brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, who according to Forbes, is worth \$700 million. Secondly, he enjoys the support of Aburizal Bakrie, the chairman of the wealthy Golkar, who himself is a very wealthy man, owning Bakrie Group, Indonesia's third largest business conglomerate. No wonder, Edward Aspinall has remarked that most of the big money is going to Prabowo.¹⁹ Prabowo has also dominated the airwave with two of Indonesia's major TV channels siding in his favor. His campaign machine has produced a sleek effect, both on ground and on air and social media. A fiery speaker, whom Marcus Mietzner, a professor at Australian National University has described to be possessed of a "populist, anti-foreign, and testosterone-driven worldview"²⁰. Prabowo however, had to deal with his somewhat unsavory past during the election campaign. He was well known as an important member of the Suharto- era 'New Order'. He rose quickly in the ranks of army and became the commander of the special forces. In that capacity, he had allegedly committed human rights violation in East Timor. His longing for the post of armed forces Chief of Staff was well known and this has reportedly caused a lot of friction with another aspiring general, Wiranto. Prabowo was active during the fall of Suahrto to stem the flow of pro-democracy protests and was dismissed from service in 1998 due to his alleged role in the disappearance of some student demonstrators in Jakarta. A friend of the King of Jordan, Prabowo

has lived in a self-imposed exile there for some time before coming back to Indonesia to join the business of his brother, with a marked interest in the Palm-oil based ethanol production and resource extraction business. Later, he established Gerindra, mostly as a vehicle for his presidential ambitions. During his well-oiled election campaigns, Prabowo has repeatedly used his strong-man image unabashedly. Even to the point of entering an election rally from a helicopter and another on a thoroughbred horse. He has repeatedly expressed his willingness to re-adopt the August 1945 Constitution, which Marcus Mietzner has described as a 'Dictator's Dream'.²¹ In fact, a brief look at his coalition leaders makes it amply clear that Prabowo is still deeply connected with the New Order network of nepotism and corruption. He himself is the son of Sumitro, the influential economist during Sukarno as well as Suharto period. He was also married to the daughter of Suharto. Hatta Rajasa, his running mate, was the coordinating minister for economy in the outgoing government and therefore is responsible for many of the foreign investment and economic failures that was criticized by Gerindra. Moreover, Hatta is also the father-in-law to SBY's son. Aburizal Bakrie, Golkar's chairman, built his wealth during the New Order era through favourable government contracts. Suryadharma Ali, the PPP leader was the minister for religious affairs in the SBY government. He was accused of a scam involving fund allocation for Haj Pilgrimage. The leader of the Islamist party, PKS, was involved in a highly sensational scam involving acceptance of bribe for tweaking the beef import quota and accepting 'favours' from a college student in the process.²² It will perhaps be apt to say that everything about Prabowo Subianto and his coalition, including his rhetoric, style of campaigning and expressed aims, hark back to the past era of authoritarian politics.

On the other hand, Jokowi hails from a middle class family. Before entering politics, he was a furniture dealer. Later, he became Mayor of a medium sized town, Solo. After improving the living conditions of that town, and gaining some recognition, he became the governor of Jakarta in 2012. Jakarta is a huge city that was however lacking in many aspects considered standard in such a city, such as a Mass Rapid Transit system. He improved the city's finances, upgraded the transport facilities and controlled the crime scene. During his entire political career, he was never accused of any financial irregularities. Moreover, he is known as a people's man. He regularly involves himself with the street level people

and their problems. Even as governor, he regularly spent hours among the common people. Jokowi is warm, approachable and scrupulously clean. During almost the entire length of his election campaign, he has managed to keep his campaign free of personal attacks on his opponents. He has openly addressed touchy issues like that of West Papua and promised a democratic solution to these territorial problems.. Moreover, he is generally considered to be more market-friendly than his opponent. He is also in favor of more friendly relations with Australia and New Zealand. Instead of the centralizing tendencies of the Indonesian governments and leaders, he has emphasized e-govt. and e-commerce initiatives. In other words, he is a kind of politician that Indonesians have not seen before. He is inexperienced though, as running a city, even one as large as Jakarta, hardly compares to running a state as diverse as Indonesia, especially within the confines of coalition politics. But Jokowi has found an able running mate in Jusuf Kalla, who being the ex-chairman of Golkar and also the Vice-President of the country under SBY will be able to provide the much needed expertise and organizational capability that Widodo needs. Jokowi is described as the country's 'first social media superstar' by Greg Sheridan of The Australian. He has used the medium to his advantage. Many of the civil society groups support his candidacy. When his name was announced, almost all of the polling agencies were showing him to be far ahead of his rival, Prabowo. Although it helped that three of such major polling agencies, namely, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) and Indikator were headed by Jokowi supporters.²³ There is no doubt that Jokowi is the blue eyed boy of the international liberal press. Interestingly, a March 26th Article in the Time Magazine by Michael Schuman has compared Jokowi to Narendra Modi as both of them emerged on the national political stage from humble beginnings and through governing local level administrative units.²⁴ Despite this, it must be said that Jokowi, in case he wins, will not be able to be as market friendly as Modi due to the internal political constraints of Indonesia. Moreover, the article, in a way, helps to bring out certain significant chinks in Jokowi's armor. Unlike Modi, he does not enjoy unqualified support from a majority of his party and is certainly not the sole authoritative figure there. The shadow of Megawati looms large behind Jokowi, who can be a very influential kingmaker. Jokowi's claims regarding intolerance for corruption also sound

hollow for his running mate is Jusuf Kalla, who was a principal accused in a 1999 election fraud case. Moreover, among his coalition partners is Wiranto of Hanura, who was a key member of the 'New Order' and was as much an accused of human rights violation as Prabowo. It must also be noted that after an early flourish the Jokowi-Kalla campaign lost steam midway in the face of a well organized onslaught from the rival coalition. So much so that Jokowi could not exploit the biggest weaknesses of the Prabowo coalition, namely, the numerous allegations of corruption and misconduct as part of the old elite group. Now, it must be noted that television has an overwhelming reach in Indonesian over other modes of communication such as social media or print media. There also, Subianto outshone Jokowi. The effect of this poor show was that the middle class, the primary consumer of television in Indonesia who were previously earnestly in support of Jokowi started to question his ability to deliver and started being swayed by the claims of Prabowo camp that he will be a mere puppet for Megawati. Moreover, Gerindra tried, somewhat successfully, to ride the bandwagon of anti-corruption campaigning by introducing a policy of absolute intolerance towards corruption in party. As a result, the economist of June 21st, 2014 reports that Jokowi camp was astonished by the middle of June at the pace at which Prabowo was bridging the gap between him and Jokowi in the polls conducted to gauge their electability. The same article also shed light on the conspicuous silence in the Jokowi camp during the targeted smear campaign that was launched by Rattled, Jokowi and Kalla finally had to let go of the kid gloves during the last presidential election debate where issues of corruption came up in a striking fashion. However, it may be, according to lowieinterpreter, too little, too late.

However, Prabowo Subianto's camp was not as in order as it seemed. It is true that he had received support from most of major parties in the DPR and also the majority of electoral funds. Still, the almost universal appeal of Jokowi and a feeling in Indonesia that he would win this election led to discontent among parties who have joined the Gerindra coalition. David Adam Stott has shown how Golkar was divided on the issue of supporting the two candidates and how the exclusion of its ex-chairman Hatta would affect the coalition. It is almost certain that despite clear instructions to support Prabowo, a section of Golkar's ground level cadre remained sympathetic to Hatta. Moreover, the coalition was troubled by

allegations of destruction of environment and human life during the course of resource extraction from Bakrie Group, owned by Golkar's present chairman Aburizal Bakrie. Islamic organizations such as Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah provided their support to Prabowo. Due to their extensive grassroots level organizational strength, both these organizations are extremely useful allies. But, Nahdatul Ulama's support for Prabowo was not unqualified. A large section of the organization is loyal to Amein Reis, who was the ex-president of the organization and a principal leader of the PAN party. Also, it must be noted that some of the Islamic parties were doubtful about Prabowo's credentials as a devout Muslim. The fact that Prabowo's mother was Christian and his tycoon brother is a devout Christian made it difficult for the Prabowo camp to allege that Jokowi is in fact, a 'closet Christian'.²⁵ The question of supporting Prabowo divided one such Islamic party, PKS so much that their leader, Suryadharma, was almost expelled in a referendum.

Both Jokowi and Prabowo presented their vision for Indonesia's future during their campaign and also presented a detailed document to the Indonesian electoral authority. A study of the documents presents a good overview of their mindset and also their obvious differences. Jokowi's document is named 'Nine Point Plan' and it entails the following:

1. Increasing salaries and efficiency of the army and the civil servants.
2. Rp. 1.4 billion aid to every village. Civil servants will be recruited from villages.
3. Rp. 1 million to the poor families every month, if the economy grows at more than 7%.
4. Land ownership to 4.5 million families. Improved irrigation.
5. Revitalizing 5000 traditional markets.
6. Creation of 10 million new jobs in 5 years. Rp. 10 million annual aid to cooperatives. Expansion of digital and creative industries.
7. Improvement of health sector. 'Healthy Indonesian Card' for Indonesians for free treatment. Establishment of 6000 community health centers.
8. Improvement of the quality of the 'Pesantren', i.e. the Islamic boarding schools.
9. Education for all Indonesians. Better welfare

and benefits for teachers.²⁶

The program Prabowo submitted was called, 'Concrete agenda and program to save Indonesia'. It is similar to that of Jokowi's in many ways as it also promises betterment of agriculture, better irrigation (a promise added later on after Jokowi quipped that Prabowo has promised to develop agricultural land without thought for irrigation facilities). However, Prabowo's plan is more detailed and pragmatic when it comes to planning for industrial and business development. Prabowo has emphasized establishment of processing industries, has promised to develop more labor intensive industries keeping in mind Indonesia's huge population. He also promised to develop downstream industries related to bauxite, iron ore etc. as most of Indonesia's labor force is still in the unorganized sector.²⁷

If we analyze these two programs, a few things become apparent. Firstly, it seems that Jokowi is more connected with the common people and his vision is an acknowledgement of their demands. Prabowo's plan, on the other hand, was more business and industry oriented. He had more sound thoughts about utilizing Indonesia's workforce. Jokowi is clearly a man who believes in social empowerment more than Prabowo. His thoughts on human development are more precise and limited in character, therefore more likely to succeed. Prabowo perhaps had better plans for industry and business but we must remember that his staunch anti foreign capital outlook would have made it mightily difficult for him to deliver what he had promised. The market-friendly Widodo had a definite edge here.

Jokowi has won this difficult battle with a comfortable margin in the end. The Election Commission, KPU declared its official result on July 22nd and declared Jokowi the winner by a margin of 8.5 million. He received 53.15% of the votes polled.²⁸ Despite this, the task before him, as is apparent from the discussion above, is not easy. The losing candidate, Subianto, has decided to challenge the result in the Constitutional Court. The Court will give its verdict by August 21. Although it looks like a ploy to waste time and save some face as the Court is unlikely to give a verdict against KPU. Despite this, the challenges facing Jokowi would be numerous. He will face a hostile parliament with his opposition parties in majority. His predecessor, SBY could not tame the parliament despite having a much more favorable equation of allies. It will be

much tougher for Widodo. Considering the serious challenges Jokowi will face, Marcus Mietzner has commented that “He will not be the messiah some people have made him out to be”.²⁹ He has to balance his pro-poor economic views with the sound macro-economic solutions for the Indonesian economy and the market. One primary example of this balancing act is the issue of \$ 20 billion annual fuel subsidies that he will have to face. The hopeful investors are beginning to return to the market and the currency is doing well after his victory. However, mismanagement and the pressure to deliver on the pro-poor policies may again disturb the situation. The key here is to maintain a fine balance. As far as foreign policy is concerned, he will have to strike a balance here between China and ASEAN, especially in the light of the lodging of Indonesia’s first official claim over the South China Sea region in March, 2014.³⁰ An upgrading of the Indonesian military is also long overdue. It will also be important to build a strong relationship with Australia since that will help as a counterweight against any aggressive Chinese position. The experience of Jusuf Kalla, the Vice President will be vital here as he has proven conflict resolution capabilities. There will be some disappointment with Jokowi, of course, since the expectations from him are unrealistically high. He will also face problems from his own party and its matriarch, Megawati. His coalition partners, not all of them are as clean or as forward-looking as himself, may give him a hard time over necessary reforms. But, with immense support behind him and a historic mandate, there is a good chance that he will prove to be one of Indonesia’s greatest presidents who will usher in a new era of democracy and transparency.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21584032-rise-economic-nationalism-compounds-broader-worries-about-south-east-asias-giant-slipping>. (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
2. Sunny Tanuwidjaja, “Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam’s Political Decline”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 32:1, (April 2010), p 31.
3. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/07/us-indonesia-election-jokowi-idUSKBN0FC0VV20140707> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
4. David Adam Stott, “Indonesia’s Elections of 2014: Democratic Consolidation or Reversal?” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 12:10:2, (March, 2014.). Accessed from http://www.japanfocus.org/-David_Adam-Stott/4087 (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
5. Stein Kristiansen and Muhid Ramli, “Buying an Income: The Market for Civil Service Positions in Indonesia” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 28:2, (August 2006), p. 219.
6. World Bank Report 2003, p21, (cited in Kristiansen and Ramli, 2006).
7. Nicholas Newman, “Indonesia: Telling Lies”, *World Policy Journal*, 28: 82 (2011), (accessed from <http://wpj.sagepub.com/content/28/4/82>.)
8. Kristiansen and Ramli, 2006, p. 227.
9. Newman, 2011, p. 88.
10. Marcus Mietzner, “Party Financing in Post-Soeharto Indonesia: Between State Subsidies and Political Corruption”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29:2, (August 2007), p. 246.
11. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/18/us-indonesia-graftbusters-specialreport-idUSBRE9AG00V20131118> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
12. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/24/gecko-vs-crocodile039-2009.html>
13. David Adam Stott, 2014.
14. Verena Beittinger-Lee, (Un)Civil Society and political Change in Indonesia a contested arena, (Abingdon: USA, Routledge, 2009), P 11.
15. *Ibid*, p. 14.
16. <http://www.insideindonesia.org/weekly-articles/putting-the-para-military-back-into-politics>
17. *Ibid*.
18. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/opinion/columnists/man-who-might-be-president/story-e6frg76f-1226834155477> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
19. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/06/wooning-indonesia-with-strongman-style-2014610113335808351.html> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
20. *Ibid*.
22. <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2014/07/07/Indonesian-election-jokowi-scores-debate.aspx?COLLCC=2125962782&COLLCC=3920876798> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
23. *Ibid*.
24. <http://time.com/38205/indonesia-india-jokowi-modi-wont-solve-problems/> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
25. <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/07/09/uneasy-alliance-prabowo-and-the-islamic-parties/> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
26. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/07/04/jokowi-pushes-9-point-plan.html> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)

- 2nd May, 2014)
27. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/05/22/job-creation-core-prabowo-hatta-programs.html>
 28. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/25/us-indonesia-election-challenge-idUSKBN0FU1JJ20140725> (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)
 29. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28397552>
 30. www.aspistrategist.org.au/jokowi-and-the-defence-realm/ (accessed on 2nd May, 2014)

Identity Question in Bangladesh: Implications for West Bengal

Siddhartha Dasgupta*

ABSTRACT

The relevance of Bangladesh in the shaping the contours of security of the region has been significant. The country's geographic location makes it an important factor in the region. On Bangladesh's western border is situated the Indian state of West Bengal. The article will focus on the importance of identity politics in Bangladesh and its effect on the geographically adjacent Indian state of West Bengal. Bangladesh poses a strange problem or riddle to the whole adjoining region including India. The country has the potential to be an engine of growth and development for the whole region. However, at the same time, it poses some serious questions to the policy makers and academics.

While on one hand, large-scale diplomatic efforts are underway to integrate it into a larger business and commercial matrix consisting of neighbouring region and countries through formation of various regional and sub-regional organisations, on the other hand, the country is trying to shed its historical baggage of underdevelopment, faltering and weak democratic traditions to be partner in the above mentioned trade and economic initiatives. This tussle signifies and describes contemporary Bangladesh polity. The nature of socio-political and economic trajectory the country shall follow, will have a deep impact on the linguistically similar province of West Bengal in India.

Keywords: Bangladesh, West Bengal, Identity.

Germane to understanding the domestic polity of the country is to understand the underpinning on which rigid group mobilization takes place. Subsequently, it creates impact beyond its border. The focus hitherto regarding this angle has been on the quantitative dimension of illegal migration to India through West Bengal. However, equally important has been the spread of ideas and ideology which has not been dealt adequately with. Change of demography across the border through illegal immigration brings perceptions and ideas which subsequently brings substantial socio-political and economic change in the host country.

The historical baggage referred to above has mainly been the constant friction between different types of nationalism based on divergent group identities.¹ Independent Bangladesh has witnessed tussle within, what may be loosely branded as the parameters of binary system nationalism. This culture of nationalism based friction has its roots in history. So a short overview of history is essential to understand the dynamics of nationalism driven politics of contemporary Bangladesh.

The geographical area that constitutes Bangladesh

today has historically demonstrated tendencies to create ferment against rulers both at the local as well as the central level. Sustained battle of attrition of the Baro Bhuiyans against the Mughals is one such instance. In comparison, the society and polity of the landscape which constitutes West Bengal today has relatively been more in conformity to the administrative and strategic vision of the rulers.

This element of assertion among the people of eastern part of Bengal was visible subsequently during the anti-British struggles and also after 1947 in the anti-West Pakistani movements which culminated in the birth of a new nation in the form of Bangladesh in 1971.

Identity has been the ideological mainstay in this historical sojourn. It has provided the ideational power to consolidate and mobilize group identity in order to bargain against the concerned opponent of the time. However, this concept of identity has not been one-dimensional. It has been formed over time by maneuvering within and among various social groups and has been conditioned by the existing environment.

Taking a few steps back in history would help us

* Assistant Professor, S.A. Jaipuria College, Kolkata.

to substantiate this lingering phenomenon.

In 1947, East Pakistan, covering an area of 54,501 square miles, was carved out of the province of Bengal and a small portion of Assam and was incorporated into Pakistan. The basic rationale behind the desire to join Pakistan- at Independence, so far as the Bengali Muslims were concerned, was the idea of getting protection from their more educated and advanced Hindu brethren. This motive was, however, couched in an exclusivist Islamic identity that was gradually given a political form to garner more support. At the same time, it should be noted that the idea of a separate state of Bengal had been mooted even before Independence and had attracted leaders as diverse in political opinion as Fazlul Huq, Sisir Bose and a few others. This was an expression of the ethno-cultural-linguistic Bengali nationalism that was the underpinning of politics in undivided Bengal. But, this effort proved futile in face of religious stridency.

However, the interface between the Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan and the rulers from West Pakistan gradually turned tenuous. The socio-political and economic landscape of East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 saw the friction of the two above stated separate strands of thought and mindsets emanating from two distinct groups of people but belonging to the same country and religion. In this tussle, the dominant mindset represented by the ruling hierarchy of the West Pakistan elite gradually marginalized the voices of the people of East Pakistan. This was a conflict between the Bengali (cultural-ethnic-linguistic) identity and the Pakistani (religious) identity, a breach which the common religious link (Islamic bond) could not restore.

It suffices to suggest that identity based nationalism has been the driving force of history in the geographical arena what constitutes Bangladesh today since the pre-partition days of 1947.

The emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 was in a way, a rare phenomenon, for it was a country to emerge out of a successful national liberation movement waged against perceived internal colonialism in the new state of which it became part only twenty five years ago. It was a watershed in the annals of South Asian history. Also it was the first nation-state to emerge successfully through the arduous process of liberation against a much more powerful post-colonial state.²

Identity formation and nationalism has been ideological forces in engendering the birth of

Bangladesh. Identity politics has a close relation with nationalism. It is a vital stepping stone in the formation of a particular brand of nationalism. Engendering of group identity based on any marker instills a sense of cohesion, bonding and companionship which is essential for the emergence of nationalism. Suffice to say that identity based politics is indispensable in the formation of nationalism. Bangladesh has been a classic case of this organic relationship.

The creation of Bangladesh saw the emergence of yet another identity-the Bangladeshi identity which harps on the territorial exclusivity of Bangladesh overriding the ethno-cultural and linguistic legacy of its people. Today the political and social space in independent Bangladesh witnesses the tussle between this territory based Bangladeshi identity and the cultural-ethnic-linguistic Bengali identity. Post-Pakistan Bangladesh is trying to fulfill its original goal of providing a prosperous state and civil society but is being pulled back, among other things, by religious fundamentalism and obscurantism, weak political institutions and an increasingly intolerant society. Interestingly, in most of these phenomena, this latent Bangladeshi-Bengali dichotomy is manifested. The re-emergence of Islam as an explicit socio-political instrument since mid-1970s has added new dimensions to this dichotomy. Islam presently tries to mobilize and steer the politics in favour of the territory based Bangladeshi identity by trying to wean away support from Bengali identity in the name of Islam. These divisions are not compartmentalized and crossing over and jockeying of activists from one ideological position to another is not uncommon.

The minorities, especially the Hindus have tried to protect their socio-political and religious space by adopting policies ranging from total submission to limited bargaining. The Hindus in Bangladesh have never been able to strengthen their position irrespective of the regimes from 1947 onwards. Deep suspicion of the Hindus and minorities in general has been a salient feature of Bangladesh politics and society even today.

In light of the above discussion, certain pertinent questions can be raised which.

- i. How does the Bengali, Bangladeshi and Islamic identities shape nationalism in contemporary Bangladesh. Does the beginning of a continuing democratic era signal the decline of religion based identity or it has

become stronger under the garb of democratic dispensations.

- ii. What is the impact of multiple identities on Bangladeshi politics as well as on its larger neighbor, especially in the linguistically similar Indian state of West Bengal. Will a democratic Bangladesh nurture multiple identities or will there be a merging of various identities into a homogeneous exclusivist and dominant Bangladeshi nationalist identity. Equally important is the exploration of the issue as to what extent do the successive democratic governments fuel and use these trends. What is the condition of the minority communities under the democratic rule. Has the sense of insecurity prevalent during the authoritarian regimes subsided or does the process of creation of the exclusivist identity at the cost of the minorities still persist. How can one account for the steady out migration of the Hindus from Bangladesh to India in search of security even after 1991.

A short mention of the nature of nationalisms in play Bangladesh polity may help us to answer the questions.

- i) Bengali, Bangladeshi and Islamic identities have separate ideological bases

Bengali identity has its underpinning in the secular socio-cultural and political ethos perceived to have originated from India's composite identity since the British era. It is based on ethno-cultural and linguistic tradition spanning the entire Bengali speaking community residing all over the world including West Bengal in India.

The Bangladeshi identity draws its ideological succour from a territory based view-point. It considers its brand of nationalism to be based on the people living only within the territorial precincts of modern Bangladesh. By implication, it tries to exclude the Bengali speaking people residing outside the territory of Bangladesh from its ideological ambit. Its ideological sustenance is based on the exclusivity of the people living in Bangladesh only.

The Islamic identity is based on the urge to create a polity and society which would conform to Islamic ways of life. However, there exists an interesting relationship between the three identities.

The Islamic identity acts as a fulcrum between the Bengali and Bangladeshi identities. The agenda setting

and drawing of broad parameters within which politics in the country would revolve is done by the votaries of the Islamic identity though this trend may not be reflected in electoral results. The Islamic identity, despite various pretensions actually tries to create an Islam-pasand socio-political context and construct a 'social-hegemony' which would ultimately provide ideological fillip to the territory based Bangladeshi identity. Bangladeshi identity uses the Islamic identity to appeal to the religious sentiment of the majority people in order to get more acceptance and to consciously construct a territorial Bangladeshi identity totally delinked from the Bengali speaking Hindus of West Bengal. The exclusivist Bangladeshi identity, has attempted to link itself consciously or unconsciously, with the hard core Sunni identity which is thought to have originated in Pakistan. Even the Bengali identity votaries have sought consciously to operate within the parameters set up by the religious groups. Experience has proved that not abiding by these unwritten broad parameters have resulted in poor electoral performance for parties like the Awami League.³ One may readily refer to the joint movement of Awami League and Jamaat e Islami against the BNP government during the mid 1990s.

Secular movements like the Shahbag movement and the activism of the judiciary in trying the war criminals of 1971 may have pushed back the rightist Islamic forces temporarily. However, the expansive network of those organisations embedded in society are relatively intact and unharmed.

Parties and social organizations with Islamic ideological moorings wield socio-political power which is disproportionately higher than their organizational strength.

Though these parties and organizations have failed to achieve a major share of electoral success, they have always enjoyed a captive vote share which have helped them to emerge as political brokers during times of instability. This phenomenon has more manifested in rural Bangladesh. Traditional tools of Islam like 'Fatwa' and 'Salishi' and other coercive actions against women groups and non-governmental organizations are used to keep a tight control over the rural populace. The weak penetration of governance facilitates this process. This type of scenario indicates the presence of a society where the 'rules of the game' are laid down by religious organizations despite presence of both centrist and leftist parties who claim to be secular. It also points

out the limitations of real secular politics in Bangladesh. Repeated and prolonged clashes of these forces (especially the student wing of Jamaat, the Chatra Shibir) with the government machinery and the volume of destruction of property and loss of life in 2012-2013 is testimony to the continuing salience and capabilities of these forces.

Throughout history, the rulers have invariably tried to use Islam as an instrument of legitimising power. However, he opines that the mass have generally tried to imbibe and inculcate religious feeling with all sincerity. Thus, the rulers have tried to exploit this very religiosity of the masses and fanned religious fundamentalism for their own needs. This phenomenon is evident to a certain extent in Bangladesh also.

Now, the natural question arises is why do they wield this disproportionate amount of social hold.

Historically, the Bangladesh society has been deeply religious without being fundamentalist.⁴ This premise is itself an important factor in the identity formation within the country. This dilemma creates adequate space for aggressive maneuvering by votaries of Islamic identity. Additional pretext conducive for such measures is the incidence of endemic poverty within the country and presence of a strong perception of a Hindu dominated India as neighbour. This accounts for the soft posturing of the so called secular political and social forces in Bangladesh towards religion. One may recall that Mujib's failure to govern ably can be attributed to his failure to identify this religious nature of Bangladesh society. His construction of secularism was not in conformity with religious ethos of Bangladesh. Thus, in Bangladesh, policies have to be in conformity with this factor of religiosity. The increasing global linkages between Islamic organizations have only accentuated this phenomenon. External organizations try to use this religion friendly atmosphere in Bangladesh for furtherance of their agenda. Additionally, situated in an unenviable geo-strategic location surrounded by a 'Hindu' India on three sides and the Bay of Bengal on the other, Bangladesh imperatively needed a concept which would link it with the Islamic heartland of West Asia. Islam has been an instrument in Bangladesh with which the people try to integrate themselves with the Islamic world community or 'Ummah'. This linkage apart from giving Bangladesh a psychological fillip, is also being used as a two-way conduit for the radical elements of Islam in context of the increasing assertion of Islamic identity.

These elements have been in Bangladesh for long but now have become active in the changed global scenario. Muslim persecution elsewhere has always been sought to be used organizations as mobilisational tools in Bangladesh. The use of anti-Indian rhetoric in the political discourse of Bangladesh has to be observed in this context.

Without going into the well covered and documented history of the role of Islam in Bangladeshi nation building, one can say that Bangladesh society has entered an era where the bargaining power of the groups professing and trying to build the nation on the ideals of Islam, has increased disproportionately. This fact should not and cannot be represented by the relatively smaller number of seats that they win in the electoral process. Similarly with trends worldwide, the power to create trouble or simply mobilise people at the grassroots level for an organisation showing fundamentalist tendencies is much higher than what is reflected in the democratic process. This tendency gains momentum in an environment of what may be called "benign communalism". It signifies that a significant part of the society harbours a silent ill will towards persons of minority religious denominations for reasons not necessarily solely economic. This ill will is fed, nurtured and tapped by the fundamentalist groups at opportune times which then manifests in minority persecution. Attempts being made to co-opt the peripheral groups into the national mainstream are limited and perfunctory. Interestingly, even the supporters of Bengali nationalism (based on a liberal outlook and claiming to represent the religious and ethnic minorities of the country) have also repeatedly sacrificed minority interests in order to play by the rules set by the Islamic identity. A natural consequence of this situation has been the marginalisation of minority communities is a constant feature of Bangladesh's socio-political and economic life.⁵ Former National Security Advisor of India M. K. Narayanan had made certain realistic observations regarding this exclusivist trend in Bangladesh way back in 2001.⁶

Additionally, the weak and fledgling democratic institutions and culture is not strong enough to empower the marginalized communities. Endemic political violence, pathological hatred for political opponents and leaders, lack of normal communication, constructive criticism and dialogue between parties, disregard for rule of law, violation of human rights, use of brutal force to restore law and order after allowing it to spiral out of control, willful disregard and neglect of the national legislature (Jatiya Sansad)

and other representative organizations have only created a void in governance which inhibits constructive engagement among heterogeneous groups. Dysfunctional democratic institutions has given rise to an intolerant atmosphere which is marked by mistrust, violence and lack of communication among the various stakeholders concerned with the decision making and policy making of the country. Barring a first few years after independence, till 1991, the country has been under authoritarian rule, either directly under military dispensation or indirectly controlled by the barracks through propped up party rule. To be candid, even the Awami League rule under Sheikh Mujib, soon after independence in 1971 till August 1975 had trappings of authoritarianism. Such tendencies were manifested through measures like muzzling of press and opposition and creation of template of a single front government like Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL).⁷ After 1991, the tenures have been generally alternatively filed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League (AL) stewarded by Sheikh Hasina. Even, the present regime of Sheikh Hasina of Awami League have been accused of coming to power through unfair means in the last general elections. Thus, an overall 'illiberal' form of democracy or direct military rule have created and accentuated the trend of majoritarianism.

ii) In view of the above short analysis, we now need to gauge the security implications that the domestic political vicissitudes of Bangladesh have on the adjoining region beyond its border.

Despite the presence of an international border, the continued links between the peoples of Bangladesh and her neighbours has become a suitable vehicle for Bangladesh to influence her surroundings. Ensnared in close proximity to the Indian state of West Bengal, both the geographical entities share remarkable linguistic and cultural similarities.

The link between the issue of evolution of nationalism in Bangladesh and that of its effect on West Bengal is quite intimate. In Bangladesh, whenever smaller identities have become marginalised, they have tried to look for succour towards their kinsmen living in neighbouring countries, thus affecting the existing equilibrium in those areas. The issue of cross border irritants ranging from illegal immigration to insurgency has to be seen in this theoretical framework. This irredentist urge of the Hindu minority has not got adequate focus yet in the concerned academic

discourse.

Moreover, it has been seen that any policy decision of the Indian government towards Bangladesh, even if normal, creates an extraordinary amount of debate in both the public and private spheres of life in Bangladesh. Similarly, incidents happening in India where Bangladeshi concerns are involved even remotely, appear to create a disproportionate amount of reaction in Bangladesh. It has been noticed, that during such situations of flux, the linkages between the internal dynamics of Bangladesh and that of West Bengal grows stronger in the form of deepened and frequent interaction between various non-state actors on both sides of the border.

The process of marginalisation and persecution of groups create various socio-economic and political problems for Bangladesh's immediate linguistically similar neighbour in the west. Moreover, unstable Bangladesh could pose a threat to West Bengal. The dynamics of identity based politics manifested through divergent narratives of nationalisms in Bangladesh has its effects on the polity of West Bengal. The civil society of West Bengal has since independence, been one of the most secular in India. It has been seen that despite being subjected to Partition in 1947 like Punjab, West Bengal has developed a polity where there has been remarkable restraint in the political use of religion. This dynamic can be termed as exceptional when seen in the context of post-Partition Punjab and other North Indian states. A sizeable section of the present national leadership of parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has their social origin in the mass of Hindu refugees who crossed over from Pakistan to North India in 1947. However, in West Bengal, interestingly, the leadership which emerged from the Hindu refugees crossing over from East Pakistan was actually instrumental in developing a secular socio-political environment in the state. However, this situation is undergoing a change which shall be mentioned later.

A study of the impact of nationalism and multiple identities in Bangladesh on West Bengal is of utmost importance in view of the prevailing socio-economic and political realities in not only West Bengal but also in the whole of eastern India, and if stretched a bit far, this issue has far-reaching security implications for India as a whole. For example, the problem of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh is not only an issue in West Bengal. It has become a central issue in present Indo-Bangladesh ties. The

response of the Government of India to the problem is not on behalf of the state of West Bengal only. The response is that of the whole Indian state which underscores the growing national dimension of the problem. According to a report of Population Studies Unit of the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata titled 'Undocumented Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal', 'household industry including bidi, pottery, mat, candle, kanthastitch, ganjee factory, and Shantipuri tant (woven saree) have improved since illegal migrants provide cheap labour'. But this constructive outcome has been overshadowed by the detrimental effect that mass illegal immigration has on West Bengal. They include deforestation, landgrab, trade grab, squatting on pavements and railway platforms, added pressure on natural resources, and expansion of existing slums.⁸

Another facet which mostly goes unattended is the problem of backlash to these problems in the affected regions outside Bangladesh. The domiciled populaces of these regions may react to the changed socio-economic and political environment resulting from the influx of huge number of illegal immigrants. The West Bengal state President of the BJP, Tathagata Roy has referred to a report by the Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai which states that the Muslim population in West Bengal's Murshidabad district has increased by 55 % in 1951 to 61% in 1991; in Malda district, it increased from 36% to 47%.⁹ Even if we take the political context of the statement, the situation is surely alarming. For example, areas like Domkal, Beldanga, Lalgola and even urban areas like Behrampur, Murshidabad have shown a steady rise in the number of 'outsiders'.

The majority of them being Muslims, adds a communal angle to the conundrum.¹⁰ One has to see the silent yet steady rise in the organisational strength of Hindu rightwing organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bajrang Dal (BD) in some areas of the border of West Bengal in this context. Apart from these organisations, formations like the Banga Sena and Bangladesh Udbastu Unnayan Parishad are also active in the border areas. Interestingly, in response to India's accusation of harbouring militants, Bangladesh government accuses India of harbouring leaders of Banga Sena and other organisations like Kalidas Baidya and Chittaranjan Sutar.¹¹ Banga Sena and other organizations have despite many odds maintained an infrastructure to help out the new Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh. Interestingly, Kalidas Baidya and Banga Sena have

been branded as anti-national elements by the Bangladesh government. They have offices in Kolkata and in some border districts of West Bengal. Though impossible to materialize, the Banga Sena held a convention in Jalpaiguri in 2003 and demanded the creation of a 'homeland' for the persecuted Hindus of Bangladesh consisting of some western districts of Bangladesh. It would suffice to say that, the Hindu illegal immigrants in West Bengal has been trying to find a foot hold and recognition in the society and will welcome any support internally or externally.

There exists a working relationship between these formations and the above mentioned Hindu rightwing organisations. The demand for the creation of a separate homeland for the Hindus in Bangladesh has been supported by the VHP.¹² Based on the growing strength of the fundamentalist Hindu organizations, the leaders of the Sangh Parivar in West Bengal are showing new found zeal and have given new stress on conversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism in different parts of the state. The growth of this network has long term security implications for the border region of West Bengal.

The increasing frequency of visit of the central level leaders of these organizations to West Bengal (hitherto unforeseen) speaks of a new focus of these organizations to harness and consolidate the frustration of the Hindus of the border areas (both immigrants and the domiciled ones) and the Hindus of the state in general in order to create a strong foothold in the state.

The result of the latest Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal has to be observed in this context. Notwithstanding the election speech of Narendra Modi of sending back the illegal immigrants after the Lok Sabha polls, the state and central level BJP leaders have sought to stress on the economic development angle in the run up to the next Vidhan Sabha elections in West Bengal in order to garner maximum political space. However, the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh is sure to become part of their political agenda in near future in West Bengal. The spectacular increase in percentage of vote share for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in West Bengal indicates towards further scope for community based polarization in the state. This fact becomes more important given the fact that the increase in percentage of vote share has been much beyond 17% in many of the constituencies bordering Bangladesh. Apart from the pro-BJP wave across India, certain West Bengal specific factors also contributed to this rise hitherto unthinkable. Reports of fundamentalist

elements of Bangladesh getting shelter in West Bengal during crackdown in Bangladesh, perception among the majority community in West Bengal of increasing assertion of fringe Islamic groups in the state and host of local grassroots issues from cow smuggling to intrusion of Bangladeshi dacoits and criminals in border areas in West Bengal has contributed to this increase in vote share.¹³ The increasing presence of the BJP and fringe Hindu revivalist forces could only accentuate this polarization process. Naturally, the presently emerging phenomenon of a certain degree of disruption of the secular strands in the society in West Bengal is a matter of concern and further analysis for academics and policy makers. A silent de-secularization may be taking place in West Bengal. It is perhaps already perceptible, especially in the border areas of the state adjacent to Bangladesh as the electoral results show and poses a long term challenge to policy makers of West Bengal.

Foremost for Bangladesh at the present moment is to solve the domestic problems peacefully for her own sake. This would automatically lessen the threat of a spillover of the internal problems of Bangladesh to India. The regimes of Bangladesh should understand that India may not be ready to face any destabilising forces which have their sources in Bangladesh. As India is the most important foreign policy determinant for Bangladesh, the latter can vitiate its relations with it only at the peril of constraining itself both politically and economically.

Additionally, the rapid changes and adjustments that come with distorted and uneven modernisation in a poor developing country with low level of democratic development and nation building, there is bound to be socio-economic changes and churning, breeding insecurity and frustration which in turn creates a tendency to renew relationship with religion. Historian Enayetur Rahim has further tried to establish a correlation between the rightist Islamic organisations led by Jamat and the growing insecurity in the Bangladeshi society. He states:

'In recent years, the Jamat has been the principal beneficiary of the rising frustration amongst the younger generations. A growing sense of hopelessness, especially among college students facing an uncertain future, has led to sizeable increases in its support on college campuses. World events have similarly influenced many to join ranks of the Islamists. Indeed, the Iranian revolution of 1979 provided a powerful impetus to many in seeking similar changes in their own conditions. Similarly,

the success of the Taleban movement in Afghanistan has equally served as a reminder of the revolutionary potential of Islam. The growing power, though not popular support, of the Jamat in recent years may be ascribed to all these factors'.¹⁴

The challenge for the Bangladesh government is to reduce the catchment area of the frustrated youth which spawns fundamentalist tendencies as eloquently stated by Rahim. As a weak state dominated by a big neighbour almost on all sides, the rise of Islamic assertion inside the country has been used by the governing elite of Bangladesh as a politico-strategic instrument to destabilise its powerful neighbour. This channelisation of internal ramifications of identity based politics outside the country may have a short time benefit for Bangladesh, though in the long run there is a great possibility of a backlash.

Complementarily, there is an urgent need to create awareness among certain informed sections of the people in West Bengal about the importance of Bangladesh as an actor in the shaping of territorial security of their own state (West Bengal). In the main intellectual discourse found in West Bengal and specifically Kolkata, Bangladesh is sometimes deliberately and quite inexplicably seen as nothing more than a reservoir of Bengali culture and an extension of West Bengal's dominant cultural landscape. This generalization, oversimplification and homogenization tends to dilute the tangible and hard effects that Bangladesh may have on West Bengal and it also undermines Bangladesh's stature as a proud independent nation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See M. Anisuzzaman, 'Identity Question and Politics' in Rounaq Jahan (ed), 'Bangladesh: Promise and Performance', (UPL: Dhaka, 2000), pp 45-63.
2. See Salahuddin Ahmed, F., Bangladesh Nationalism and the Emergence of Bangladesh, ICBS, Dhaka, 1994.
3. During an interview with Manash Ghosh of The Statesman, Kolkata, Seikh Hasina told that 'the results show that no secular party with Bengali nationalism as its creed can ever come to power. I might have to forge ties with moderate Muslim outfits like the Khilafat Andolan to take on the Islamists. Politics here has undergone a big change.' Further in the report, it is mentioned that even pro-Beijing left radicals find nothing wrong in the Jamaat's agenda of further Islamising Bangladesh because 'this is a Muslim majority country'. For full report see Manash Ghosh, Wither Bangladesh, The Statesman, Kolkata, October 26,

- 2001.
4. See Joseph T. O'Connell, *The Bengali Muslims and the State: Secularism or Humanity for Bangladesh* In Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001), pp. 179-200.
 5. See *Communal Discrimination in Bangladesh: Facts and Documents* (Bangladeshe Samprodaiyik Boishommo: Tothya O Dolil), a bi-lingual publication by the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council (Bangladesh Hindu Christian Bouddha Oikya Parishad), Dhaka, 1993. This book give detailed accounts (with paper clippings and photographs) of the anti-minority (mainly anti-Hindu) persecution carried out with official connivance at different times. It also presents the various discriminatory anti-minority acts and laws enacted by successive governments in Bangladesh.
 6. M.K. Narayanan, *Web of Deceit*, Asian Age, Kolkata, May 7, 2001.
 7. Lawrence Ziring, *Bangladesh: From Mujib to Ershad - An interpretive study*, (University Press Limited: Dhaka, 1992), pp 79-103.
 8. See article by Suhrid Sankar Chatterjee, 'Constant Traffic', *Frontline*, Chennai, (June 15, 2007), pp. 14-15.
 9. See Suhrid Chatterjee, *Frontline*, p.16.
 10. See Manas R. Banerjee, *Bangla influx gathers pace*, *The Statesman*, Kolkata, November 23, 2001.
 11. Banga Sena and other organizations have despite many odds maintained an infrastructure to help out new Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh selectively who were forced to cross over mainly due to religious persecution which continues in a silent manner even without the necessity of any major provocation like the razing of Babri Masjid. The Banga Sena has offices in Kolkata and in some border districts of West Bengal. Though impossible to materialize, the organization held a convention in Jalpaiguri in 2003 and demande the creation of a "homeland" for the persecuted Hindus consisting some western districts of Bangladesh. They even arrange protest marches on the Liberation Day of Bangladesh. For details of the visit see report 'Yen for capital, not probe', by Sunando Sarkar in the *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, April 4, 2002.
 12. In a programme attended by some Bangladeshi Hindus from Faridpur, Khulna and some other districts, the VHP passed a resolution alleging that the Hindus were being persistently persecuted in the neighbouring country since Khaleda Zia assumed power in October 2001. The resolution stated 'if the atrocities on the Hindus and the Buddhists do not stop completely then we will demand land in Bangladesh for setting up a separate homeland for all Hindus and Buddhists who are now living there and also for those who were systematically expelled since 1947.' The resolution further accused Khaleda Zia government of 'unleashing a reign of terror against the Hindus'. The VHP leadership resolved to unite all Hindus of the country and the world to stop persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh. The meeting held on December 10, 2002 was attended by West Bengal VHP president Jyotirmoy Chakraborty and General Secretary Ajoy Kr. Nandy. For details see 'VHP's discrimination charge against Dhaka', *The Asian Age*, Kolkata, December 16, 2002. Also see report on the same convention in 'BJP seeks to strike a note of sympathy', *The Times of India*, Kolkata, December 16, 2002.
 13. In a significant move, the AL MP Seikh Fazlul Karim Selim requested the West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee to ensure that no Jamaat cadres are given shelter in West Bengal. There have been accusations brought by CPI(M) state secretary Biman Bose that a Trinamul Congress MP has given shelter to these cadres. For details, see *Doinik Statesman*, Kolkata, January 23, 2014 and *Doinik Statesman*, Kolkata, February 15, 2014.
 14. See Enayetur Rahim, 'Bangladesh Muslims and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Jamaat-e-Islam in Bangladesh' in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.) *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*, (OUP: New Delhi, 2001), p. 256.

The Ukraine Crisis: A Critical Test for American Power

Urbi Das*

ABSTRACT

The Ukraine Crisis represents one of the most crucial political upheavals of the 21st century where the United States of America and the Russian Federation are engaged in a tussle that closely resembles the bipolar politics of the cold war days. Russia, which considers the erstwhile Soviet satellites as its own sphere of influence wasted no time in annexing Crimea which is economically and strategically important to it. In the face of growing Russian assertiveness, the United States of America cannot afford to sit back as a silent observer. In fact, in the event of the crisis, Ukraine became a battleground representing the clash of interest of the two powerful nations. It undoubtedly became a litmus test of American power and credibility as a super power nation.

Keywords: Ukraine crisis, Russia, United States of America, European Union, Crimea.

Introduction

The Ukraine crisis which began on the November of 2013 primarily as a domestic protest movement against the Ukraine government's denial to sign trade association agreement with the European Union, quickly colored itself with international flavor as the world witnessed the re-emergence of cold war bipolar politics between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, which emerged as the largest successor state after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The political upheaval in Ukraine also seemed to be the test of American power and credibility. After the frailties and follies that the United States of America suffered following the prolonged engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the instability that still dominates the region thereby making the loopholes in American strategic planning and perceptions visible, has put formidable challenges to American power. Hence, America which emerged as the super power dominating a unipolar international environment cannot let Ukraine, the second largest nation in Europe to fall into the ambit of Russia's influence. The tussle between the United States of America and Russia in trying to mould the Ukrainian foreign

policy to suit their respective interest, has made Ukraine's future all the more uncertain and difficult. The whole issue of Ukraine's sovereignty has been under question since the country is divided between Russian allegiance and people who are inclined towards the European Union (EU) and as the tussle continues, America as the super power finds its own way to secure its stake in the country by siding with the European Union and trying to offset Russia's influence in the region.

Though President Obama denies the cold war rhetoric in his comments during a trip to Mexico on February 19 suggesting that, 'Our approach as the United States is not to see these as some Cold War chess board in which we're in competition with Russia.'¹ And suggesting that America's goal is to ensure freedom and self-assertiveness of the people of Ukraine, however, the ground reality reveals a different story where the super power and the 'emerging power' are engaged in a tussle that closely resembles the 20th century power play with the difference being that the proxy war is now fought not in the far lands of the Asian countries, but for a greater strategic influence and dominance in an erstwhile Soviet satellite Ukraine.

* Pursuing M. Phil in American Studies Program at the Centre for Canadian, United States and Latin American Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Ukraine: Its Ambivalent Attitude

Situated at the cross roads of Europe and Asia, Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe in terms of land area. It shares its borders with Russia, Belarus, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, and Slovakia and Poland. In addition to this, the Black Sea bordering Ukraine on the Eastern side is of strategic and economic significance. Recognized by the World Bank as a low middle income country whose GDP in 2013 was 177.4 billion US dollars², Ukraine's main export includes steel, coal, fuel and petroleum products, chemicals, machinery among others and most of these exports are directed to those nations which were once a part of the Soviet Union such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus to name a few. Hence economically, Ukraine is deeply connected with the erstwhile Soviet Republics. In the sphere of foreign policy, Ukraine, since it gained independence from the Soviet Union has been torn between the West and the East. There has been a divide among those who desire to be part of the Euro-Atlantic community under the American guidance and those whose ambitions lay in being a part of Eurasia under Russia's leadership.

Such a psychological dilemma can be partly attributed to the ethnic composition of the Ukrainian population. Russian along with Ukrainian, are the two major languages spoken in this former Soviet satellite. According to the 2001 census, there are 8,334,100 Russians and Russian-speakers in Ukraine accounting for 17.3 per cent of the republic's population. Recorded in the 2001 census Russians dominate industry, administration and education in the urban areas of the east and south.³ The ambivalent attitudes of the Ukraine foreign policy are a manifestation of its societal structure. While a major section of the population is inclined towards the Russian Federation, the political elites in Ukraine are unified in their goal of joining the European Union (EU). Since 1994 Ukraine displayed the ambition of joining the European Union which became more pronounced after the Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution which lasted from November 2004 to January 2005 witnessed a tilt towards the European Union and an attempt to implement western style model of development even though Ukraine considered Russia as a strategic partner. Since the color revolution, one of the main aims of Ukraine's foreign policy was the achievement of NATO and EU membership.

The leader of the Orange Revolution Viktor Yushchenko who became Ukraine's new President in January 2005 believed that integration with the

West will supersede Russian-led integration efforts.⁴ Therefore the dilemma that Ukraine faced in balancing its foreign policy remained even after the Orange Revolution.

The democratic surge of the Orange Revolution that swept all across the country was welcomed by American President George W. Bush. President Bush couldn't but explore such an opportunity to extend a build a strong relation with the erstwhile satellite nation of the Soviet Union and bring the nation under the ambit of American led style development. Subsequently, President Bush and President Yushchenko signed a joint statement that hailed Ukraine's democratic revolution and said the two countries would work to spread freedom in the region, as well as throughout Europe and beyond, including in Belarus and Cuba. It restated the long-standing U.S. policy goal of a democratic, secure Ukraine integrated in European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.⁵ This however, was viewed by Russia with an eye of skepticism since its former 'communist brother' is strategically, culturally and politically important to Russia, which has its powerful Black Sea Fleet on the Crimean region which until recently was both an official and an actual a part of Ukrainian soil.

As evident, the identity crisis that Ukraine faces since it gained recognition as an independent sovereign nation state, has been an impediment towards its development and led to a number of political crises since its independence in August 1991.

The Present Crisis and Russia's Position

The Ukraine crisis which drew the attention of the entire world was a direct outcome of the Ukraine's then President Viktor Yanukovich decision to pull out of an association deal with the European Union. The Ukrainian crisis represents an example of a domestic problem culminating into an issue of international concern where major powers are involved in their strategic and diplomatic struggle for supremacy.

As already noted, the Black Sea is of vital significance not only to Ukraine but the Russians and the rest of Europe has a huge stake in securing the Black Sea region. The Black Sea, whose waters separate southern and Eastern Europe, is an important trade route for Europe and for long acted as a buffer from land based armies. The Crimean Peninsula which is Russian-populated, but until recently was Ukrainian-owned, juts into the middle of the Black sea,

affording whoever controls it crucial access to the Russian and Ukrainian plains. Hence Crimea forms a giant, immovable military fortress at the mouth of some of the most vital transportation routes for Ukraine. Whoever controls this “fort” controls Ukraine. Russia can interdict the Ukrainian links to the Black Sea easily from its Black Sea naval headquarters in Sevastopol, and its control over the peninsula is secure because the population of Crimea is heavily ethnically Russian and pro-Russian.⁶

Hence, the control of the Black Sea is essential for securing the control of the energy resources in the Caucasus region and Caspian Sea region. As already noted, the powerful Black Sea fleet of the Russian Federation has its base in the Crimean region. Again, the ethnic composition of the Ukrainian population has an important role to play in the ongoing crisis. The 2001 census indicated that 14.8 per cent of ethnic Ukrainians considered Russian their first language; in Crimea more than two-thirds of the population claimed Russian as its native language.⁷ Hence the Crimean population is linguistically more inclined towards Russia. Given these circumstances, the crisis that unfolded in Ukraine in the wake of the President Yanukovich’s decision to cancel the trade agreement with EU under Russian pressure, presented a clear opportunity to Putin for entrenching its ambitions in engulfing Crimea which is vital for fulfilling Russia’s international ambitions. President Yanukovich decision to revert the trade deal can be attributed to Russia’s pressure since allowing Ukraine to fall into the western influence means serious ramifications for Russia’s national interest. Ukraine by virtue of its geographical proximity, can never afford to ignore Russia. Russia is a major source of natural gas and other resources for Ukraine and several European countries. Hence ignoring Russia would mean virtual death for the Ukrainian economy since Russia is its major natural gas supplier.

As per the report of the U.S. Energy Information Administration, more than half of the country’s primary energy supply comes from its uranium and coal resources, although natural gas also plays an important role in its energy mix. Ukraine consumed approximately 1.8 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas in 2012, with domestic production accounting for approximately 37% of the total at 694 billion cubic feet (Bcf). The remainder of supply is made up by Russian natural gas, imported through the Bratstvo and Soyuz pipelines.⁸

Again given that Russia is highly protectionist and

any trade alliance between Ukraine and the European Union would threaten the prospect of Russian businesses. Hence Putin’s aversion towards the Trade association Agreement between EU and Ukraine was natural. The decision of the then President Yanukovich to drop out of the trade association invited nothing short of demonstrations in Kiev by protestors seeking to align their future with Europe and speaking out against corruption, ultimately leading to Yanukovich government’s downfall.

As political instability intensified in Ukraine, with southern and eastern Ukraine being the most worst-hit, Russian President Vladimir Putin lost no opportunity in annexing Crimea by citing its concern over the security and sentiments of the Russian speaking population in Crimea. This was a dramatic move on the part of the Soviet successor nation, recalling the pride and influence of the Soviet days where it stood high-headed as the one and the only challenge to American power. On March 21, 2014 President Vladimir Putin completed the annexation of Crimea, signing the peninsula into Russia at nearly the same time his Ukrainian counterpart sealed a deal pulling his country closer into Europe’s orbit. Putin hailed the incorporation of Crimea into Russia as a ‘remarkable event’⁹

Amidst the political crisis and instability, Petro Poroshenko is sworn in as Russia’s new President and the country moves closer to western influence. As a superpower the United States of America echoed EU’s concern in its bid to curb Russia’s hegemonic attitude in the Eurasian region which Russia considers as its own sphere of influence. For its part Russia has never given up its ambitions in the Eurasian region and the present actions are nothing but a reflection of this harsh reality.

America’s Repercussion and its stake in Ukraine

Following the independence of Ukraine from the Soviet Union, the United States of America established diplomatic relations with the country in 1991 and pledged to assist in Ukraine transition into a democratic capitalist market economy.

Ukraine by virtue of its strategic location is important to the European Union and hence America too has a vital interest in protecting the economic development, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation, and ensuring the country’s integration into the Euro-Atlantic community.

As such there are extensive trade and economic ties with Ukraine being the United States’ 61st largest

goods export market in 2012. On the other hand, Ukraine was the United States' 75th largest supplier of goods imports in 2012.¹⁰ Ukraine's main exports to the United States include iron and steel, inorganic chemicals, oil among others while coal, machinery, vehicles are few of the products that are imported from America.

Given these linkages, when Russia annexed Crimea and intervened in the Ukrainian crisis to secure its national interest and political ambitions, the super power and the leader of the capitalist world economy cannot but resent it with serious consequences. As the leader of the free world and 'the city upon the hill', America pledges to protect the interest of free people across the world. American President Barack Obama retaliated by issuing warnings that there would be serious 'costs' to any Russian military intervention in Ukraine.¹¹

According to U.S. officials, Russia's actions are in breach of international law, including the provision of non intervention in the United Nations Charter. Again the 1997 Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and Ukraine requires Russia to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. Hence Russia can be held responsible for not only violating the provisions of international law but also the clauses of bilateral agreements.

Again, 1994 Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances¹² signed by Ukraine, the United States, Britain and Russia, which pledges to protect Ukraine's territory and sovereignty have been violated by Russia.

In the wake of the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, Washington acted by imposing sanctions on Russia, freezing the assets of some high ranking officials in Russia and suspending some of its bilateral cooperation. Some instances of Washington's repercussions can be noted as follows :

On March 6, the Administration issued an Executive Order imposing visa bans and asset freezes against persons who 'undermine democratic processes and institutions in Ukraine; threaten its peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity; and contribute to the misappropriation of its assets...' On March 17, the Administration announced visa bans and asset freezes against several senior figures from Russia and the secessionist Crimean government. On March 16 and 20, after Russia moved to annex

Crimea, the Administration issued two additional Executive Orders expanding the scope of sanctions.¹³

Hence, sanctions formed an essential part of the America's policy in condemning Putin's actions in Ukraine. Sanction was also imposed on Bank Rossiya for its involvement in the political instability.

Apart from this, U.S. aid has been an important instrument of trying to restore peace in the region. Aid forms an important instrument of U.S. soft power and the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) has been providing a substantial amount of economic aid since its recognition as a sovereign nation state.

According to the USAID 'Green book' website, the United States obligated over \$4 billion in aid to Ukraine from FY1990 through FY2012. According to other State Department figures, the United States allocated \$92.391 million in aid for Ukraine in FY2013 and \$86.125 million in FY2014.¹⁴

The aid provided were in terms of economic, military and energy aimed at bringing stability and democratic development of the country and also offsetting Russia's influence.

An important point to note is that despite America's repeated warnings and sanctions, Russian ambitions in annexing and incorporating Crimea into its own territorial limits remained unmoved. The Black sea region which is a strategically vital area is now under Russian influence. Russia did to hesitate to fulfill its goal in the wake of either EU or American sanctions. This brings into question the utility or the fruitfulness of sanctions in the globalized world order when all the nations are in some way or the other linked to each other. It can be argued that imposing sanction in one country can invite negative consequences or disadvantages not only to the sanctioned nation but also the country imposing the sanction since it limits the scope of bilateral engagement and the fruits of inter linkage between two nations.

Conclusion: What does the Crisis hold for American Power?

The Ukraine Crisis brings into question the credibility and the role of a superpower in reducing or addressing a crisis. Notwithstanding the various efforts that American and the European Union undertook, the crisis reflected America's failure in blocking Russia's annexation of Crimea. Intervention

as a foreign policy option is a far cry and is least feasible in the current political upheaval. After the lessons that American policy makers and strategists have learned following the prolonged engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, it can be argued that America's military capability may not match its political will. In case of the Ukraine crisis, the United States could do nothing more than implementing a series of sanctions on Russia which ultimately proved futile in checking Russia's ambitions.

It has now been argued that America is a super power in decline and no longer holds the same command and power that it had when it emerged as the super power dominating a unipolar world structure. The neo liberal world order that it created to suit its national interest undoubtedly made America the leader of the capitalist world economy but the downfall of American power that started with the great depression of 2008 and subsequently the loopholes in devising a sound 'exit strategy' from Iraq and Afghanistan has added to the already existing burdens of President Obama. While the Middle East is still in crisis and though the Obama administration did gain from its ultimate abandonment of Syrian Chemical weapons, Russia played the role of an excellent and credible negotiator.

The question here is not limited to how much important Ukraine as a country is to the United States of America, but what can a nation like the United States of America which calls itself the 'leader on the world's stage' do to offset a condition that might prove to be detrimental to U.S. credibility and question its super power status.

The world today has witnessed the rise of regional power houses where nations like the People's Republic of China, Russia, and India cannot be ignored. Globalization has made the world integrally inter connected where occurrences in one part of the globe have ramifications worldwide. Hence, even though President Obama believes that America is destined to rule the world and that 'if we don't, no one else will'¹⁶, the Americans today are no longer the one and only mastermind in shaping international politics. China's muscle flexing in the Asia Pacific region and Russia's emerging challenge in the Eurasian region serious causes the call for a new dimension and strategic thinking in American foreign policy.

It's also a clear demonstration of two powerful nations trying to gain from the instability raging in the

country. The battle here has a flavor that reminds the world of the bipolar politics of the cold war days. It can be argued that the cold war mentality is still dominating international relations. However, the politics is now not limited to stockpiling of nuclear arsenals and the struggle is not dominated by ideological inclinations. The 21st century is a different world where the weapons of the game are innovative and dynamic, encouraging the players to find new ways to gain strategic, economic and diplomatic advantage over one another.

Today, it is not only about hard power but also soft power that can make a nation strong and unveil its power among its neighbors. Such a dimension of foreign policy building has been reiterated by President Obama in his remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, on May 28, 2014 when he said, 'U.S. military action cannot be the only – or even primary – component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail'¹⁷, suggesting the growing significance of soft power and smart power over hard power.

The Ukrainian crisis which can be regarded as one of the most serious crises in the wake of the 21st century, has emerged as the battle ground of the present century, where Russia and the United States are engaged in a tug of war, both pulling hard to bring the country into their respective sphere of influence. It is a clash where Russia's plan of a Eurasian Union is confronted with the Euro-Atlantic structures. In this war of pride and supremacy, Russia is slowly climbing up the ladder of influence. Undoubtedly, the crisis represented a litmus test for American power. In the present century where the Obama administration has vowed to rebalance itself to the Asia Pacific nations, the Ukrainian crisis posed a serious challenge to U.S. credibility and power. The United States can no longer proclaim itself as the super power having the sole capacity of muscle flexing and shaping the world as per its own discretion.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-russia-too-important-to-lose/25276457.html>, (accessed on 5th July, 2014).
2. <http://data.worldbank.org/country/ukraine>, (accessed on 10th July, 2014).
3. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749c91a.html>, (accessed on 7th July, 2014).

4. Ukraine's Orange Revolution and U.S. Policy, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/45452.pdf>, (accessed on 5th July, 2014).
5. Ukraine's Orange Revolution and U.S. Policy, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/45452.pdf>, (accessed on 5th July, 2014).
6. http://www.whatswrongwiththeworld.net/2008/08/the_strategic_importance_of_th.html, (accessed on 10th July, 2014).
7. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749c91a.html>, (accessed on 7th July, 2014).
8. <http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=up>, (accessed on 10th July, 2014).
9. <https://news.yahoo.com/russia-completes-crimea-annexation-122546931.html>, (accessed on 5th July, 2014).
10. <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/russia-and-eurasia/ukraine>, (accessed on 9th July, 2014).
11. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/ukraine-politics/>, (accessed on 7th July, 2014).
12. <http://www.cfr.org/arms-control-disarmament-and-nonproliferation/budapest-memorandums-security-assurances-1994/p32484>, (accessed on 11th July, 2014).
13. Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33460.pdf>, (accessed on 7th July, 2014).
14. Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33460.pdf>, (accessed on 7th July, 2014).
15. <http://www.voanews.com/content/remarks-of-president-barack-obama-graduation-ceremony-west-point-new-york-may-28-2014/1924421.html>, (accessed on 11th July, 2014).
16. <http://www.voanews.com/content/remarks-of-president-barack-obama-graduation-ceremony-west-point-new-york-may-28-2014/1924421.html>, (accessed on 11th July, 2014).