

The United Nation's Agenda of Sustainable Peace: Implications for SAGAR

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Two decades into the twentieth century, traditional interstate conflicts continue to persist. However, peace and security are no longer measured only in terms of conventional wars. Under-development in many parts of the globe manifests itself in crime, terrorism, and civil wars which, invariably, have a transnational character, and affect regional stability. In 2016, the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly adopted concurrent resolutions on Sustainable Peace, recognising that development, peace, and security are firmly interlinked. In 2015, Prime Minister Modi enunciated India's foreign policy vision of Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR) that conflates security with development. This paper seeks to assess the extent to which the United Nations has been able to deliver on its sustainable peace agenda. It examines the conceptual compatibility between sustainable peace and SAGAR. Finally, the essay argues that SAGAR not only provides a framework for maritime governance in the Indian Ocean but is also a strategy for sustainable peace with a global footprint.

The concept of sustainable peace promoted by the United Nations melds two basic conditions. Firstly, it shifts the reference point of peace from the absence of conflict to human security. Secondly, it lays emphasis on sustainable development.¹ Membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2021 and 2022 offers India the opportunity to position itself as a champion of international peace and security, and bolster its claims for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. However, it would require

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India to align its foreign policy for the next two years with the goals of the United Nations by synthesising humanitarian security and development.

India is one of the major contributors to international assistance through multilateral forums and bilateral schemes. However, such humanitarian and development assistance lacks an overarching theme. In this regard, the conceptual framework of SAGAR fosters the unique capacity of conflating maritime governance with humanitarian assistance and sustainable development. It also harbours the potential of extending beyond the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to 75 percent countries of the world that share maritime coastline. Thus, SAGAR offers India a strategy for a global footprint through India's vision of sustainable peace.

The first part of the paper evaluates the extent to which the United Nations has been able to deliver on its sustainable peace agenda, which effectually establishes that international peace and security will consistently require significant contributions from major economies like India. Further, it examines the conceptual compatibility between sustainable peace and SAGAR. Finally, the paper argues that SAGAR not only provides a framework for maritime governance in the Indian Ocean but it could also be a strategy for sustainable peace with a global footprint.

Sustainable Peace: United Nations and Other Security Actors

The United Nations had undertaken two influential reviews on the peace building architecture in 2015: the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) report, and the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO) report.² Thereafter, in 2016, the concept of sustainable peace was introduced through concurrent resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)³ and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)⁴. It urged the Secretary General to strengthen the collaboration between the United Nations and the World Bank, and align regional and country specific strategies to promote sustainable peace. However, the question that one may ask is: what was the need for these two reviews in the first place?

The *raison d'etre* of United Nations has been to maintain international peace and security by taking effective measures against threats to peace and acts of aggression. Further, it promotes fundamental human rights and social progress.⁵ Thus, the goals of sustainable peace have been deeply embedded in the UN Charter since its inception. However, the AGE report in 2016 had noted that 'gaping holes' in UN's Peace Building Architecture

have existed. This was primarily due to the present 'nature of peace building' operations and the 'fragmentation of UN departments into silos'. Essentially, peace building has been an afterthought that is usually undertaken after the guns have fallen silent.⁶ Global trends post the Cold War have further exacerbated these systemic infirmities in coping with emergent security and humanitarian challenges.

Post-Cold War Trends

Spearheaded by India and China, the world has made impressive strides in reducing poverty in the past three decades. But poverty continues to rise in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia due to rising fragility, conflict, and violence. The global share of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has increased from 15 percent in 1990 to 56 percent in 2015.⁷ While interstate wars have been on the decline, conflict has taken new forms today. By leveraging modern technologies, non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, and traffickers and terrorists can act with impunity across national borders and regions. There is a growing recognition that the international toolbox of responses has been deficient in handling the new realities of complex and protracted conflicts.

Presently, about two billion people - a third of the world's population - live in countries affected by conflict.⁸ At the end of 2019, there were 79.5 million forcibly displaced worldwide, including 26 million refugees. As compared to 1990, people fleeing conflict has almost doubled in three decades.⁹ Drivers for fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) have been on the rise, and include inequality, lack of opportunities, discrimination, and exclusion, which tend to fuel grievances and perceptions of injustice. In addition, the effects of climate change, demographic change, migration, illicit financial flows, terrorism, and violent extremism often transcend borders. Most FCV countries also suffer from chronic poor governance.¹⁰ These factors vindicate the worsening condition of global peace and security, and beckon a new approach against conflict and violence.

UN Approach for Sustaining Peace

The United Nations Secretary General's (UNSG) 2018 report on *Peace Building and Sustaining Peace* enunciates that the aim of the UN is to forge a common vision, systems and capacities to support member states. Specifically, it has declared that Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development

Goals (SDG) is ‘not only a blueprint, but also ... the best defence against risks of violent conflict’. The report acknowledges that the United Nations is but one partner amongst others in the pursuit of sustainable peace and, on its own, cannot achieve the desired goals. Since every region or State is unique, other flexible frameworks will have to be explored.¹¹ Incidentally, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) Report 2020 of the UN’s General Assembly (UNGA) has noted that despite, empowering the Resident Coordinators, there are considerable gaps between policy and implementation of developmental projects by the United Nations. In addition, there are significant business operations costs, inadequate accountability, lack of country level framework for cooperation, and the absence of institutional mechanisms to evaluate system-wide effectiveness. These drawbacks particularly have come to light during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²

Funding Pattern of UN Activities

Overall, UN funding for activities in 2018 was \$36.4 billion, which was equally apportioned between development and humanitarian activities. However, only 28 percent of the funding came from core resources (not earmarked for specific programs). Despite measures such as pooled funding and the Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), contributing countries prefer non-core funding as it gives them greater leverage on stipulating conditions and monitoring of the developmental project.¹³

New Way of Working for Collective Outcomes

Global Humanitarian appeal (demands) as on 30 September 2020 was USD 39.94 billion from 63 countries. In comparison, the funding received was only 32 percent, amounting to USD 12.89 billion.¹⁴ These funding trends essentially point at the accumulating magnitude of humanitarian crises. To address this drawback, the Secretary General of the UNSC noted in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) report (2016) that there was a need to transcend the humanitarian-development divide.¹⁵ The report had effectually emphasised the linkages between humanitarian security and development. It has been further argued that the 2030 Agenda on SDGs are not only required to meet the needs, but would also have to be tailored to reduce humanitarian risks and vulnerabilities. Hence, globally there is a pressing need to identify and strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus.¹⁶ Thus,

the notion of 'collective outcomes' has to be placed at the centre of the New Way of Working (NWoW).¹⁷

The World Bank

Fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) are on the rise in low and middle-income countries, all of which have the potential for spill over. Climate change and FCV threaten the progress of SDGs, and could push more people into poverty. In response, the World Bank Group (WBG) has established multiple channels for funding development projects, identified close links between security, development, and justice in its 2011 report. Since then, Low Income countries (LICs) and Middle Income countries (MICs) have been supported by the International Development Association (IDA). In the fiscal year 2020, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) made a net commitment of USD 28 billion, and IDA's net commitments was USD 30.4 billion.¹⁸ IDA funding has steadily increased from USD 2.4 billion in 2012 to USD 20.8 billion in 2018.

In order to expand the pool of financial sources, the IDA 18 further introduced a unique private sector window through the International Financial Cooperation - the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (IFC-MIGA).¹⁹ Building on WBG's World Development Report 2011, the United Nations and WBG jointly promulgated the *Pathways for Peace Report* in 2018, and the first *Strategy for FCV 2020–2025* in 2019.²⁰ Consequently, IDA 19 saw an increment in its budget to USD 23.488 billion. The World Bank's IDA programs are tailored for the United Nation's agenda of sustaining peace, and focuses on preventions programs as well as supporting countries to escape the 'fragility trap'. However, the magnitude of funding requirements is too large even for the World Bank. Accordingly, the World Bank has initiated new partnerships with diverse actors beyond the United Nations, such as the African Development Bank, the European Union, civil society organisations, and bilateral partners. Despite these steps, more needs to be done globally to operationalise the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.²¹ This is where international financial assistance from other actors, especially major economies, plays an important role.

State Led International Financial Assistance²²

Outside multilateral institutions, individual States have been playing an active role in development assistance. International concessional assistance

from 40 major countries was USD 150 billion in 2017. Of this, only 32 percent contributions were made to the multilateral core. The balance of 68 percent was bilateral or non-core contribution. The List of State led financial international assistance, popularly known as an Official Development Assistance (ODA), is collated by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has 29 member states. However, it is widely recognised today that countries outside the DAC, especially from the South, are important players in global development, and are contributing substantially to the United Nations agenda on sustainable peace. In 2017 alone, foreign assistance by these countries from the South accounted for nearly 18 percent of the overall contribution. Such non-DAC countries include Argentina, India, China, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Mexico, and South Africa.

South-South Cooperation

The scale and pace of progress needed for achieving SDGs by 2030 will not be possible without innovative partnerships. One such enterprise has been the South-South initiative. The United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation, and the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation have made significant contributions to South-South Cooperation.²³ India has pledged USD 150 million to the United Nations Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). Since its inception in 2017, the India-UN Development Partnership Fund has approved 59 project proposals in 48 countries for an amount of USD 47.8 million.²⁴ On 03 August 2020, India contributed USD 15.5 million to this fund.²⁵ In addition, the IBSA Fund, operationalised in 2006, supports SDGs in areas of food security, HIV/AIDS, and safe drinking water. A total of 22 projects were concluded by the IBSA Fund, one was approved, and eight were ongoing in 20 countries as of 2018.²⁶

From the quantum of developments required and the extent of conflict worldwide, it can be argued that the United Nations and World Bank put together do not have the adequate means of meeting the appeals (demands) of sustainable peace. Thus, major economies from the global South (like India) will have to contribute in that direction. However, the current narrative of SAGAR is largely woven around maritime governance, which cannot be ignored against the backdrop of climate change, transnational crime, economic interests, and geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

SAGAR: A Framework for Maritime Governance

India's maritime security is defined by its unique geography. It has a coastline in excess of 7,500 km, more than 1,200 islands, and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of about two million sq. km. The imminent addition of another 1.2 million sq. km of continental shelf would make India's total seabed area equal to its land mass. Its central position also influences the lay of maritime trade routes in the North Indian Ocean. Its island territories overlook some of the most important choke-points in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. The gargantuan stretch of India's maritime frontiers not only provides it a domineering position in the IOR but also make it vulnerable to numerous maritime threats and challenges. Being a large growing economy, India's economic interests depends overwhelmingly on the maritime domain - energy imports, shipping, fishing, overseas investments and Diaspora.²⁷ Hence, India's maritime security and interests are inevitable drivers of its foreign policy.

There is a recognition that we live in an inter-dependent world and the world is but one family – *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*.²⁸ Hence Prime Minister Modi had enunciated the *Panchamrit* (literally, the five sacred foods), of India's foreign policy as *सम्मान* (respect); *संवाद* (dialogue); *सहयोग* (cooperation), *शांति* (peace); and *समृद्धि* (prosperity).²⁹ Taken together, India's foreign policy combines *shanti* (peace) and *shakti* (strength). The vision of SAGAR is founded on these principles.

On 12 March 2015, while commissioning the Indian built Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) Barracuda in Mauritius, Prime Minister Modi articulated India's vision of SAGAR for the IOR. He had declared IOR as India's first priority, and outlined its five constituents: (1) safeguard our mainland and islands, and protect our interests; (2) deepen economic and security cooperation; (3) collaborative response to emergencies; (4) sustainable development; and (5) those who live in the region have the primary responsibility for peace, stability, and prosperity of the IOR.³⁰

External and Internal Impulses of SAGAR

There is evidence to suggest that India's maritime diplomacy emerges out of both internal and external motivations. Internally, SAGAR has enhanced intra-departmental and intra-ministerial coordination in projects such as the *Sagarmala* for the creation of port and related infrastructures. Externally, geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific have encouraged India to play a

more active role for shaping maritime governance in the IOR.³¹ Maritime governance envisaged under SAGAR encompasses security, connectivity, cooperation, and resources.

Through SAGAR, India has tried to enhance its maritime diplomacy qualitatively and quantitatively. India is regarded as a promoter of collaboration, partnership, and multilateral initiatives. India has been the first-responder in times of natural disaster and political upheavals. Some of the latest initiative that reinforce India's role in maritime governance of the IOR include:

- **India joining the Djibouti Code of Conduct as an Observer:**³² The Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCOC) has become the dominant regional security architecture of the Western IOR. Initially adopted in 2009, DCOC was amended by the Jeddah Amendment to include other illicit maritime activities, *inter alia*, human trafficking as well as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.³³ Joining the DCOC, provides India the opportunity to empower the States, and strengthen regional maritime infrastructures like the Information Sharing Centres (ISCs) in Mombasa (Kenya), Sana (Yemen), and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), and the Djibouti Regional Training Centre (DRTC) in Doraleh.³⁴
- **India joining the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) as an Observer:**³⁵ The IOC has assumed a significant role in the Western IOR. Comprising entirely of island states, maritime security and safety is their primary concern. Almost 14 out of the 17 fields of the 2nd Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2018-2021 concerns regional maritime security.³⁶ India's admission into the IOC will eventually provide a fillip to the functioning of the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC), Seychelles as well as the Regional Maritime International Fusion Centre (RMIFC), Madagascar.
- **Countering String of Pearls in the IOR:** To counter China's so-called String of Pearls strategy, India has adopted a multi-pronged approach, including the signing of the Maritime Transport Agreement with Oman for the Duqm port.³⁷ India and Japan signed the Agreement on the Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the two-armed forces that will enable access to the Japanese facility in Djibouti.³⁸ Further, India is believed to be developing the Agalega and Assumption Islands in Mauritius and Seychelles, respectively.³⁹ India has also signed several defence cooperation MoUs with Madagascar.⁴⁰ The India-France Joint Strategic Vision, concluded on 10 March 2018, includes defence cooperation with Reunion Island.⁴¹ For the implementation of the White

Shipping Agreement, a French Officer has already been appointed in IFC-IOR at Gurugram, India.⁴² Just like the Western IOR, India has upped the ante in the Eastern IOR, particularly with Indonesia and Australia. Both countries have also signed the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA). The Eastern IOR has three strategic choke points to reach the Pacific Ocean: Malacca, Lombok, and the Sunda Straits. Overlooking these chokepoints, the right hook of India's maritime strategy in the Eastern IOR includes the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Indonesian island of Sabang, the Australian islands of Coco and Keating, and Diego Garcia. Professor Pankaj Jha argues that India's strategy in the Western and Eastern IOR together represent the 'Left and Right Fish Hooks' for countering the Chinese String of Pearls.⁴³

- **Mission SAGAR during COVID-19:** India launched Mission SAGAR on 10 May 2020 to deliver COVID-19 related assistance to the IOR countries. *INS Kesari* delivered essential humanitarian assistance with medical supplies, food items, and Medical Assistance Teams (MAT).⁴⁴

It can thus be argued that India has made a strong pitch for maritime governance in the IOR, under the overarching framework of SAGAR. However, seen in the context of India's membership in the UNSC commencing January 2021, SAGAR would be expected to do more than maritime governance. It would need to be tailored to position India as a global leader for world peace and security, and be able to claim its rightful place as a permanent member of the UNSC. However, this would require India to conflate humanitarian security, development, and maritime governance. Development initiatives being undertaken bilaterally and multilaterally need to be repackaged under the rubric of collective outcomes to achieve the goals of sustainable peace. In this regard, SAGAR provides India a strategy, with the implications and footprint which go much beyond maritime governance and the IOR.

Repackaging SAGAR as a Strategy for Sustainable Peace

Humanitarian Security vs. Human Rights

Human security aims to realise freedom from want and fear through security and development. In contrast, human rights are about freedom with dignity. This distinction differentiates interference (like Kosovo) from intervention like disaster relief. For example, human rights action does not mitigate the root causes of famine or subsistence. If the root cause of famine is not

addressed, it will surely re-occur. So, requirements of basic survival or humanitarian security cannot be considered as support for human rights.⁴⁵ While human rights claim to protect individuals against States, humanitarian security necessitates an egalitarian world order to enable a State to protect its people.⁴⁶ The concept of humanitarian security provides a broader framework for the assessment of a State's contribution to international peace and security.⁴⁷ Fortuitously, SAGAR has demonstrated the bandwidth for coupling the security of a nation-state with humanitarian security and developmental programs. Since India is already undertaking several developmental activities in the IOR, SAGAR can be repackaged to conform to the principles of sustainable peace. It would not only yield disproportionate results but also help make a stronger case for India's contribution to world peace.

India's Outreach to Low and Middle Income States

While addressing the Indian Ocean Conference in September 2019, External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishakar, had redefined the contours of SAGAR. He has expanded its scope beyond maritime governance to building linkages with the hinterland, strengthening regionalism, and creating an extended neighbourhood. He has envisioned India as a net security provider, albeit with an integrated approach.⁴⁸ Integrated approach is akin to a collective outcome. Thus, activities, projects, and initiatives under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS), the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), and multilateral forums have the inherent potential of being promoted under the overarching rubric of SAGAR in littoral States, and even beyond the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This includes over 150 countries of the world that share a maritime coastline. Thus, SAGAR offers India a strategy for establishing a global footprint through India's version of sustainable peace within the existing projects under IDEAS, ITEC, and other international assistance programs. Thus, the reorientation of SAGAR would reinforce India's leadership role for world peace within the existing funding pattern.

Financial Assistance by India for Sustainable Peace

The Government of India's Line of Credit (LOC) for the year 2018-19 was USD 1946.9 million.⁴⁹ In addition, India's contribution to multilateral forums in 2017 is tabulated below. Thus, India's foreign assistance to the multilateral-core was about 35.4 percent. The balance was by the way of bilateral LOCs and ITEC.

It can be argued that India's contribution to human security and development has grown significantly. Such financial assistance could be

Table: India's Contribution to Multilateral Forums in 2017

Type	Agency	USD Million	Percent of Total	Percent of Foreign Assistance
Core	African Development Bank	11	1.6	0.6
	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	285	40.8	14.5
	Asian Development Fund	10	1.4	0.5
	Consultative Group for International	8	1.1	0.4
	Agricultural Research			
	Global Environmental Facility	3	0.4	0.2
	Global Fund	6	0.9	0.3
	International Development Assistance	30	4.3	1.5
	India-Brazil-South Africa Trust Fund	1	0.1	0.1
	New Development Bank	300	43.0	15.2
	United Nations	44	6.3	2.2
	Total		698	100
Non-Core	United Nations	3	100	0.2

Source: Ian Mitchell, Euan Ritchie, and Andrew Rogerson⁵⁰

repackaged under SAGAR, and promoted as India's contribution to international peace and security under the theme of sustainable peace. It is likely to find greater resonance with developing countries, help reduce the geopolitical straitjacket, and enhance India's legitimacy as a global leader.

Conclusion

India's vision of SAGAR is driven by internal and external impulses. The enormous stretch of India's maritime frontiers and growing economic interests are inevitable drivers of its foreign policy. Under this backdrop, SAGAR is an effectual platform for maritime governance, encompassing security, connectivity, cooperation, and resources. However, in the context of India's membership in the UNSC commencing January 2021, SAGAR would be expected to do more than maritime governance. It would need to be tailored to position India as a global leader for world peace and security, and be able to reinforce India's place as a permanent member in the UNSC. However, it would require India to synthesise humanitarian security, development, and maritime governance. Development initiatives being undertaken bilaterally and multilaterally need to be repackaged under the rubric of SAGAR to achieve the goals of sustainable peace. Thus, SAGAR provides India a strategy, with implications and a footprint which go much beyond maritime governance and the IOR.

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