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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 access 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 Assistance[22]

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); *संव्वाद* (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 the 17 fields of the 2nd Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2018-2021concerns 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**	**35.4**
Non-Core	United Nations	3	100	0.2

Source: Ian Mitchell, Euan Ritchie, and Andrew Rogerson[50]

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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India and Singapore: Fifty Years of Diplomatic Relations

Suranjan Das and Subhadeep Bhattacharya*

Without the contribution that we have had from India, her rich and enduring past, her sagacious and enterprising people, we would have been that much the poorer.

Lee Kuan Yew, *Former Singapore Prime Minister*[1]

Today, Singapore is one of our most important partners in the world. It is a relationship that is as strategic as it is wide-ranging.

Narendra Modi, *Prime Minister of India* [2]

In ancient times, Singapore - earlier known as Tamaseek - was linked to the Greater India economy and culture through India's expanding maritime trade.[3] The modern-day relationship between India and Singapore can be traced to 1891 when Stamford Raffles convinced the East India Company administration to make the trading station of Singapore (en route to the Straits of Malacca) a British base between South and Southeast Asia.[4] Thus, Singapore became a crown colony, governed from Calcutta till 1867. Singapore's Foreign Minister, George Yeo, called modern Singapore the 'daughter of Kolkata'.[5] Later, this British strategic enclave became the base of Indian nationalists fighting British imperialism from abroad, with Subhas Chandra Bose setting up the Indian National Army in Singapore in July 1943. From 21 October 1943 onwards, the Provincial Government of Azad Hind functioned from Singapore till it was moved to Rangoon on 7 January 1944. Singapore became a part of Malaya in 1962, but broke away in 1965 as an independent republic. The relationship between India and Singapore survived the difficult terrain of the Cold War to become what Prime Minister Modi calls, the 'warmest and closest' relationship.[6]

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In analysing the evolution of this relationship, the seminal point raised by Theva Yogaananthan and Rahul Mukherjee is that Indo-Singapore bilateralism has been determined by the 'interconnectedness of security and commercial relations'.[7]

India and Singapore: The First Phase

Mainstream Indian nationalist leaders keenly watched the developments in Malaya during the World War II. Despite great odds, Jawaharlal Nehru visited Singapore in 1946 to see the disbanded INA troops, who had surrendered to the British Military Administration of Malaya following the surrender of Japan. Nehru was cheered by INA soldiers in uniform with Indian flags as he drove along the streets of Singapore.[8] Three years after becoming Prime Minister, he re-visited Singapore, addressing a historic rally at the Jalan Besar stadium. Independent India demonstrated its solidarity with Singapore in the aftermath of British withdrawal by supporting its merger with the Malaysian Federation despite opposition from Indonesia, China, and the Philippines.[9] Nehru's untiring efforts convinced the Afro-Asian nations that the Singaporean leader, Lee Kuan Yew, was a neutralist - that is, neither a Chinese chauvinist nor a 'colonial stooge'.[10]

In 1965, when Singapore separated from the Malaysian Federation, New Delhi was one of the first to recognise the sovereign republic. But India failed to respond to Singapore's request for military cover to meet the security challenge from the Chinese-sponsored communist insurgencies in Malaysia and Indonesia,[11] and the intra-ethnic bitterness between Malays and the Chinese.[12] TheSingapore Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, wrote to his counterpart, Lal Bahadur Shastri, on 9 August 1965:

> We ourselves cannot afford to build up forces sufficient to protect ourselves from aggression by our neighbours … For my government to use British officers to help in this may be said to be tainted with neo-colonialism. I therefore seek your government's assistance to send a team as soon as convenient to advise us in this.[13]

Israel offered to train Singapore's army, but Lee preferred to wait for India's response.[14] However, the Indian government did not respond to Singapore's request for military assistance[15] - perhaps due to its commitment to Non-alignment and its closeness to the Soviet Union at a time when the new-born Singapore was set to play the US geo-political role. Nevertheless, India extended diplomatic help for Singapore's integration into the world community by supporting its admission to the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and the Afro-Asian Conference.[16]

Differences on strategic thinking between the two states grew during the tenure of Indira Gandhi, whom Lee Kuan Yew considered 'the toughest woman prime minister.'[17] Lee's plea for India to be a stabilising factor in Southeast Asia during his 1966 Delhi visit went unreciprocated, partly because of the pressure of the pro-Soviet group within the Indian bureaucracy, dubbed by an analyst as the 'Moscow Mafia', who considered South-East Asian regimes as American or Japanese puppets,[18] and partly due to the domestic economic crisis that prevented Delhi from taking on any new external commitments. However, Prime Minister Gandhi chose to provide an ideological justification to support the Indian stand when, during her trip to New Zealand in May 1968. She expressed India's objection to any move by an external power to fill any power vacuum in Southeast Asia.[19] Emboldened by the replacement in neighbouring Indonesia of the belligerent Sukarno regime by the pro-US Suharto one, the Singapore Prime Minister Lee now turned to the USA. This was the time when India was looking for Soviet support to counter the tacitly US-backed Sino-Pakistan front, and was defending its stand on the Kashmir issue at the United Nations Security Council. In this context, bitterness in the India-Singapore geo-strategic relationship was to be expected.

Yet, Singapore's first Ambassador to India, Maurice Banker, felt that in the absence of American presence India could contribute to containment of leftist politics of subversion in Southeast Asia if the USA was made to leave Vietnam.[20] When China undertook the nuclear tests in 1964, Lee even suggested that India should follow suit - 'at least for the sake of Southeast Asia, even if she wanted to throw it (the nuclear bomb) into the sea later.'[21]

The Kampuchean (Cambodian) crisis of the late 1970s further heightened the differential geo-political perceptions of India and Singapore. While India instantly recognised the replacement of the oppressive pro-Chinese Pol Pot regime by the Soviet-and Vietnam-backed Heng Samrin government, Singapore disapproved of the 'aggression and forcible installation of a puppet regime' in its neighbourhood.[22]

This period marked, as Kishore Mahbubani notes, the 'lowest point in bilateral relations',[23] and coincided with New Delhi's developmental strategy based on substituting import with industrialisation, impeding the country's integration with the world economy, thereby weakening Indo-Singapore economic relations.[24] But even then, Lee appreciated the Indian predicament, remarking: 'You (India) were caught up; these were obligations that you had to honour because of your close ties, military and economic, with the Soviet Union.[25] Such underlying understanding contributed to the development of a productive Indo-Singapore bilateralism once the Cold War ended.

Developments in the Post-Cold War Period

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao took the first effective step in making India a part of the evolving Asia-Pacific security framework when, with Singapore's support, it became a Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN in 1992, a full dialogue partner in December 1995, and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996.[26]Rao's successor, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, also perceived Singapore as a potential 'geo-political ally' which could provide India a 'gateway into the rest of Southeast Asia'.[27] C. Raja Mohan has shown how the conspicuous absence of the security initiative in Indo-Singapore relations was redressed in 2003 through the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) that 'launched vigorous security diplomacy in the region.'[28] It entailed cooperative intelligence gathering and a Defence Policy Dialogue; and expanded the zone of bilateral naval exercise SIMBEX (Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise) from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea. The 2005 Indo-Singapore Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance addressed the issue of terror funding,[29] while 2007 onwards, India and Singapore were involved with joint military training exercises.[30] Singapore's deterrence capacity against Malaysia was improved by acquaintance with the equipment and tactics of Malaysian armed forces, since both India and Malaysia have traditionally been reliant on Soviet equipment.

This positivity in geo-strategic relations was contemporaneous with significant Indo-Singapore economic bilateralism. Already, in the initial phase of Rajiv Gandhi's premiership, this economic linkage was enhanced through trade fairs, engineering exhibitions, and talks on joint ventures in petrochemicals, fertilizers, diesel engines, engineering, and steel.[31] Realising the potential of increasing trade with the ASEAN, India established the India Investment Centre in Singapore in 1985, and later, the Singapore office of Export-Import Bank of India. Simultaneously, Singapore's Trade Development Board (TDB) sent eighteen missions to India, proposing investment opportunities in Singapore. It also set up its office in Bombay in 1986.[32] An exclusive Indian trade exhibition was held in Singapore in April 1987.

However, it was in the aftermath of the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s that New Delhi started looking East, along with its traditional Western partners, to attract foreign investment and explore external markets. In this context, Singapore, one of the strongest economies of Southeast Asia, inevitably attracted India. Significantly, this ideational change coincided with the Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's economic interest in India in his move to diversify Singapore's external investments and reduce engagement

with China. He thus initiated, in the 1990s, a 'mild India fever' in Singapore, encouraging his country's business houses to venture into India.[33]

India's Look East Policy

The significance of Singapore in Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's Look East Policy was underlined by Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, at a Singapore seminar concerning 'Investing in India: New Business Opportunities' on 18 October 1991: 'We in the Government of India thought, that if we have to market New India, we have to begin with Singapore.'[34]

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, visited India between 22 and 27 March 1992 to explore new bilateral trade and investment opportunities.[35] The total volume of these rose between the two countries from US $1.08 billion in 1991-92 to US $2.04 billion in 1996-97, registering an average rise of 13.7 percent in dollar terms.[36] On 8 September 1994, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao formally outlined India's Look East Policy in his lecture at Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.[37] He unveiled a vision of the Asia-Pacific region as 'our springboard to the global market-place' in which Singapore was rightly looked upon as 'a bridge to connect the rest of Asia with India.'[38] He viewed Singapore as India's 'gateway to the Pacific world.'[39] Singapore was also among the first in Southeast Asia to respond to the Look East Policy.

> The potential of India's economic relationship with Singapore was aptly articulated by its next Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee when, in his 9 April 2002 Singapore Lecture he observed: 'Singapore has considerable strengths in the old economy and ambitions in the new economy. India has needs in the old economy and some competence in the new economy. In this lies a major confluence of our interests.'[40]

The bilateral economic connectivity further improved during the premiership of Manmohan Singh with the conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CECA) on 29 June 2005. Singapore's first Free Trade Agreement with South Asia and India's first outside South Asia,[41] the CECA, resulted in immediate tariff elimination on 506 items and proposed a phased tariff elimination on 4500 items by 2009. It also resulted in the avoidance of double taxation, property rights, and the quality recognition of goods and services. These contributed directly to the bilateral trade rising from US $ 4.2 billion in 2003-2004 to US$ 11.4 billion in 2006–2007.[42] By 2012 Singapore was India's 9th largest trading partner.[43] India's main exports to Singapore included petroleum products, both crude and refined; gems and

jewellery; electrical machinery and spare parts; and transport equipment and surgical instruments; its imports comprised electronic goods; organic chemicals; pharmaceuticals; transport equipment; printed books and other reading materials, and metal ores and scraps.[44] Significantly, a crucial part of this bilateral trade is re-export that takes place from Singapore to India.[45] The post-CECA years also saw the two countries collaborating to assist the CLMV countries.[46]

This surge in bilateral trade was contemporaneous with a rise in Indian investment in Singapore from US $ 351 million in 2004–05 to US$ 37.4 billion in April 2015.[47] By 2013, 6450 registered Indian companies - mostly trading and business consultancies - operated in Singapore, while India attracted Singapore's investment in ports, real estate, and construction.[48] Between April 2005 and January 2006 alone, Singapore's FDI in India registered a 300 percent growth, reaching a cumulative figure of US$ 3 billion.[49] Stressing the significance of this new-found bilateralism, Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's former Prime Minister and then a Senior Minister, reminded his Asia Society audience in 2005: 'With India's rise it will be increasingly less tenable to regard South Asia and East Asia as distinct strategic theatres interacting only at the margins.'[50]

Thus, scholars like S.D. Muni contend that the Look East Policy has both reinforced India's cultural and economic links with the ASEAN and East Asia, and 'firmed up strategic relations with them.'[51] India-Singapore relations lie within this matrix.

New Era in India-Singapore Bilateralism

India's connections with South East Asia deepened when, in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi transformed the Look East into Act East Policy. If the Look East Policy was about increasing economic integration with South East Asia, the Act East Policy aims at both economic and security linkages not only with South East but also East Asia. The Act East strategy also considers Singapore a crucial economic and geo-strategic point for India. Singapore's President Tony Tan Keng Yam's visit to Delhi (8 to 11 February 2015) occasioned explorations for new bilateral initiatives on smart cities, skill development, coastal and port development, and the strengthening of linkages with the North East of India. Singapore companies became involved with the construction of a new capital city for Andhra Pradesh.[52] Singapore industrial houses - like Gateway Distriparks, Snowman Logistics, Airtel, Temasek, and Government of Singapore Investment Corporation - considerably benefitted

from India's 'corporate sector friendliness'[53] But it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip (23 and 24 November 2015) that took the relationship between the two countries to new heights. Delivering the 37th Singapore Lecture on 'India's Singapore Story' (23 November 2015) the Prime Minister remarked:

> Our relationship is written in the pages of history, the footprints of culture, the ties of kinship and the old connection of commerce. We stood together in friendship at the dawn of freedom; and, we reached out to each other in a partnership of shared hopes. Singapore's success became an aspiration of Indians. And, in turn, India became the hope for a more peaceful, balanced and stable world.[54]

Prime Minister Modi's visit resulted in upgrading India-Singapore bilateral relations into a strategic partnership based on political exchanges; defence cooperation; trade and investment; air transport and maritime cooperation; smart city development; skill development; people-to-people exchanges; science, technology and research innovation; legal, judicial, financial and parliamentary cooperation; and collaboration in multilateral and regional fora.[55] Already the Indian Space Research Organisation had launched Singapore's first indigenously built micro-satellite in 2011. By 2015, the Maritime Security Strategy of India was stressing the security of the Indian Ocean 'choke' points, from the Cape of Good Hope to Malacca and Singapore Straits.[56] This period also witnessed the enhancement of civil aviation connectivity, with 464 weekly flights connecting 12 Indian cities from Singapore by May 2014.[57] Following the 2016 visit of Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, the two countries agreed to work for maritime security, freedom of navigation and flights, and unimpeded commerce in accordance with international law.[58] Indo-Singapore relations came to be hailed as a 'strategic partnership in the true sense'[59] In 2019, they conducted a joint naval exercise in the disputed South China Sea,[60] and a trilateral naval exercise by Singapore, India and Thailand (SITMEX).[61] The invitation to Singapore at the India-Africa Summit indicates the importance that Delhi attaches to their strategic relationship.[62]

On Indian Republic Day celebrations in 2018, Prime Minister Lee was the chief guest. In the same year, Prime Minister Modi visited Singapore twice: from 30 May to 02 June, and between 14 and 15 November. His May visit yielded 35 MOUs and new initiatives to address cyber security and terrorism issues.[63] On 1 June 2018, Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to deliver the Keynote Address at the annual Shangri La Dialogue, where he delineated India's vision of a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific region.[64] During his November trip, he attended the East Asia Summit

and the 2nd Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Summit where he pitched for a comprehensive and balanced regional economic partnership. He also became the first head of government to address Singapore's Fintech Festival, where he assured the Fintech companies that 'India [wa]s [their] best destination.'[65] Moreover, he launched, with Deputy Prime Minister T Shanmugaratnam, the APIX (Application Programming Interface Exchange), a banking technology platform designed to reach nearly two billion people world-wide who were still without bank accounts.[66]

An inevitable upshot of this strategic relationship was a significant growth in economic bilateralism. In 2018, the two countries extended tariff concessions to another 30 items, resulting in bilateral trade reaching US $16.3 billion in 2019-2020.[67] In 2014, India's External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, specifically invited Singaporean investment for high-status projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), and the Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor.[68]Singapore's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rose from $13.69 billion in 2015-16[69] to $14.67 billion in 2019-20, representing 30 percent of the FDI in India.[70] If the cumulative FDI from Singapore into India from April 2000 to September 2019 was US$ 91.02 billion, the outward Indian FDI to Singapore between January 2008 and December 2019 was US $ 67.64 billion, making Singapore a top destination for Indian foreign investments.[71] More than 440 companies and two leading Singapore banks have their presence in India.[72] By 2018, Singapore-based investors had Assets Under Management of more than US$ 100 billion in India.[73]

The two countries jointly developed the world-class Information Technology Park in Bengaluru; Singapore and Japan have collaborated to develop an integrated township within Chennai's IT and Industrial corridor; joint business ventures by Singapore Chambers of Commerce with their Indian counterparts are coming up in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka.[74] Singapore's Sing Tel and India's Bharti Airtel are collaborating in telecommunication, and the Port of Singapore Authority has invested in container handling and terminal projects in Tuticorin, Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai.[75] Likewise, about 9,000 Indian firms are registered in Singapore; 6 public sector units and 9 leading banks (like the Indian Overseas Bank, the Indian Bank, the ICICI bank, the State Bank of India, the Bank of India, Axis Bank, and the UCO Bank) are operating in Singapore.[76] At least 80 percent of listed offshore bonds by Indian issuers are listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange.[77] Following Prime Minister Modi's 2018 visit to Singapore, the Temsak Holding, a Singapore Government Fund, contributed to the National Infrastructure Fund of India.[78] Singapore today is India's largest trade and

investment partner in the ASEAN, and the second largest foreign investor.[79] The period also saw the emergence of Vistara airlines in India, a joint venture of the Tata Group and Singapore Airlines.[80] Not unnaturally, India today occupies the third spot in Singapore's visitor arrivals, the number of Indian visitors rising from 778,303 in 2008 to 1.42 million in 2019.[81] Greater private sector engagement with a system of 'harmonised markets and trade links' can effectively carry forward this economic bond.[82]

The Act East period has experienced growth in India-Singapore connections in the areas of education and knowledge transfer.[83] India is set to benefit from the Singaporean experience with polytechnics and vocational training for implementing the Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, and Clean India projects. The two countries are developing a world class polytechnic facility in Delhi. Singapore's Institute of Technical Education and the Delhi Government's Training and Technical Education have collaborated to create a Skills Centre in Delhi; Singapore's Lee Kuan School of Public Policy offers training in Public Policy.[84] In 2004 the National University of Singapore set up a South Asian Institute to house Indian experts for promoting understanding between Asian states; in 2007 it became an enthusiastic partner in Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's plan to revive Nalanda University.

The number of Indian students going to Singapore is estimated to be rising by 20 percent each year.[85] During Prime Minister Modi's 2015 visit, an MOU was concluded between India's NITI Ayog and Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (NTU) for research partnership in artificial intelligence, machine learning, cognitive computing, big data analysis, smart energy systems, and e-governance.[86] The IITs, IISC (Bengaluru), and the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology are being identified as India's nodal centres for scientific collaboration with Singapore. The participation of students from the Singapore Management University in the Infosys Instep Programme indicates that management education is another area for academic collaboration.[87] Also, the success of the Global Indian International School, the Delhi Public School, and the NPS International School shows further possibilities of the Indian private sector collaborating in Singapore's school education.

Among the Indian provinces, Maharashtra has attracted almost a third of this Singapore investment. West Bengal, too, has remained an enthusiastic participant in the enrichment of India's economic ties with Singapore. Between 2009-10 and 2012-13, the Falta Special Economic Zone's (SEZ) exports from

and imports to Singapore were respectively to the tune of US$ 110.44 million and US$ 115.52 million respectively, while total export trade through the Kolkata port to Singapore during that period was US$ 1487.23 million. By 2012-13, Singapore was the second biggest export market from the Kolkata port after the USA, the major items being refined petroleum products. However, it is during the present Chief Ministership of Mamata Banerjee that West Bengal's economic link with Singapore has received a boost. Her visit to Singapore between 18 and 22 August 2014, termed as a 'turning point' for Bengal, resulted in the signing of 13 MOUs.[88] A business hub was proposed as a joint venture of the West Bengal and Singapore Governments.[89] A notable step in the direction of Singapore's investment in West Bengal was also taken. Already in 2009, Singapore's Changi Airports International Pte Ltd. (CAI) had decided to acquire 26 percent stake in Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Ltd. (BAPL) for developing a township centred around the upcoming Andal airport in the Bardhaman district.[90] Following the Chief Minister's visit, the Changi Airports International raised its stake in the project to 32.2 percent.[91] Today, Singapore is one of the top ten destinations of West Bengal's industrial products.[92]

The Diaspora Link

Bilateral cultural connectivity has gone hand-in-hand with geo-strategic ties. Ethnic Indians constitute approximately 9.1 percent or 3.5 lakhs of Singapore's 3.9 million population, while about 3.5 lakh Indian expatriates holding Indian passports represent 21 percent of the 1.6 million foreigners in the city-state.[93] India is the second largest beneficiary of remittances from Singapore.[94] Singapore has recognised Tamil as one of the four official languages: Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi are taught in the island's schools. Singapore's 'Little India', the initial settlement area for Indian migrants, remains a nodal trading point for India and Singapore. To preserve the cultural traits of Indian settlers and to acquaint the non-Indian Singaporeans with India's civilisational heritage, India and Singapore signed an MOU on 5 February 1993 to promote cooperation in arts, heritage, archives, and libraries.[95] Annual Indian festivals like Deepavali and Malay Hari Raya are observed. Vivekananda's historic speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1983, Gandhi's birthday, Hindi Divas, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and International Yoga Day are commemorated. The Singapore Indian Fine Arts, founded as early as 1949, and Nrityalaya and Kalamandir effectively promote Indian classical dance and music[96] The Singapore Government has established the

Indian Heritage Centre, while Singapore's Museum of Asian Civilizations (ASC) recaptures the Indian legacy in the region.[97]

However, Singapore's ethnic Indian society is very heterogeneous: 64 percent are Tamils, 8 percent Malayalis, 7 percent Punjabis, 6 percent Sindhis and 2 percent Gujaratis; 6 percent are Hindus, 20 percent Muslims, 12 percent Christians, 7 percent Sikhs, and there are a small number Buddhists.[98] Economically, Singapore's Indians are divided too: a minority successful class in politics, business, and professions juxtaposed with a majority forming the society's 'underbelly'.[99] If India intends to use the Diaspora link to strengthen its connection with Singapore, this diversity must be recognised.[100]

The ethnic Indian connection has recently strengthened cooperation between the two countries in handling the COVID19 pandemic. When the pandemic struck Singapore, Indian migrant workers were among the worst-hit. By the end of March 2020, at least 4,800 Indians were infected by the virus.[101] Under the Vande Bharat Mission, the Indian High Commission repatriated 17,000 Indian nationals till September 2000 through 120 special flights.[102] Prime Minsters Modi and Lee Hsien Loon resolved to meet the Covid challenge by keeping supply chains intact and 'essential supplies flowing.'[103] Modi reiterated that the strategic India-Singapore partnership would work to bring stability and prosperity to the post-Covid world.[104] Meanwhile, Singapore's Confederation of Indian Industry and the India Business Forum raised 159,000 Singapore dollars (INR 86.60 lakh) to help the Indian migrant workers face the stress of the pandemic.[105]

Conclusion

The India-Singapore relationship is today rooted in reciprocity, mutuality as well as economic, cultural and strategic links. The economic partnership is expanding from trading to investment; in geo-political terms, if India sees Singapore as its 'eastern anchor' of maritime security,[106] Singapore views India as a 'benign security partner' without any 'adverse historical baggage in the region'.[107] It remains keen to collaborate on regional stability by containing external interventions, especially from China. Neither would 'like to see the Asia Pacific dominated by any single power.'[108] The two states have also concurred at the East Asia Summit, the G-20, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

However, Singapore is yet to fully utilise investment potential in India, perhaps due to the lack of a 'Singapore lobby' in India.[109] Such developments as Pakistan's adoption of 'Vision East Asia' in 2005, Singapore's recent

promotion of economic ties in South Asia beyond India, including the Gulf,[110] and its support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would impose regulations for trade and investment which could be 'non-tariff barriers' for the entry of Indian goods in the region,[111] should alert Delhi to the need for reinforcing the relationship.

Neither country should insist on a 'pseudo-exclusive relationship;' they should strengthen their special ties while maintaining 'well-balanced relations' with all regional powers.[112] We shall wait to see how this connection flourishes, both in terms of regional or bilateral considerations as well as in the context of broader world politics, especially in the post-pandemic period. Summarising fifty years of Indo-Singapore diplomatic relations we agree that:

> India-Singapore relations have laid a strong foundation of a cooperation framework covering a wide range of areas … The challenge in the next 50 years would be to recognise these areas of strength, identify the areas of opportunities, and use that knowledge to take the relationship to the next level.[113]

Notes :

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India-Taiwan Relations: Time is Ripe to Bolster Ties

Sana Hashmi

2020 will be remembered for a number of reasons. COVID-19 has changed the world in unimaginable ways. However, one silver lining of the pandemic is that it expanded Taiwan's global space. One of the greatest developments of 2020 was a deeper understanding about Taiwan worldwide, especially in India. Due to Taiwan's impeccable COVID-19 response and also India-China violent clashes in the Galwan valley, domestic public opinion in India is increasingly shifting in favour of Taiwan. However, despite this positive momentum, the Indian leadership still remains cautious about elevating political ties with Taiwan.

There have been calls to re-evaluate India's China policy and advance ties with Taiwan. India does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and the relations are managed primarily through unofficial channels. The China factor has loomed large over the prospects of setting the right context for India-Taiwan relations. While the recent standoff has provided a window of opportunity for India to look towards Taiwan, there is need for India to devise a long-term strategy to engage Taiwan. Taiwan too, under the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen, has emphasised the importance of strengthening ties with India. A persistent policy and a long-term framework to guide the relationship is the need of the hour.

India-Taiwan relations remain one of the most understudied and under-appreciated relationships of the twenty-first century. While fellow democracies, such as the USA and Japan have stepped up cooperation with Taiwan in the

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past few years, India has not yet been able to fully realise the potential of its relations with Taiwan - so much so that India's approach towards Taiwan is sometimes characterised as a series of missed opportunities. However, 2020 has provided another window of opportunity to countries, especially India, to rethink their Taiwan policy and expand cooperation with Taiwan.

Taiwan's impeccable COVID-19 response has generated greater awareness about, and garnered appreciation for Taiwan among Indians. This, coupled with growing tensions with China, has paved the path for greater appreciation of Taiwan, and generated discussion about Taiwan as a prospective partner in the Indo-Pacific region. In the aftermath of the Galwan clashes, India's focus has shifted to managing tensions with China rather than attempting to cooperate and expand the scope of relations with it. For decades, even though the boundary dispute has been the biggest irritant in India-China relations, the resolution has been delayed by the Chinese side. However, these recent clashes have made it apparent that the boundary dispute is not about differing perceptions, and that China has not been respectful of the status quo. It has not only violated several agreements signed between the two countries over the years, but has also shown complete disregard for India's territorial sensitivities. The prospects for cordial India-China relations also seem bleak in the times to come. These clashes have had a decisive impact on the political and economic discourse in India, and are increasingly changing the domestic perception about China in India.

Earlier, any discussion about India's engagement with Taiwan was put in the context of India-China relations and India's adherence to the so-called One-China policy. The focus has always been on managing India's relations with China. India's attempts to maintain cordial ties with China has outweighed the perils of engaging Taiwan. Relations with Taiwan have suffered for a long time due to Indian leadership's hesitation to make any reference to Taiwan that could obstruct the prospects of strengthened relations between India and China. Given China's growing aggression towards India, this approach has not proven beneficial for India's interests, and overlooking Taiwan in the hope of having lasting peace in the relationship with China is proving counterproductive. It is in this context that this essay attempts to highlight the importance of engaging Taiwan for India, and the prospects for India-Taiwan relations.

Overview of India-Taiwan Relations

India and Taiwan have long-standing ties. The bonhomie was witnessed during

Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Mainland China in 1939, and later, the visit of Kuomintang (KMT) Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling to New Delhi and Kolkata in 1942. The visit by Chiang and his wife was instrumental in forging a closer bond between India and the Republic of China (ROC). While Chiang Kai-shek gave an interview to All India Radio in Chinese, in an attempt to reach out to a wider audience in India, Soong Mei-ling gave an interview in English. However, the dynamics began to change when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over Mainland China, and India had to share a border with the communist China, which later on became disputed.

On the eve of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Mao Zedong declared PRC's foreign policy guidelines, and asked countries to shift recognition from the ROC to the PRC. He stated,

> In order to make a clean break with the foreign policy of the old and semi-colonial China and uphold the independence and sovereignty of New China, we should "start anew" and "put the house in order before inviting guests". That is to say, China renounced all the diplomatic relations the Kuomintang Government had established with foreign countries, treated heads of foreign diplomatic missions accredited to Old China as ordinary foreign nationals instead of diplomatic envoys; reviewed all the treaties and agreements Old China had concluded with foreign countries; gradually cleared up the prerogatives and influence the imperialist countries had in China; and established new diplomatic relations with other countries on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and equality and mutual benefit.[1]

India became the second non-communist country to recognise the PRC, and establish diplomatic ties on 1 April 1950. When India shifted its recognition from the ROC to the PRC, the KMT leadership heavily criticised India's decision.

> As for the neutralists, of whom Nehru is indisputably the most outstanding representative, they have always been labouring under the illusion that their national security can be ensured by humouring the Chinese Communists as far as possible. Hence, Nehru's fence-sitting attitude and the policy of appeasement pursued by Indian diplomats in the United Nations and at other international conferences … when Nehru has outlived his usefulness as a tool of the Communists, it will be the armed might of the anti-Communist democratic nations instead of Indian neutralism which will save India from Communist invasion and enslavement.[2]

Along with Myanmar (then Burma), India and PRC signed the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. India's willingness to establish cordial ties with China led to a halt in India-Taiwan relations. For much of the Cold War period, there was barely any contact between India and Taiwan. Even though the relations between India and China were suspended for 15 years after the 1962, India and Taiwan did not make many advances towards each other. It was only in the 1990s that channels for unofficial contacts were established.

In 1992, Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao launched India's 'Look East Policy', while Taiwan's President Lee Teng Hui launched his 'Go South Policy'. The focus of their respective policies was on engaging the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economies. However, the decade of the 1990s also began to see unofficial relations taking shape. The representative offices - the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC) and the India-Taipei Association (ITA) - were established in 1995. In 2011, the TECC set up an office in Chennai. In the past few years, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council has established four offices in India: in Chennai, New Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, and held the first-ever Taiwan Expo in India in May 2018.

Table 1: List of Selected Agreements Signed between India and Taiwan

Area	Name of the Agreement	Signed in
Economics	Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement	July 2011
	ATA Carnet Protocol	March 2013
	MoU on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises	December 2015
	MoU between Taiwan Chamber of and India's PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry	June 2016
	MOU on Promotion of Industry Collaboration	December 14, 2017
	Authorised Economic Operators Recognition Action	2017
	Mutual Recognition of the Respective Authorised Economic Operation Programs	2018
	Bilateral Investment Agreement	December 18, 2018
Science and Technology	MOU on Scientific and Technological Cooperation	2007
	MOU of Cooperation between ROC (Taiwan) Academia Sinica and Indian National Science Academy	2012

Education	MoU between Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education of Taiwan and Association of Indian Universities,	2010
	MoU on Social Sciences Research	2019
Aviation	Air Services Agreement	September 2016
Agriculture	MoU on Taiwan-India Agricultural Cooperation	September 2016
Railways	Letter of Intent for Cooperation on Railway Heritage in Chiayi City of Taiwan	December 24, 2016

Source: Taiwan Economic and Cultural Centre in India, Republic of China (Taiwan)

India's interests in Taiwan mainly lie in the economic sector. From US$ 1.19 billion in 2001–02 to US$ 5.7 billion in 2019-20, the two-way trade has increased manifold since the onset of the twenty-first century. India primarily exports Naphtha, metal and metal products, organic chemicals, and agricultural products to Taiwan; and its imports from Taiwan include PVC, machinery, organic chemicals, electrical machinery, ICT products, and solar cells.[3] As far as investment is concerned, by 2018, with a cumulative investment of U$ 1.5 billion, more than 100 Taiwanese companies were operational in India.[4]

Table 2: India-Taiwan Two Way Trade

(US$ Billions)

Year	Export	Import	Total Trade	Balance of Trade
2015-16	1.4	3.3	4.7	(-) 1.9
2016-17	2.2	3.1	5.3	(-) 0.9
2017-18	2.1	3.9	6	(-) 1.8
2018-19	2.6	4.6	7.2	(-) 2
2019-20	1.7	4	5.7	(-) 2.3

Source: Ministry of Commerce, Republic of India

Taiwan is a major hub in the regional supply mechanism. According to the ITA, "the potential sectors of collaboration between India and Taiwan are Electronic Systems Design and Manufacturing (ESDM), Machinery, Auto parts, Green energy, Agri-businesses, Food processing, Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical, Tourism and Education."[5] In terms of technology, India can benefit immensely from the technological advances Taiwan has made. For example, the IT sector, cell phone technology, etc. are the areas in which India generally relies on China. But it can easily switch over to Taiwan.[6] Since India is attempting to decouple from the Chinese economy, Taiwan can be an important economic partner. In October 2020, the Indian government decided

to give approval to Taiwanese firms, such as the Foxconn Technology Group, the Wistron Corp. and the Pegatron Corp., for investment worth more than US$ 143 billion for Smartphone production, over the next five years.[7] This also makes sense as Taiwan is one the few economies that has continued to grow amidst the pandemic. According to Taiwan's Statistics Bureau, "Taiwan's gross domestic product expanded 3.3 percent in the third quarter from a year ago, its fastest increase since June 2018."[8]

When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, there were speculations that India's Taiwan policy will see a transformation. He visited Taiwan in his capacity as the General Secretary of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1999; and later, in 2011, he invited a business delegation to Gujarat when he was the Chief Minister of the state. In 2014, he invited Ambassador Chung Kwang-Tien, former Representative of Taiwan to India, to his swearing-in ceremony. Over the years, there have been several parliamentary delegation visits from Taiwan to India. The last visit was by an all-women parliamentary delegation in 2017, under the framework of the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum. China registered a strong protest to the growing interaction between India and Taiwan, and immediately after that, the Doklam standoff took place. Though it seems there was no link between the parliamentary delegation's visit and the border standoff, it did shift the Indian leadership's attention towards the boundary dispute, and affected the consistency in interactions between India and Taiwan. Immediately after the Doklam standoff, India, along with Australia, Japan, and the USA decided to revive the quadrilateral security dialogue. China's growing aggression was at the helm of rejuvenated interest of the four countries in the quadrilateral security dialogue. However, sensing the countries' efforts to form the coalition against China, the Chinese leadership extended an olive branch to India, and suggested that the Indian and Chinese leaders meet in an informal summit. That led to the Wuhan Summit in 2018, and later to the Mamallapuram summit in 2019. These developments led the Indian leadership to believe that they might achieve a breakthrough in more than seven-decade old boundary dispute. This meant putting elevating ties with Taiwan on the back burner. In 2018, Air India, the Indian official airline, changed the name of Taiwan to Chinese Taipei on its website. This was widely perceived as a move to rectify ties with China by agreeing to the nomenclature set by China. The last few years have witnessed growing competition, conflict, and divergence between India and China, and India's obvious preoccupation with China has obstructed India-Taiwan ties. The cooperation between India and Taiwan is restricted to the commercial sector

and the science and technology field. The scope of cooperation in other sectors, such as education, security, and even people-to-people contact, remains limited.

India and the New Southbound Policy

In 2016, Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan assumed office, and one of her first policy moves was to launch the New Southbound Policy. The major objectives of the policy include,

- 'Fostering links between Taiwan and the New Southbound countries in the areas of economic and trade relations, science and technology, and culture; share resources, talent, and markets;
- Creating a new cooperation mode that seeks mutual benefits and win-win situations;
- Forging a sense of economic community.'[9]

The New Southbound Policy has four components: soft power links; supply chain links; regional markets links; and people-to-people links. On 20 May 2016, during her inaugural address, President Tsai Ing-wen stated,

> We will promote the New Southbound Policy in order to elevate the scope and diversity of our external economy, and to bid farewell to our past overreliance on a single market … We will broaden exchanges and cooperation with regional neighbours in areas such as technology, culture and commerce, and expand in particular our dynamic relationships with ASEAN and India.[10]

That was partly in response to China's attempts to poach Taiwan's diplomatic allies. However, the New Southbound Policy is just not about reducing Taiwan's dependence on China; it is also about increasing its international outreach. On 5 September 2016, Executive Yuan unveiled a plan to promote the policy, and illustrated four major components of the policy: 'promoting economic collaboration, conducting talent exchanges, sharing resources, and forging regional links'.[11]

While the New Southbound Policy was considered an extension of the previous administration's Go South policy, the New Southbound Policy is wider in geographical and administrative scope. In total, 18 countries are part of the New Southbound policy: 10 ASEAN, Australia, New Zealand, and six South Asian countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. India is one of the focus countries of the New Southbound

Policy. The Go South Policy was launched by Lee Teng-hui, the former President of Taiwan in 1994, and was carried forward by Chen Shui-bian. The focus areas of the earlier Go South Policies was on lessening dependence on China, and reaching out to the Southeast Asian economies. Similarly, India launched its Look East Policy in 1992, and the focus was on the ASEAN.

As Taiwan is attempting to find new partners and diversify its foreign relations, India occupies an important place in the New Southbound policy as well as Taiwan's foreign policy agenda in a wider sense. James Huang, the first Director of the New Southbound Policy office and now the Chair of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council, called "India the 'jewel' in Taiwan's external economic strategy."[12] India has also upgraded its Look East Policy, and the newer Act East Policy covers a wider geographical expanse, including countries of East Asia to the Pacific Island. Taiwan is also a part of the policy geographically. India's expansion of its Look East Policy and Taiwan's willingness to strengthen ties in the Indo-Pacific under the aegis of its New Southbound Policy, are complementary with each other.

Time to Revisit the One-China Policy

India was one of the first countries to adhere to the One-China policy. That means India does not have diplomatic ties with Taiwan. However, India has stopped mentioning its adherence to the One-China policy in the joint statements with China and other official documents since 2010. What is interesting to note is that even though India mentioned its acceptance of the One-China policy before 2010, it never mentioned Taiwan in the joint statements, while Tibet was mentioned several times. For instance, in 2005, during the visit of Wen Jiabao, former Chinese Premier, the joint statement made a specific mention of Tibet,

> The Indian side reiterated that it recognized the Tibet Autonomous Region as part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and that it did not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India. The Indian side recalled that India was among the first countries to recognize that there is one China and its one China Policy remains unaltered. The Indian side stated it would continue to abide by its One China policy.[13]

In 2008, during the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to China, the mention of Tibet was dropped; but India's acknowledgment of the

One-China policy was there. The joint statement mentions the following.

> The Indian side recalls that India was among the first countries to recognize that there is One China and that its One China policy has remained unaltered. The Indian side states that it would continue to abide by its One China policy, and oppose any activity that is against the One China principle. The Chinese side expresses its appreciation for the Indian position.[14]

In 2014, during the visit of Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister, to India, the late Sushma Swaraj, former Minister of External Affairs, stated, "We support the One China policy. However, we expect you to also have a One India policy."[15] Despite the protracted boundary dispute, China's attempts to undermine India's territorial integrity and growing tensions with China, India has remained overcautious in engaging Taiwan. It has yet to shed its diffidence. The China factor has loomed large over any prospect for the elevation of India's ties with Taiwan.

Taiwan officials have been urging India to forge closer ties with Taiwan without compromising on its adherence to One-China policy. In this context, Tien Chung-kwang, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Taiwan, and the former Representative of Taiwan to India, said,

> Taipei is hoping and urging the Indian government to develop relations between India and Taiwan to be parallel to ties with China. We have no objections for India to make friends with any country in the world but not at the cost of Taiwan's relations with India. This is something (on which) we are very firm and urging the Indian government.[16]

What is important for India to realise is that the relations with Taiwan can be managed and upgraded without abandoning adherence to the One-China policy. Cooperation in areas such as economics, culture, agriculture, education, etc. may be expanded without considering and worrying excessively about China's reaction.

India-Taiwan Relations in 2020

In 2020, unprecedentedly, domestic public opinion in India shifted in Taiwan's favour. This is primarily due to Taiwan's COVID-19 response. As of 17 December 2020, with 749 cases [657 imported; 55 local; 36 from the Panshi fast combat ship; 1 unknown], and seven causalities, Taiwan's democratic and far successful model to deal with the COVID-19 has been presented as an alternative to China's rather authoritarian model. Taiwan has actually

turned the crisis into an opportunity, and shown that its policy in the time of the pandemic is inclusive. It has donated millions of masks (more than 50 million to at least 80 countries), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and other necessary medical supplies to the countries in need. It has also extended its medical diplomacy to India. In May 2020, Taiwan donated 1 million masks to the Indian Red Cross Society, and masks worth Rs. 45 lakhs (US$ 61,000) to the Mizoram government in June 2020. Later, due to the growing tensions between India and China, and the latter's rising aggression at the border front, China is increasingly seen as an adversary in India. Taiwan's image as a responsible stakeholder has been established among Indians, and calls to proactively engage Taiwan are getting stronger. On 20 May 2020, Meenakshi Lekhi and Rahul Kaswan, two BJP Parliamentarians, attended the second swearing-in ceremony of Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen virtually.

One of the limitations in India-Taiwan relations is that the government-to-government interactions are still restricted, and the potential in several areas of cooperation remain under utilised. In the absence of official diplomatic ties, non-state actors have played a crucial role in bolstering ties. For example,media's role in generating awareness about Taiwan in the COVID-19 times is a case in point. Wide media reportage about Taiwan's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic played a pivotal role in steering the discussion in Taiwan's favour. On 7 October 2020, the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi issued a diktat to the Indian media not to refer Taiwan as a country while reporting on its National Day. The statement read,

> Regarding the so-called forthcoming National Day of Taiwan, the Chinese Embassy in India would like to remind our media friends that there is only One China in the world, and the Government of People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China. Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.[17]

This backfired, resulting in even wider reporting on Taiwan. Several Indians, including journalists and local leaders from the BJP, wished Taiwan on its National Day, and even posters were put outside the Chinese embassy to wish Taiwan on 10 October. This led to meaningful discussions about Taiwan in India. Even India's Ministry of External Affairs responded by saying the "Indian media is a free entity and they can report on any issue they deem fit."[18] Taiwan seems eager to expand ties with India. The India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum was revived in 2020. Several developments have led to positive momentum in India-Taiwan relations in 2020. However,

what remains to be seen how the two sides sustain the momentum.

Prospects for India-Taiwan Relations

Engaging Taiwan has its own merits. Elevating ties in the field of commerce, culture, education, science and technology does not violate India's adherence to One China Policy. Steps need to be taken to bolster already existing mechanisms. An agreement between the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce and India's PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry already exist. Under the framework of the agreement, annual industry dialogue may be initiated. Commerce dialogue exists at the secretary level. The level of the same may be elevated for better prospects in the economic field. Another important addition to the already existing dialogues will be an annual India-Taiwan CEO Forum, or at least regular exchanges between senior business executives.[19]

Baushuan Ger, Taiwan's Representative to India, has pointed out complementarity between India and Taiwan for fostering industry collaboration. He has highlighted that,

> Taiwan excels at hardware manufacturing while India's expertise and competence lies in software development. India enjoys a demographic dividend as well as a perfect location with respect to market access in East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Responding to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have noticed that India has doubled down on its 'Make in India' initiative and Self-Reliant India (*Atmanirbhar Bharat*) to boost the economy and attract foreign investment. India, therefore, is invigorated to put more effort to attract Taiwanese businesses. Taiwan's industries, especially ICT and electronics, have become technologically autonomous. We are glad to see India continue to improve its investment environment, as this benefits Taiwanese businesses looking to expand investment in India.[20]

As far as cooperation at the government level is concerned, a dialogue in policy planning, and cyber security will prove mutually beneficial. Health cooperation should also be expanded. Other countries such as the USA are attempting to learn from Taiwan's best practices. In August 2020, Alex Azar, US Secretary of Health and Human Services visited Taiwan. It was the first visit by a US cabinet level official since 1979. During Azar's visit, a memorandum of understanding on health cooperation between the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the US Department of Health and Human Services

was signed. Similarly, India, which is yet to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, could learn from Taiwan's approach towards the COVID-19 regarding what approach suits it best.

However, one area that has immense potential but remains under-utilised till date is people-to-people linkages. Given that Taiwan's New Southbound Policy is people-centric, in the absence of formal diplomatic recognition, this aspect assumes immense importance in India-Taiwan relations. A lot could be done to strengthen tourism prospects. In 2019, the number of outbound Indian tourists was 29 million. Countries such as Thailand and Singapore receive a substantial number of Indian tourists. For instance, in 2018, Singapore received 1.4 million Indian tourists, whereas 2 million Indian tourists visited Thailand. However, the number of Indian tourists visiting Taiwan remains low. Only 35000–45000 Indian tourists visit Taiwan annually. Similarly, only 30000–35000 Taiwanese tourists visit India annually. Though Taiwan Tourism Bureau has an office in Mumbai, the fundamental problem still remains the lack of awareness about Taiwan's potential as a major tourist destination. Taiwan is trying to work on this. One example is that it has launched halal and vegetarian tourism to attract tourists from South and Southeast Asia. Taiwan tourism bureau came up with *Taiwan 2020* which aimed at increasing tourism to Taiwan from Asian countries.

Taiwan should also consider introducing easy tourist visas to Indians, in a way somewhat similar to Thailand and Malaysia. With more awareness about Taiwan and its successful COVID-19 response, most Indians are more likely to choose Taiwan as their next holiday destination once the pandemic has eased.[21] Difficult visa procedure for Indians for Taiwan remains an issue, and is limiting the prospects for tourism. The two sides also need to work on direct connectivity between Delhi and Taipei. Only China Airlines (Taiwan's state-owned airlines), operates direct flights between Delhi and Taipei. More airlines should be encouraged to start direct flights not just between Delhi and Taipei but between other Indians states and Taipei. More options and cheaper air travel will motivate people from both sides to travel. More needs to be done in the field of tourism and culture. India's soft power - one of the strongest features of India's public diplomacy - is not projected well in Taiwan.

Both, India and Taiwan donot have enough scholarship to understand each other. More Taiwanese and Indian scholars should be encouraged to study India and Taiwan. For better understanding of each other, further academic exchanges at the level of think-tanks and universities are the need

of the hour. Educational exchanges are yet to achieve their optimum level. Taiwan may be developed as an important destination for Indians to learn the Chinese language. Taiwan has been able to attract Indian students and professionals primarily in the sciences and information technology fields. While Taiwan's Ministry of Education offers language and higher studies scholarships, the lack of awareness about such programs is still a key challenge.

The Way Forward

There is a growing realisation that China should not define India's equation with Taiwan, and a rethink in the policy is crucial. Countries such as Japan and Singapore have established robust ties with Taiwan. India may emulate their model.

Today, the interests of India and Taiwan converge more than ever before. 2020 was a year of possibilities for India and Taiwan. However, to sustain the momentum in ties, it is imperative for both countries to make the relations multidimensional and strengthen ties at several levels, such as people-to-people contact, business-to-business connections, and government-to-government ties. The New Southbound Policy and the Act East Policy provide a framework for India and Taiwan to engage each other, and a consistent and long-term strategy for engagement will be mutually beneficial.

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Punching Above Weight? The Role of Sri Lanka in BIMSTEC

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Why do small states like Sri Lanka show a keen interest in being a part of regional organisations? Why does Sri Lanka wish to punch above its weight in such groupings? What does it strive to achieve in the process? How far has it been successful? It is worth addressing these questions to understand the role of India's small neighbours vis-à-vis regional groupings by looking at the case of Sri Lanka.

In the increasingly globalised world, international cooperation has become imperative. States are finding it difficult to overcome economic, security, socio-political, and other challenges on their own. This is more than true for small states which are militarily less powerful, have low GDP, are geographically small, and have a relatively small population.[1] In international relations, social Darwinists have, in fact, written off small states as "insignificant", and have been confident that they would disappear *en masse*. The birth of the United Nations and the proliferation of numerous regional organisations in the post-Second World War era has changed the dynamics in favour of small states by giving them a sense of family like protection as is given to infants and children.[2] Multilateral organisations are, therefore, imperative for the very survival of small states. No wonder, small states tend to have "high levels of activity in international organisations", and "support for international legal norms".[3]

Jennie Hey argues that "small states choose to participate in multilateral organisations to attain foreign policy goals."[4] These goals vary from security and economic development on the one hand, to enhancing their image and stature in the international arena on the other. The cooperative arrangements could be at regional or global levels. But, statistically speaking, small states give preference to regional organisations, especially in their respective vicinities,

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to achieve their security and development interests. For instance, regional groupings like ASEAN, SAARC, BIMSTEC are populated by and, in fact, propelled by small states. The rationale is based on "the need for transnational pooling and coordination of state functions to adjust to and facilitate the transnationalisation of capital."[5]

In cooperative arrangements, especially in regional groupings, small states "enjoy greater freedom of action, including free riding, which is accepted by the international community."[6] As such, small states may be of little value individually; but they carry considerable weight collectively. Regional groupings also give small states a level of confidence to resist the undue influence of large states from the same organisation by ganging up. SAARC is a classic case.[7] Crucially, small states look at regional groupings as protective umbrellas in order to deal with various vulnerabilities: economic, disasters (natural or manmade), security threats (traditional or non-traditional), and so on. In a regional cooperative arrangement, guided by the principle of good neighbourliness, small states feel safer.[8] In the economic domain, cooperative mechanisms give small states better market access and lower tariffs for their goods, and better import terms through preferential or free trade agreements. Given their limited resources and feeble negotiation capacity, herding strategies work better for small states. Else, negotiating free trade agreements with each and every country bilaterally would be a huge task.

With this analytical backdrop, the paper seeks to find answers to the following questions: How significant is BIMSTEC for Sri Lanka? What role has Colombo been playing to augment the contours of the regional arrangement? Are there any national interests involved in such a robust role? What challenges are confronted in the process? How does India see this?

BIMSTEC and Sri Lanka: The Context

Established in 1997, the 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC), is a sector-specific cooperative arrangement, aimed at synchronising the 'Look West' policy of some countries of ASEAN with the 'Look East/Act East' policy of certain South Asian countries. The Bangkok Declaration of 1997 clearly spelled out the aims of the new grouping as being to "create [an] enabling environment for rapid economic development … accelerate economic growth … promote active collaboration … provide assistance … and to cooperate on various areas identified."[9] At its second Ministerial Meeting in 1998, six sectors were identified for cooperation: Trade and Investment, Transport and Communication, Energy, Tourism,

Technology, and Fisheries. Later, in 2005, at the eighth Ministerial Meeting, seven new areas of cooperation were added: Agriculture, Public Health, Poverty Alleviation, Counter-terrorism and Transnational Crime, Environment and Disaster Management, People-to-People Contact, and Cultural Cooperation. Given its significance, Climate Change was added as the 14th area of cooperation in 2008.[10]

Eventually, the number of sectors were concretised to seven: Science, Technology and Innovation; Trade and Investment; Environment and Climate Change; Agriculture and Food Security; Security; People-to-People Contact; and Connectivity. Two reasons were behind the idea of reducing the number of sectors by half: to avoid the overlapping of the scopes of sectors; and to entrust each country with the leadership of a sector by giving focused attention for advancing cooperation among the member countries of the region.

The following table details the sectors and the lead countries:

Table 1: Country-wise Distribution of Sectors in BIMSTEC

Lead Countries	Sectors
Bangladesh	Trade, Investment and Development
Bhutan	Environment and Climate Change
India	Security (Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Management & Energy)
Myanmar	Agriculture and Food Security
Nepal	People-to-people contact (culture, tourism, forums of Think Thanks, Media
Sri Lanka	Science, Technology and Innovation
Thailand	Connectivity

Source: www.bimstec.org

In terms of methodology, the lead countries are in charge of facilitating cooperation in the areas allotted to them through an Expert Group for each of the sectors drawn from the member countries. The country in charge has to ensure the conceptualisation, implementation, and constant monitoring of the cooperation in the specified area.[11]

As a small state, Sri Lanka lays more emphasis on being part of cooperative frameworks - global or regional - to push its national interests. As a result, Colombo is part of several global and regional groupings. BIMSTEC is not just one among them, but is one of the principal ones. Sri Lanka is a key founding member and outgoing chair of BIMSTEC (2018–2020).

For three major main reasons, Sri Lanka is deeply interested in BIMSTEC:

1. There is a special bond between the island state and the grouping. Since its independence, Sri Lanka wished to be a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. That is exactly what BIMSTEC aspires to do: "The regional group constitutes a bridge between South and South East Asia and represents a reinforcement of relations among these countries."[12] Not only being a bridge between two regions, BIMSTEC also has set-up a platform for cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN members.
2. Significantly, BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization unlike various other regional groups. So far, 14 sectors have been identified: trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact, and climate change.[13] This is exactly what Sri Lanka wants at this juncture. Being an island country, cooperation based on a sea-based grouping is as natural for Sri Lanka as fish to water. According to Sri Lanka, "BIMSTEC means connectivity, engagement and prosperity" that the island state desperately needs at any point in time.[14]
3. Being realistic, Sri Lanka is also going with the flow. Stuck in myriad issues and bottlenecks among some of its members, SAARC is struggling even to conduct its regular summit meetings. Consequently, the South Asian grouping's key member, India, has been trying to shift its focus towards Southeast Asia, and towards sub-regional groupings, so as not to get stalled by SAARC's switch-on and switch-off mode, as dictated by Pakistan. In this regard, of late, India has started giving much importance to cooperative arrangements like Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), BIMSTEC, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), and East Asia Summit (EAS)[15]. Can Sri Lanka afford to ignore signals sent by India?

Role in Key Sectors

It is significant that Sri Lanka figures in the upper tier of the classification of states in BIMSTEC: Developing and Least Developed. In the former category, India and Thailand figure, along with Sri Lanka; in the latter category four countries - Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh - are clubbed. Entrusted with Science, Technology, and the Innovation sector, Colombo has taken a keen interest in all the sectors identified, especially trade, and security. It is significant that Colombo, as the Chair of the Organisation, has been instrumental

in enhancing the profile of the organisation through various initiatives. Colombo's role in BIMSTEC is seen in these three predominant areas.

Technology

Technology is a vital sector in propelling economic growth. Sri Lanka is designated to lead the grouping on the technology sector, both in capacity-building and in technology management (this includes IPRs, technology forecasting, and technology intermediation). In this regard, the island state has put in effort in two directions: intra-grouping technology transfer and inter-regional technology exchange - for the benefit of the member countries.[16] Some of the key areas identified for technology cooperation include, "agro-based technologies, food processing, herbal products, biotechnology, information and communication technology."[17] It should be noted that Sri Lanka is the first country in South Asia, and the second country in Asia after Japan, to be part of the Budapest Convention. Sri Lanka's e-Sri Lanka initiative by the Information and Communication Technology Agency in 2005 has enabled various online initiatives in the island.[18] All these refer to the technological acumen and preference given by the island state to technology-driven governance and its development trajectory.

In due course, advanced areas of fundamental scientific research in both software and hardware development as well as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) were identified for cooperation. To firm up all the above areas of technology cooperation and exchange, Colombo proposed the setting up of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TFF) way back in 2006. This idea was endorsed at the second BIMSTEC Summit in 2008, and an Expert Group was duly formed to draft a Memorandum of Association (MoA). However, though the MoA is ready, the TFF is yet to see the light of the day even after a decade.[19] The challenge before the country is how to build technology-driven knowledge-based economies despite the prevalence of illiteracy and the low income of its people.

Trade

Trade is gradually picking up in BIMSTEC. Intra-regional trade among the grouping countries is around US$ 70 bn; but that constitutes only seven percent of the total global trade of the member states. This is far less when compared to ASEAN's US$ 600 bn (intra-regional trade constituting 23 percent of its global trade), although it is not fair to compare with a grouping that is

old and well entrenched.[20] Free trade agreements among BIMSTEC countries are a good option to enhance intra-regional trade volume. However, issues of trade patterns and complementarities remain hurdles that also bothers Sri Lanka. Interestingly, it was India that went ahead and signed the first free trade agreement with Sri Lanka in the region.

Yet another issue is the skewed nature of the economy of the countries of BIMSTEC. Of the combined US$ 3.5 trillion GDP of member states, India accounts for whopping 74 percent, Thailand 13 percent, Bangladesh 7.3 percent, Sri Lanka four percent, Myanmar two percent and Nepal and Bhutan less than one percent.[21] However, it is significant to note that the Bay of Bengal is strategically located at the centre of the Indo-Pacific region which witnesses a chunk of world trade flows. Sri Lanka, especially, is at the entry point of the Bay, connecting to the Indo-Pacific maritime highway. In this sense, Sri Lanka is crucial for enhancing BIMSTEC's maritime trade connectivity to the outside world. Three important harbours - Trincomalee, Hambantota, and Colombo - would serve both as transhipment and trading ports.[22]

With these potentials, free trade agreement is an obvious choice. The BIMSTEC members already have either bilateral or regional free trade arrangements in the vicinity. Some of the regional FTAs include: ASEAN FTA involving Thailand and Myanmar, ASEAN-India FTA, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) involving Myanmar, Thailand and India, ASEAN-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership, South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) involving Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan, and Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) involving Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Some of the bilateral FTAs include India's bilateral FTAs with Sri Lanka and Bhutan, and a Treaty of Trade with Nepal. Therefore, going by the web of free trade agreements touching almost all the member countries, BIMSTEC FTA looks to be a smooth sail. The member countries did, indeed, make it a priority since the beginning to enhance trade in goods and services, apart from investments. However, the progress has been very slow. Although a Framework Agreement was signed way back in 2004 by establishing a Trade Negotiating Committee, the negotiations are still on. The principal hurdle posed has been differences over market access between the two big economies of BIMSTEC: India and Thailand. In 2016, the countries agreed to pace-up the negotiations on at least two issues in the FTA: preferential treatment to Least Development Countries, and pushing relaxations in services and investments.[23]

Sri Lanka will, nevertheless, benefit from BIMSTEC FTA because of free trade opportunity with six countries in the neighbourhood in one go. BIMSTEC countries account for around 18 percent of Sri Lanka's total trade in goods. Of this, 23 percent are imports and only seven percent are exports. There is, thus, a huge gap between import and export figures. Crucially, India accounts for around 80 percent of goods exported, and 87 percent of goods imported. This does not cover informal trade between these two neighbours, which is mostly one-way from India to Sri Lanka. In this context, an FTA in the Bay of Bengal area would benefit the island state in the form of trade diversification.[24]

Sri Lanka's specific role in certain sub-sectors within the trade sector is important to note. The trade sector of BIMSTEC is broadly divided into two categories: goods and services, and trade and investment. There are eight sub-sectors under goods and services, and seven sub-sectors under trade and investment. Sri Lanka is entrusted with two sub-sectors - gems and jewellery and processed food - in the goods and services category. Under the trade and investment category, Sri Lanka has been identified as the lead country to take care of two sub-sectors: banking arrangement and mobility of businesspeople.[25]

Table 2: Sub-sectors and Lead Countries in the BIMSTEC Trade Sector

Category I: Good and Services	
Country	**Sub-sector**
Bangladesh	Textile and clothing
India	Drugs/Pharmaceuticals & coconut and spices
Sri Lanka	Gems and Jewellery & processed food
Thailand	Automotive industry and parts; horticultural/floricultural products & rubber, tea, coffee
Category II: Trade and Investment Facilitation	
Bangladesh	Customs procedures
India	Promotion of intra-BIMSTEC investments; intellectual property rights & e-BIMSTEC
Sri Lanka	Banking arrangement & mobility of business people
Thailand	Standards and conformity

Source: Nepal-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The country-wise allocation of sub-sectors in the following table will give a wider idea.

It should be noted that in the sub-sector allocation, three countries - Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan - were not given any charge. Perhaps this was because of their underdevelopment. But sometime in the future, these three countries could be given an opportunity to look at some of these sub-sectors in both the categories. Both India and Sri Lanka support this standpoint, recognising the increasing economic capabilities of Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan. Perhaps, handholding for some time before giving full responsibility of the sub-sectors may be considered.

Security

Security is yet another important sector of cooperation. Some of the common threats faced by BIMSTEC countries include terrorism, organised crime, drug-trafficking, human trafficking, illegal migration, and radicalisation. A Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) was established to jointly fight against terrorism as well as organised and related threats in the Bay of Bengal region. Six Sub-Groups, each working on a specific aspect of CTTC cooperation, were formed to report to the BIMSTEC Joint Working on CTTC.

The following table provides details of the sub-groups and the countries responsible (called as 'Lead Shepherd'):

Table 3: Sub-groups and Lead Shepherds in BIMSTEC Security Sector

Sub-Group	Lead Shepherd
Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals	Myanmar
Intelligence Sharing	Sri Lanka
Legal and Law Enforcement Issues	India
Anti- Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism	Thailand
Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration	Bangladesh
Countering Radicalization and Terrorism.	India

Source: www.bimstec.org

As a 'Lead Shepherd' of intelligence sharing, Sri Lanka is strategically located to effectively coordinate intelligence sharing among the member countries. Such coordination goes well with its lead role in technology cooperation. Presently, the sub-group is involved in creating a database on all aspects of terrorism and transnational crimes in the region. In addition, under the auspicious of the United Nations Office on Drugs Crime (UNODC), a collaboration between BIMSTEC and the South Asia Regional Intelligence

Sharing and Coordination Centre (SARICC) has been taken forward to know more about the drug trafficking in the region.[26] Sri Lanka's capability in intelligence sharing was questioned in the wake of the Easter attacks of April 2019. The intelligence inputs that were provided by India on the imminent attacks were not acted upon. However, with the assumption of a new government under the Rajapaksas, attempts are being made to plug the loopholes. When it comes to legal frameworks on security cooperation, they are not disappointing. Way back in 2009, the member countries signed the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime, and Illicit Drug Trafficking. Though awaiting ratification from all member states, the Convention provides "each [member state] the widest possible measure of mutual assistance in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and suppression of such crimes."[27] Significantly, Sri Lanka's over three-decade-old ethnic war with the LTTE ended in that year. Sri Lanka was at the forefront to push such security cooperation to blunt LTTE's strong international financial, arms, and other support networks. And now, there is a reason for taking security issues more seriously in the wake of the Easter attacks.

The BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, which "aims to extend [the] widest possible assistance to each other through mutual cooperation for enhancing capability and effectiveness of the Member States in investigation and prosecution of crimes, including crimes related to terrorism, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering and cyber-crimes", has been finalised but awaiting signature.[28] Yet another legal framework favoured by Sri Lanka that is on cards is the BIMSTEC Convention on Human Trafficking. Sri Lanka has also been actively participating in the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs meetings since 2017 to give impetus to the monitoring and implementation aspects of the legal frameworks on security.[29] In all these, Colombo has been ably guided and supported by New Delhi.

BIMSTEC as an Institution

As one of the key founding members, Sri Lanka is keen to establish strong institutions for the grouping. When Colombo held the chair during 2002–2003, "the importance of the political commitment of member countries was underlined for promoting a more intensified sub-regional cooperation."[30] At a later date, the island state proposed a 'troika system', comprising former, current, and upcoming chairs, to establish continuity in policy formulation

and implementation in all the identified sectors. The idea of having "observers" and "dialogue partners" in the grouping on the lines of SAARC/ASEAN has also been floated for greater inclusivity and support systems for the effective cooperation in all the sectors.[31] Interestingly, it is Sri Lanka that has been pushing the idea of including 'observers' and 'dialogue partners' to complement gaps in resources, expertise, technology, and so on. But there is also politics in such a suggestion: bringing big powers like China would help in checking on India. In that case, it may scuttle the very purpose of cooperation. Therefore, such ideas of the inclusion of extra-regional members require careful deliberation.

Colombo also has highlighted the issue of the BIMSTEC charter. Having a charter on the lines of other regional groupings like ASEAN, SAARC, and the EU would provide themuch-required standards. But, at the same time, not having a charter gives the grouping enormous flexibility in decision-making and operations.[32] However, as the chair, Sri Lanka finalised a charter for BIMSTEC, keeping in mind both flexibility and having standard rules of procedures. Colombo has also has been advocating a "revisit the Declaration" in the light of changes in the past two decades. This idea is worth looking at, considering the new additions in memberships and the rising aspirations and needs of the existing members. It is also important to note that Sri Lanka was instrumental in the rationalization of sectors and the Memorandum of Understanding on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/Training Institutions of BIMSTEC Member States.[33] India's support, in this regard, is immense. Sri Lanka has also advocated "outreach activities" with the UN and other similar regional organisations for maximum benefit, including "recognition, financial assistance, expert assistance, market access, etc."[34]

Conclusion

Sri Lanka is undoubtedly a key member of BIMSTEC, and has been intensely involved in making the grouping more vibrant in all the 14 sectors identified for cooperation. The fact that India is keen on energising BIMSTEC, is a big plus for Sri Lanka's ambitions. As the current chair (2018 to 2020), it has facilitated conduct of three Permanent Working Committee Meetings and a Senior Officials Meeting.[35] Over a period of time, Sri Lanka did inject dynamism and added vitality to the organisation in various capacities.

As a sector-in-charge of technology, Sri Lanka has a pivotal role to enhance cooperation in those fields that revolves around technology. Technology Transfer Facility that "aims to expand the technological knowledge and skills

of micro, small, and medium sized enterprises in the Bay of Bengal, and thereby build knowledge-based economies" is one important aspect.[36] Sri Lanka has also been playing a pivotal role in the trade and security sectors. Yet, it should be acknowledged that the enormous potential of BIMSTEC remains untapped. Human and natural resources are a plenty. Given the level of synergies and complementarities among the member states, it is viable to realise the Bay of Bengal Economic Community at some point. India is at the forefront in pushing this point.

In this regard, the formation of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (RC-BNPTT) for wider regional consultations on policy matters is a good move. At the same time, for wider acceptability and entrenchment, it is vital to take the grouping to the level of the people. Sri Lanka's pitch for track 1.5, track 2, and track 3 dialogues among BIMSTEC members, and public diplomacy to reach out to the people would work to a greater extent in this regard. Presently, BIMSTEC hovers around at political and bureaucratic levels. Linking up with other like-minded regional groupings is important. Engagement with BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is a good move. At the same time, Colombo should not neglect SAARC. Sri Lanka could take a lead in reviving the South Asian grouping rather than putting it in cold storage. No country other than Sri Lanka is in a good strategic position to strengthen regional groupings in the area. Colombo undoubtedly has a strong supporter in India.

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BOOK REVIEW

S. Jaishankar, ***The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World,*** (New Delhi, Harper Collins India, 2020), Pages: 240 (HB), Price: Rs. 296.54 (K), Rs. 558.00 (HB).

The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World provides an analysis of Indian approaches dealing with the turbulence caused by the rapid shifting of the global balance of power. The Corona Virus pandemic has further heightened the uncertainty, and made the world even more volatile. How is India coping with the task of designing a foreign policy for uncertain times? The book offers useful insights.

Set against the backdrop of India's rise, the author points to emerging dimensions in India's foreign policy. The crucial point he makes is that, in an uncertain world, India must develop its own narrative, strategies, approaches, and solutions to the problems rather than react to someone else's compulsions, and live on borrowed wisdom.

The book has emerged from the authors' various lectures and talks given at different fora following his retirement as India's Foreign Secretary in 2018 after a 41-year long rich diplomatic career, and before he became the External Affairs Minister in May 2019 in Prime Minister Modi's cabinet. During his long diplomatic career, S. Jaishankar served as India's Ambassador to several countries, including the USA, China, and Singapore.

Being a Minister, the author would understandably be balanced and careful in his expression lest it impacts India's relations with other countries. However, that has not prevented him from stating what was wrong and what was right and India's 70-year long foreign policy journey. He divides this evolution into six phases: namely, 1947–1962 (optimistic nonalignment); 1962–1971 (realism and recovery); 1971–1991 (regional assertion); 1991–1998 (nuclear power); 1998–2014 (as a balancing power); and the beginning of a new phase from 2014 onwards when Modi became the Prime Minister. Each phase ends with a defining event: the Sino-Indian War of 1962; the dismemberment of Pakistan's in 1971; the opening of the Indian economy in 1991; the nuclear tests of 1998; the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2005; and the beginning of Prime Minister Modi's first term in 2014. The author's approach in the book is conceptual rather than descriptive. This enhances the value of the book manifold. The

book has eight chapters and an Epilogue. Each chapter can be read as a standalone chapter.

The first chapter, "The Lessons of Awadh", points to a historical weakness in Indian leadership's character: namely, the preoccupation of its rulers with little things, and an indifference to larger global trends. In the process, Indians lost out to the East India Company which was essentially a trading company but eventually came to rule the entire country by exploiting the infighting among Indian rulers and their self-obsessions. Pointing out to the famous Satyajit Ray film *Shatranj Ke Khilari*, the author describes this tendency as the 'Awadh' syndrome. He asks, "Will the world continue to define India, or will India now define itself? Awadh remains the symbol of the former to this day" (page 17).

The second chapter, "The Art of the Disruption", examines the consequences of the rebalancing that is under way as US dominance declines, and China emerges as a challenger to the western-dominated order. To many countries, including India, the new balance of power will bring new opportunities. The author says that it is vital that "India makes the most of convergences with others, and helps achieve an overall balance by forging more contemporary ties on every major account" (page 26). He goes on to say that the world is becoming increasingly multipolar. It is the new balance of power rather than collective security that will become important (page 32). India will have to engage in a diverse set of partnerships more creatively (page 42). The theme that India should build partnerships with like-minded countries with whom it shares common values runs through the book.

The third chapter, "Krishna's Choice", is one of the most original and thought-provoking essays. It relates the events described in the famous Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, which is an account of the Great War fought by the Pandavas and their cousins the Kauravas. This is made to represent contemporary scenarios. While the stories in the epic are fascinating in their own right, it is the lessons in strategy that the *Mahabharata* provides which concern the author. These answer Western criticism which often points out that India has no tradition in strategic thinking. The stories in the *Mahabharata* revolve around the personal dilemmas of the characters involved, the choices they make, and the consequences that flow from these choices. The *Mahabharata* contains the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna helps the reluctant warrior Arjuna achieve strategic clarity about the war which he almost refused to fight. In the *Shanti Parva* section, the epic has a detailed account of the statecraft which the patriarch Bhishma Pitamah taught Yudhisthira when he became king after winning the war.

The author draws attention to the critical issues dealt with in the *Mahabharata*, such as the rule of law; the conditions in which these rules can be violated; the importance of building a credible narrative based on the *dharma* or ethical conduct; the art of disruption and dissimulation in diplomacy and war-fighting; the importance of strategic clarity in achieving one's aims; and the numerous shades of diplomacy ranging from alliances to neutrality. Analysing the episodes in the *Mahabharata*, the author draws parallels between the multipolar world of those times and the one that accrues today. Of the many lessons that the *Mahabharata* holds for us today, the one that is emphasised by the author is the need to have strategic clarity about one's aims. To occupy a moral high ground while building a narrative based on ethics and the right conduct is also necessary. The author points out that while power is essential, it has to be used ethically and with restraint. He writes, "As Indians prepare for greater contribution, they must rely on their own traditions to equip themselves in facing the tumultuous world" (page 67).

The main message of the book is in chapter 4 which is titled "The Dogmas of Delhi". The author emphasises that India must overcome the 'hesitations of history', and liberate itself from past dogmas to deal with the new realities. This will require a clear understanding of emerging trends, an appetite for risk-taking, and self-belief. These were some of the attributes that were missing in the past. The Indo-US nuclear deal of 2005 was a turning point in India's foreign policy as it raised India's global stature, and opened up many opportunities. Since 2014, Indian foreign policy has become more realistic and pragmatic, and has also developed a willingness to take decisive action as was reflected in the surgical strikes after Uri and Balakot. The confidence so gained will stand India in good stead. According to the author, what India needs is greater realism, more economic capabilities, multiple engagements, risk taking, and reading global trends right (page 97–101).

In Chapter 5, "Of Mandarin and Masses", the author discusses the growing impact of public opinion on foreign policy. Foreign policy is no longer a game which only the elites play. The critical point made in this chapter is about the rise of nationalism across the world, be it 'America First' or 'China Dream'. India is no exception. Bharat, and not India, is now asserting itself in the foreign policy domain. This is a fundamental shift that needs to be understood. The author points out that India's nationalism has historically been inclusive. "Not driven by victimhood, Indian nationalism has the potential to serve as a bridge between the established and emerging orders" writes the author (page 114). Indian officials rarely talk of Indian nationalism in the context of foreign policy. However, the fact is that nationalism gives self-confidence which is

essential for engagement with the rest of the world. The author refers to the Indian tradition of treating the wider world as a family – Vasudhaiava Kutumbakam – an attribute of India's nationalistic outlook. This is often ignored or dismissed by the realists.

In Chapter 6, the author discusses what is arguably the most important challenge before India's foreign policy: namely, managing the rise of China. It offers an overview of India-China relations, and the adverse consequences of China's rise for India. The author points out that both countries are civilizational powers. They have been interacting with each other for a long time. They have viewed each other in a positive light for most of history. However, in the 1950s, nationalistic China brought into play the territorial dispute and the boundary question which has remained unresolved to this day, and is a source of many troubles. China's growing footprint in India's neighbourhood and its nexus with Pakistan are serious security issues for India.

Will Sino-Indian relations improve? The author recognises the inherent constraints in bilateral relations. Both are rising nations. Their footprints overlap. Competition and rivalry are evident, and cannot be wished away. The author is concerned about the power asymmetry between India and China. China has had a head start over India in building its comprehensive national power, while India has yet to do. He writes, "There are gaps in their comprehensive national power. We have yet to build some deep capabilities, achieve human development indices or create the growth conditions that China did for the last four decades. On the contrary, we have made this transition harder until recently" (page 151).

In chapter 7, the author examines in detail the salience of a strategic partnership between India and Japan in the emerging Asian balance. The two countries have had a cordial relationship for much of history; but this has not resulted in a strategic partnership. Japan was a staunch critic of India's 1998 nuclear tests. The situation began to turn in 2000, with Japanese Prime Minister Mori's visit to India. While the economic partnership has grown, political warmth has been missing. Both countries stand to gain from a mutual partnership in the emerging Asian balance of power. Japan is not only a technological storehouse but also potentially an important political power. India must, however, realise that Japan has a different culture and a different mindset. A lot of patience will be needed to develop the ties further.

The author also discusses the importance of ASEAN in India's foreign policy. Look East and Act East policies have filled a major gap in India's foreign policy. ASEAN has helped India to rediscover its past historical

connections with Asia. Developing strategic ties with ASEAN is one of the greatest achievements of Indian foreign policy in recent years. India is conscious of ASEAN's centrality in the Indo-Pacific.

In chapter 8, the author gives a nuanced analysis of the concept of the Indo-Pacific which is now an important pillar of India's foreign policy. India has also come out with a visionary Indian Ocean policy and a comprehensive maritime strategy. The author writes,

A comprehensive maritime strategy has a set of priorities, best depicted in terms of concentric circles. The first is a maritime infrastructure for the homeland… The next (is) … the maritime space beyond India's borders and its immediate island neighbours… The third (is) the revival of the Indian Ocean as a community that builds on its historical and cultural foundations… The outermost circle…takes India into the Pacific…" (page 187).

In the Epilogue, the author presents an analysis of how the Corona virus pandemic has impacted Indian foreign policy. The pandemic is one of the most important developments since 1945. The pandemic has triggered vigorous conversations about the trends and changes in the post-1945 world order. It has also brought into sharp relief the deficits in multilateralism. India was one of the few countries which came forward to help the other countries by sending medicines and other medical equipment - a lot of it on a grant basis - thus refurbishing its image as a 'generous' country. As a champion of reformed multilateralism, India now has a chance to carry forward the dialogue further. The author is confident that India will contribute toward rebalancing and shaping multipolarity, political and economic. Its strong bonding with the global South is critical to ensuring that developmental priorities and natural justices are not disregarded (page 207).

The author lists many new attributes, approaches, and strategies in India's foreign policy which are preparing the country for the new realities. What are these? In summary, these would be: the rapid enhancement in India's global engagements following the Indo-US nuclear deal; realism and the willingness to take risks; and the articulation of new constructs like the inclusive Indo-Pacific and Security and Growth for All (SAGAR). A whole range of new initiatives has been unfolding - like the Quad; the maritime policy; the Indian Ocean strategy; various connectivity initiatives; defence cooperation agreements, etc. On the geopolitical front, India has deeply engaged with formations on both sides of the ideological divide - for example, the QUAD on the one side and RIC on the other. This is an example of India's multiple engagement policy.

The Indo-Pacific construct has been complemented with a wide-ranging Indian Ocean strategy which aims at building a community of Indian Ocean littorals. The author lists a variety of maritime instruments ranging from building maritime infrastructure; humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation; a blue economy; white shipping arrangements; the revival of coastal shipping, etc. Attention is being paid to the development of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Connectivity is now a fundamental principle of India's foreign policy.

The book is a comprehensive account of how India's foreign policy is evolving, and being enriched with new initiatives. Yet, a vision without implementation is a mere slogan. Implementation has been a weakness in India's foreign policy. This issue is being addressed to some extent, but there are still many problems. The author must be fully aware that many countries who look towards India are disappointed with India's implementation record. There is often a complaint from many countries that India seems to over-promise. Quite often, India's record of implementation is compared with that of China, mostly unfavourably. It would have been useful if the author had dwelt upon the constraints faced by Indian diplomacy in translating its vision into concrete reality.

The author says that India did not read China well in the 1950s. However, are we reading China correctly today? On the one hand, we have had deep engagements with China; on the other we have had to reckon with repeated military face-offs, including the most recent one in 2020 on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. The book does not mention the Doklam crisis of 2017, which showed the ugly face of China. How do we deal with China? Can China be trusted? This requires an elaborate answer. China's actions have blatantly violated India's sovereignty. Should one continue to follow the one China policy in the face of China's repeated infringements of Indian sovereignty? Yet, there seems to be a reticence in official circles to call a spade a spade, and see China as a major security threat. It would have been interesting to see the author examining the nature of the China threat, and how India is preparing to deal with it.

India's policy towards Pakistan must evolve beyond surgical strikes. Pakistan is increasingly becoming a client state of China. China has joined Pakistan in criticising India's decision to abrogate Article 370 relating to Kashmir, and has tried to raise the Kashmir issue in the UN Security Council. Pakistan's Prime Minister openly issues nuclear threats to India at the UN in the context of Kashmir. It would have been useful to know of the author's thinking on how to deal with Pakistan, and the China-Pakistan nexus.

It is interesting to learn from the book that Indian foreign policy is becoming more purposeful. However, the long-lasting habit of hedging has still not gone away. For instance, on the Rohingyas issue: India is very careful not to offend either Bangladesh or Myanmar. Similarly, India is ambivalent about the Quad. Will India encourage the Quad emerging as a military alliance? Are not multiple engagements (that is, simultaneous engagement with the Quad and the RIC) not a sophisticated way of hedging?

The author gives credit to Indian diplomacy for having brought in the industrial development of India in the 1950s and 1960s. There is an intimate connection between foreign policy and technology. Although India is part of many international scientific projects, that does not necessarily translate into higher technological capacity. How does India become a technological power? India's expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP is inadequate. Unfortunately, we are still dependent on the import of high-tech equipment for our defence forces and industry. This debilitates our foreign policy.

Surprisingly, the book does not discuss India's nuclear doctrine, and whether it requires a change as the nuclear environment in the world changes rapidly. Likewise, India needs doctrines for space and cyber domains. These issues have not been covered in the book.

How does foreign policy relate to the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat? This is an important issue. The author emphasises that a self-reliant India would encourage greater innovation and creativity. He writes "It is only when its own production flourishes at home that India can make an economic difference abroad" (page 210). This is an important assertion because there are apprehensions in the mind of India's partners about India turning inwards by pursuing the path of self-reliance. This doubt needs to be dispelled forcefully.

The role of culture and heritage in the formulation of foreign policy is not discussed often in this country. It is heartening to see the author emphasising the civilisational attributes of India, and the strength of its traditions and culture. One would have liked to know how the government of India is promoting India's thought and culture in helping to shape a humane world. The role of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations needs to be changed.

While the author has emphasised that transactional diplomacy will be the order of the day in a multipolar world, the role of values and ethics cannot be denied altogether. In fact, in the conversation about the New World order,

India should emphasise the importance of ethics and values in international relations, which the West has completely overlooked. Indian foreign policy should not shy away from incorporating the wisdom of our ancient thought and the teachings of the greats, like Swami Vivekananda who had unshakeable faith in India's destiny, and who opened up the Western mind to the cosmopolitan nature of Indian philosophy and Hindu religion. India's ancient wisdom and its relevance to the contemporary world should be brought to the attention of the world, including at the UN, in a systematic way. The Ministry of External Affairs has a big role to play in this.

The author has been an important player in the formulation and implementation of India's foreign policy in the last few years. Readers would be interested to know how foreign policy decisions are taken, monitored, and implemented. Why is it that India's External Affairs Ministry has so little in terms of financial and human resources? What are the problems that the Ministry faces in coordinating efforts with other ministries and departments?

What India needs is a foreign-policy concept in which its new approaches are presented formally. Countries like Russia have a formally declared foreign-policy concept. Why not India? The external world has always been curious about India's rise, and what it means for the world. They want to know from the Indians which direction India is heading. The book provides answers to many of the questions in the mind of readers. It will be read with great interest not only because it is written by the External Affairs Minister of India, but also because of the depth of the analysis. This book is not a run-of-the-mill account of Indian foreign policy. The author's vast experience, his scholarly credentials, and his knowledge of international relations are reflected in the slim volume. The book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on rising India.

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★★★

Vijay Sakhuja and Somen Banerjee, ***Sea of Collective Destiny: Bay of Bengal and BIMSTEC*****,** (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2020), Pages: 192, Price: 795.00, (HB) Rs. 596.00 (SC)

From time immemorial, the Bay of Bengal [BoB] has been a maritime domain for Asian countries for trade and cultural exchanges. Before the Christian era [BCE], ancient Kalinga pioneered maritime exchanges across the BoB to lands east of India. Ports along India's Coromandel Coast and the coast of Odisha and Bengal, were trading across the BoB, with East and South East Asian ports in Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, the Moluccas (Maluku), and China. During the 8th–10th centuries CE, Arab traders were prominent players in sea-borne trade in the Arabian Sea and the BoB. The rise of the Chola Empire in southern India in the 11th and 12th centuries inherited this strong maritime tradition and legacy. The advent of European colonial powers subverted these ancient ties as they established their political and economic hegemony over Asian countries.

This book is a timely contribution to the literature on regionalism at a time when strategic restructuring is underway in the global order. It covers a wide range of issues, under the broad themes of Security, Economy, Geopolitics, Connectivity, and Regionalism. It examines the potential for knitting together a BoB oriented community of nations, with BIMSTEC as the pivot. Both the authors are former naval officers whose knowledge of strategic maritime affairs is evident in the narrative of the book. Published in the pre-COVID era, the book lacks inputs on the geopolitical and geo-economic impact of COVID. A unique feature of the book is that each chapter can be read as an issue brief. This is helpful for lay readers and scholars. On the negative side are occasional repetitions. End notes are comprehensive, and will be useful for readers who wish to delve further into the subject.

There is a useful discussion on "the dialectic of regionalism and regionalization" which sets the context. The evolution of regionalism through various stages, and why some geographic spaces manage to succeed in regional integration and some fail, are part of this context. By identifying the main criteria for regionalism – security, economy, culture – and how regionalism connects with its periphery as well as globalisation, the narrative focuses on the paradigms of regionalism in IR theory as well as its relationship with globalisation and its role in constraining an emerging hegemon via regional

structures. By adopting regionalism to develop powerful economic blocs, developing countries can create heft in the global economic order, and cope with unilateralism and hegemony.

The overview of the BoB as the highway for regional and international commerce and civilisational discourse during the past millennia is pithy. It links the current geopolitics of the BoB with reference to China's Maritime Silk Road [MSR], India's "Mausam" and Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum [GMF], and notes that there are no major boundary disputes within BIMSTEC, except for Myanmar and Thailand over three small islets. Apart from BIMSTEC, the BoB littorals are members of several regional organisations that promote economic cooperation and connectivity. Such cooperation has moved into the security domain with MILAN, a joint and coordinated naval patrol, information and intelligence sharing, humanitarian aid and disaster management [HADR] as well as Search and Rescue [SAR].

A large part of the book [6 Chapters] has been devoted to Traditional and Non-traditional Security issues, ranging from transnational organised crimes [TOCs], environment, migration, and climate change. It defines the nature of transnational organised crimes, and identifies trafficking in drugs/psychotropic substances as well as humans/wildlife as the main areas of transnational crimes. It recommends mitigation efforts via regional cooperation on the SAARC and BIMSTEC platforms, utilising the Colombo-based South Asian Regional Intelligence and Coordination Centre [SARICC] as the vehicle for cooperation. The remaining 5 Chapters deal with economic integration and connectivity as well as current geopolitical and geo-economic trends and challenges.

On Terrorism and Piracy, the book discusses various initiatives and institutional frameworks for cooperation. It suggests that India as the lead country for Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes [CTCC] – one of the 14 sectors for BIMSTEC cooperation – can develop greater synergy with other institutions like the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia [ReCAPP], the Indian Ocean Rim Association [IORA], and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium [IONS]. Noting that the BIMSTEC CTCC Convention is yet to be ratified and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters [MLACM] is yet to be signed, the lack of urgency in formalising these institutional frameworks remains a serious deficiency in charting BIMSTEC's future trajectory.

Not surprisingly, Climate Change is highlighted as the most pressing issue/concern among non-traditional security challenges. Regional cooperation on issues like the rise in greenhouse gases and its impact on the

BoB and littoral countries, Sea Level Rise [SLR], the impact on crop yields, Ocean Acidification and Oxygen depletion is essential, although Climate Change mitigation demands a global response. It notes that the BoB already has developed "dead zones" that are bereft of marine life, endangering the livelihoods of millions dependent on fisheries. The BoB is already threatened by marine pollution [plastics, litter, industrial and agricultural waste], exacerbated by melting glaciers and drying rivers. Policy measures and cooperation among BIMSTEC members to move to non-renewable energy sources cannot be postponed.

Cyber-attacks and illegal migration are other non-traditional security threats that have grown with increasing incidents of piracy, disrupting commercial shipping and cargo handling at ports. Illegal migration, though not a new phenomenon, has increased in the BoB region. It has been caused by social and physical insecurity, local conflicts, religious persecution, and climate change factors. All these issues demand cooperation among BIMSTEC members and the BoB littoral countries.

Connectivity is an important pillar of building a community and the feeling of togetherness which the authors call "we-ness". It identifies a successful connectivity ecosystem as having people-to-people contact and the ability to intermingle reasonably freely, transportation links with smooth movement of goods and services, and investment and digital connectivity for facilitating interactions at all levels. It notes that ports in BoB are not very profitable since container ships have to deviate from SLOCs and travel north to ports on India's eastern seaboard – Chittagong in Bangladesh and Yangon in Myanmar. Smaller container ships have to enter a river to dock. These constraints inhibit large container ships. Port cities connectivity via coastal shipping arrangements will facilitate tourism and cultural contact at the people-to-people level, and lower costs for shipping companies.

India's "Sagarmala" project seeks to remedy this as well as inland connectivity issues. The Bangladesh-India Coastal Shipping Agreement is a landmark agreement for local shipping in the BoB. Ro-Ro ships are now able to ship vehicles from Chennai to Mongla at a much lower cost. The harmonisation of Cabotage laws in the BoB will add to the greater movement of shipping among BIMSTEC and other BoB littoral countries. The "Sethusamudram" Canal Project [SCP] has the potential to reduce costs for shipping when it is completed, though the impact on fragile marine ecosystems remains a constant red flag for such projects. The Kra Canal, a potential connector between the BoB/Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, has a

similar potential, but has also aroused considerable environmental and political concerns.

Digital and Energy connectivity, tourism, and associated leisure activities have a huge potential for community building. Energy connectivity is in place for the BBIN countries and can be expanded into Myanmar and Thailand. The Tri-lateral highway project, when completed, can also facilitate Energy and Railway connectivity from India's north east to Myanmar, Thailand, and beyond.

The weakness of regionalism among BoB countries lies in its low 4 percent share of global GDP, despite having 23 percent of global population. While success in regionalism has transformed certain South East Asian countries into dynamic economies, India and Bangladesh too have logged impressive rates of growth. In this context, the advantages and challenges to regionalism and the structures of Bob countries individually have been examined.

The lack of economic corridors is a major constraint in growth and integration. An Economic Corridor demands the harmonisation of regulations as per international conventions, connectivity, standardisation, investment in cross-border infrastructure projects, and security coordination. Another factor is gender sensitivity, particularly at Land Customs Stations and Border Haats. Governments should deploy female customs and police officials at these cross-border nodes for encouraging female participation in cross-border trade.

The Blue Economy is a natural domain for BIMSTEC countries, except the two landlocked ones – Bhutan and Nepal. The development of the Blue Economy is closely connected with the 14 sectors identified for cooperation in BIMSTEC. The Blue Economy is also intimately linked with Maritime Security. The National Security Advisers [NSAs] of the BIMSTEC countries met for the first time in 2017, and then again in 2018. There is no agreed framework for cooperation yet. The UN-promoted Sustainable Development Goals [SDG] 2030 are also connected with several sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation; yet there is no progress on Joint Managements Plans - not even on the crucial issue of the protection of the Sunderbans, a unique ecosystem that protects the hinterland against annual cyclones in the BoB. While national measures by individual countries to fulfil SDGs 2030 are being implemented, collective strategies are absent as individual countries pursue national strategies in silos.

The geopolitical underpinnings in the BoB, in the absence of a community displaying "we-ness" despite the long civilisational maritime discourse, have been marked by political identities, nationalism, and identity politics fostered

by the nation state system. Yet, there is an underlying spirit of co-existence. The BIMSTEC countries and other littoral countries of the BoB are being buffeted by pulls and pressures generated by China's BRI and MSR. China's investments have, no doubt, built infrastructure that has added to nation building; yet the pitfalls of "debt trap diplomacy" have become quite apparent. The geopolitics of playing the "China card" by smaller countries and reducing India's influence is a natural magnet for India's neighbours and China. The latter is eager to increase its sphere of influence in pursuit of its ambition to be the regional/global hegemon. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are already dependent on Chinese military hardware, and are susceptible to Chinese politico-military pressure.

China has used economic reprisals to warn countries against taking anti-China positions on issues like COVID, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Australia and India are facing China's assault – the former via economic reprisals, and the latter via military intrusions along the LAC. China's COVID-related behaviour may ultimately lead to countervailing balancing, by bolstering the Quad, and should motivate BIMSTEC and the BoB littoral countries to strengthen their bonds, and expedite building a community. The recommendations proposed for a future road map, are worth pursuing.

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Former Ambassador to Thailand;
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★★★

Lakhan Mehrotra. ***The Odyssey of a Diplomat: Through the Corridors of Time,*** (New Delhi, Heritage Publishers, 2020), Price: Rs. 595.00 (PB) ¹ 695.00 (HB), Pages: 356 (PB) 356 (HB)

Veteran diplomat Shri Lakhan Mehrotra's autobiographical book *The Odyssey of a Diplomat: Through the Corridors of Time* is both a narrative of the rich experience of the author and a reflection on the history and cultures of the various countries where he served. During his illustrious career spanning almost five decades, the author witnessed as well as participated in historic events in places as diverse as Tibet, East Timor, Argentina and the erstwhile Soviet Union.

The author was born in the 'Devbhoomi' of Uttarakhand, and had a childhood steeped in its rich local culture and traditions. He studied Indian history at Allahabad University which, in the 1950s, was one of the foremost centres of learning in literature and philosophy in Northern India.

Shri Mehrotra had the unique opportunity of experiencing the full spectrum of India-China relations. He gives a vivid description of his visit to China in 1955 as a member of a student delegation. Those were the days of "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai", and Premier Zhou Enlai received the delegation at his residence for tea.

Later, from 1973–76, Shri Mehrotra served as Chargé d'affaires in the Indian Embassy in Beijing when the relations were evolving from frozen to a mild thaw, leading to the appointment of Ambassador K. R. Narayanan to China after a gap of 14 years. Before his departure for Beijing, the author called on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who perceptively observed that 'The Chinese [were] very angry about the loss of Bangladesh to Pakistan and our role in bringing that about. She also pointed to the indignant Chinese reaction to changes coming about in Sikkim' (page166)

Shri Mehrotra has given a vivid account of the sensitive negotiations with China after six Indian jawans were ambushed by the PLA in 1975. The author underlines that a diplomat should act with dignity and composure even in the face of grave provocation from the other side. There is also an attention-grabbing account when Chargé d'affaires Mehrotra walked out from a banquet hosted by Deng Xiao Ping in honour of the visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Z. A. Bhutto (page177).

After joining the Indian Foreign Service in 1958, Shri Mehrotra was allotted Tibetan to learn as his compulsory foreign language. In the Chapter 'The Dalai Lama Crosses into India:1959', there are informative details of Prime Minister Nehru's first meeting with the Dalai Lama on 24 April 1959 after he had sought refuge in India. Interestingly, a young Dalai Lama still nursed hopes of some reconciliation with China, and requested Prime Minister Nehru that India should stand in the middle and try to help Tibet with China. Prime Minister Nehru's realistic response was that, at that moment, India's relations with China were quite strained.

Shri Mehrotra's first posting was to Sikkim where he learnt Tibetan and watched developments in Tibet. On return, the author had the privilege of being the Government of India's liaison officer with the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala in 1961–62. In this Chapter, the author gives a lucid summary of Buddhism and its various interpretations, including Tibetan Buddhism. As a

student of India's ancient history and archaeology, the author could dive deep in his philosophical interactions with His Holiness. On political matters, the Dalai Lama shared that his delegation had signed the 1951 Agreement with China under duress, with the Chinese giving no opportunity for any meaningful negotiations. The author points out that the Tibetan Government's attempts to raise the Tibetan issue at the UN asking for UN intervention against Chinese aggression in 1950 failed as the UK 'cast doubts over Tibet's sovereign status' (page 58).

From Dharamsala the author went as Consul to New York. His chapter on his posting in the USA captures well the life of a vibrant country, a rich social life, and interactions with eminent Americans and Indians. He attempted to save the marriage of actors Saeed and Madhur Jaffry, but did not succeed. The author narrates in detail the UNSC deliberations after the liberation of Goa in 1961 when, peeved with India, the US moved a resolution in the Security Council condemning India's action, which was vetoed by the Soviet Union. In this chapter, the author has sensitive comments about the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and the death of Prime Minister Nehru.

After a brief stint in Mexico, the author spent two years in Cuba. The highlight of his chapter on Cuba is the description of his meeting with Fidel Castro. Predictably, 'the 20-minute conversation with Fidel was almost a one-way affair'. This chapter has an excellent short history of Cuba and the revolution.

The author was again in New York in 1965–66, during the period of the India-Pakistan conflict and the death of Prime Minister Shastri. In the midst of the Indo-Pak war, Indira Gandhi visited the USA as Information Minister. The author recalls a significant vignette. Indira Gandhi felt that 'it was important that, apart from officials, the Indian community in USA st[an]d up for India…'. This wish has been fulfilled today.

From New York, Shri Mehrotra went to Moscow - the Cold War rival of USA - as First Secretary (Political) in 1966 for three years. The chapter on his stint in Moscow starts with a crisp narrative of the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev, and the blossoming ties with India. The author narrates the story of the laying of the foundation of India's defence relationship with USSR, the tough negotiations on the terms of credit, and the genesis of the Rupee-Ruble agreement. The author quotes Prime Minister Kosygin telling Ambassador Kewal Singh that the USSR treated India as a major power, but regretted that India had not woken up to its potential fully, and that it had

shirked a substantive major power role on the world stage which it deserved. There are highly readable accounts of visits of numerous personalities to the USSR ranging from Shri Jai Prakash Narayan to the thespian Raj Kapoor.

After Moscow, the author spent four years at HQ in Delhi (1969–73), in the Northern Division of the MEA dealing with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. There are interesting details of China's intrusion into Bhutan on 3 May 1970 (on the birthday of the then Bhutan King), and Foreign Secretary T. N. Kaul's negotiations to raise the diplomatic profile of Bhutan by facilitating its entry into the United Nations. The author observes that, during the 1971 conflict with Pakistan, the Bhutan King was apprehensive that China might try to open a corridor through Bhutan to induct PLA contingents from Tibet into East Bengal as an ally of Pakistan.

In early 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi organised the famous 'in-camera meeting with General Maneckshaw in the office of the Foreign Secretary T. N. Kaul, with P. N. Haksar, Principal Secretary to the PM and myself (the author) present'. The author's account of General Maneckshaw's response to Prime Minister Gandhi's instruction for action to be 'all over by the end of April' is quoted below :

The General then courteously but firmly told the Prime Minister that he would not advise action as early as that… firstly, he would like to choose a time when the possibility of China's military intervention … would be minimal and that could only be when the winter snows had blocked the passes along the frontier. Secondly, [the] Mukti Bahini… would need time to be trained and equipped.'

The author writes that the 'Prime Minister saw the force of his arguments and nodded her consent' (page 152–153).

In the Northern Division, the author was involved in the events leading to Sikkim's merger with India. His comments on the history of Sikkim, the insidious role of the Chogyal's wife Sarah Lawrence, and the nurturing of Sikkim's democratic forces are quite insightful. The narrative also describes the hands-on role played by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. She discussed all policy options before taking any decision.

From HQ, Shri Mehrotra moved to Beijing as Chargé d'affaires (1973–76), and faced China's criticism of Sikkim's accession to India in May 1976. 'The Chinese Government issued a terse statement terming that action as 'expansionist' … warning India's neighbours of its 'hegemonic' tendencies' (page 174). However, when the author called on the Deputy Director in the Chinese Foreign Office to convey India's viewpoint, 'the Chinese official

heard [him] patiently, made no further fuss, and assured [him] that the development would not affect the new direction of [their] relations' (page 174–75). The 'new direction' referred to was the impending resumption of representation of both countries at the Ambassador level. The author has described the delicate negotiations that ensued as China insisted that India's Ambassador, Shri K. R. Narayanan, arrive first in Beijing as India had been the first to withdraw its Ambassador in 1962.

Shri Mehrotra was then posted to San Francisco as Consul General (1976–79). He describes his involvement in social events and interactions with important personalities. Surprisingly, the author has avoided the subject of the US perception of the ongoing Emergency in India, how he handled criticism in the media, and how various segments of US policy makers viewed the restoration of democracy in March 1977.

The Author was Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow (1979–82) at the time of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The author describes the dilemma faced by India as 'the turbulent situation in Afghanistan posed very difficult choices for India'. The Soviet Union expected India to endorse its intervention, and the Chief of South Asia Division reminded the author that 'a friend in need was a friend indeed, and that true friendship was tested only in the hour of difficulty.' His remark was clearly prompted by India's adverse vote in the UN General Assembly (page 216). Then, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was re-elected, and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko promptly went to Delhi to meet her. On his return, the author quotes Gromyko as having said that while there were 'differences of perspective, the two countries stood together in search of peace and stability in Afghanistan' (page 219). This chapter describing his posting as Chargé d'affaires in Moscow is replete with perceptive observations on historic events from his perch in Moscow and, at the end, the author pronounces a harsh judgement against the then Soviet system.

From the turbulence of Moscow, the author was posted to seemingly placid Argentina (1982–85). He gives a ringside account of the UK-Argentina clash over Malvinas/Falklands in 1983. What the reader misses here is how India looked at the events. The author's silence is surprising as the Argentinean intervention had echoes of India's action against the Portuguese in Goa in 1961.

Shri Mehrotra then moved to Belgrade (1985–89), and has thoughtful observations on Yugoslavia after Tito and the internal squabbles among the seven Republics which led to its break up soon after. The author started his

stint in the midst of Yugoslav dissatisfaction over India's hesitation in passing on the NAM Chairmanship to Yugoslavia. But the relations between Belgrade and New Delhi thawed gradually, with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's highly successful visit in July 1988.

From Belgrade Shri Mehrotra moved as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka (1989–90). This was in the midst of India's stormy relationship with President Premadasa who was viscerally against the IPKF. The author gives an analytical account of President Premadasa's conviction that 'the IPKF had designs other than its stipulated purpose of disarming the LTTE…' (page 298). According to the author, 'President Premadasa also developed a personal animus against Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi' (page 300). Mehrotra narrates the deft handling of the situation after President Premadasa publicly, and without notice asked India (1 June 1989) to withdraw the IPKF by the end of July. After difficult negotiations, the withdrawal date was moved to 31 March 1990, which saved India's face. It is to the credit of his suave personality and diplomatic tact that, throughout this period verging on animosity between the two countries, High Commissioner Mehrotra kept a direct line of communication open with President Premadasa.

The closing chapters include the author's description of his stint as Secretary (East) in MEA (1990–1992) when he was directly involved with Nelson Mandela's historic visit to India in 1990, and with the first steps taken towards formulating a Look East Policy.

The book is packed with information and anecdotes, and is a lucid narration of the vibrant practice of diplomacy. On the whole, the time spent reading the odyssey of this consummate diplomat would be time well spent, both for students and practitioners of international relations as well as a wider readership.

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★★★

Shakti Sinha (ed.), ***One Mountain Two Tigers: India, China and the High Himalayas*****,** (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2020), Pages: 570 (HB), Price: 614.00, (HB)

This book appropriately analyses contemporary issues with deep historical insights. It looks at history, politics, military, trade, and cultural links to understand the convoluted relationship between the two Asian giants - India and China. The title of the book, *One Mountain Two Tigers: India, China and the High Himalayas*, edited by Shakti Sinha, is particularly interesting as it reminds us of a Chinese saying: 'one mountain cannot contain two tigers'. Figuratively, China is trying to be the sole tiger on a mountain called Asia since 1949. The book addresses the lingering disputes between the two Asian giants, ranging from historical to contemporary times.

The timing of this edited volume is most pressing, with Sino-India border tensions flaring up during the Covid-19 pandemic, amidst signs of a new world order that appears to be taking shape. Media commentaries on the issue continue to be riddled with contradictions and factual inaccuracies, incomplete information, and varying social media 'truths'. In this regard, the collection of topical essays provides a comprehensive understanding by those who have been there on the ground as well as scholars with an analytical bent in connecting the dots on geopolitical developments.

The Communist Party of China has been adept at interpreting history in its own unique way, and justifying its agenda through its own version of historical facts. This 14-essays collection unravels the myths surrounding China's grandiose standing in the ancient world order. The first three articles take a historical perspective on the trade, cultural, and political links between India and China. These show the far-reaching cultural influence of the Indian civilisation over several regions of China. In fact, India was considered the 'Zhongguo', or Middle Kingdom, before the name was appropriated by the Chinese for themselves, and India became 'Tianzhu', or Heavenly India. The first chapter, 'When Xinjiang Was a Part of the Indic World', written by Subhash Kak, draws attention to how the Xinjiang region and Tibet were part of the Indic space with extensive use of Sanskrit, and trade involving Xinjiang, Ladakh, and Tibet, with Leh as a hub. In fact, arrangements were made to ensure the availability of food, shelter, and fodder en route. Indian culture and Indian kings dominated the Xinjiang region in China. Xinjiang was known as 'Uttarakaru'. It was a flourishing part of the Sanskritic world, and its people spoke the Gandhari language. Scholars would travel from Kashmir to Khotan,

and the silk culture is believed to have passed from Khotan to Kashmir, and then into the rest of the Sub-continent. The region has been called Serindia by European scholars, signifying the place where China and India met.

The chapter 'At India-China Relations: Ladakhi and Dogra Claims in China', written by P. Stobdan discusses Ladakhi and Dogra claims in China, emphasising that these can be traced back to 17th century when Sengge Namgyal, King of Ladakh, opposed an expansionist Tibet under the fifth Dalai Lama. While the relations were cemented by trade later, Ladakh and Bhutan retained an enclave in Menser, which consisted of a cluster of villages located 296 kilometres deep inside Chinese territory, at the foot of the holy Mount Kailash on the banks of the Manasarovar Lake. Menser served as a key outpost for Indian and Bhutanese traders for over 300 years before India unilaterally surrendered its sovereign rights over Menser in the 1950s. Interestingly, the fate of these enclaves has not been negotiated or settled legally until now. Thus, China's hardening of its border position should now prompt Indian policymakers to rethink the overlooked issue of restituting Menser. In 'Trans Himalayan Trade of Kashmir and Ladakh with Tibet and Xinjiang, 1846–1947', Professor K. Warikoo explains how Leh was a metropolitan city in terms of its diversity of population that met and traded goods from distant lands. The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir used to ensure that traders were not inconvenienced, and made arrangements for shelter, food, and fodder en route, especially in the non-populated areas.

The next few essays narrate the origins of India-China border disputes, past treaties, and Chinese illegal claims on Indian territory. Over the periods of history, China's anxiety to deal with domestic pressures at home has led to diversionary adventures abroad. Many times, the price of this has been paid by the neighbouring countries, including India. Alok Bansal's 'India- China Border Disputes in Ladakh' throws light on China's dubious claims on Aksai Chin, and its illegal possession of the Shaksgam Valley in the trans Karakoram region, courtesy Pakistan. Ajay Singh's 'Shadows of 1962' traces the origins of the India-China dispute from the early 1950s that ultimately led to the 1962 offensive. Sriparna Pathak's '1962 and Beyond' explains how China's disastrous economic and social policies - like the Great Leap Forward between 1958 and 1962 - led to serious man-made famines in which millions starved to death. This led to the weakening of Mao Zedong's position domestically. He saw India as a soft target to regain control over China by unifying it against an outside enemy. Similarly, a series of 1967 Nathu La and Cho La clashes can be connected with 'regime insecurity' during the Cultural revolution, leading to the use of force against India. The current tensions also point in a similar direction.

Two chapters in particular look at the battlefield, and aim to bring a solution to the issue. 'Geo-Strategic Construct of Eastern Ladakh' by Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Rakesh Sharma is an insightful chapter analysing why Ladakh, a rugged high altitude region, was chosen as a battlefield in the current conflict. Located at the crossroads of important trade routes since ancient times, Ladakh has always enjoyed great geostrategic importance. The Eastern Ladakh-Siachen Glacier is of immense importance as it connects Xinjiang and Tibet, and is central to making the CPEC a successful venture. Any geostrategic collusion between China and Pakistan for a two-front war in Eastern and Western Ladakh will be difficult for India. The author states that India needs to be prepared in border patrol management as well as for conventional war. India needs to strategise modern technological warfare, and ensure that real time intelligence and surveillance equipment is available. Another essay, 'Post Galwan: Deter China's Aggressive Behaviour', is a practitioner's view of learning the right lessons from the conflict. In this chapter, Lt. Gen. Vinod Bhatia states that India needs to build up systems with better logistics, combined with non-traditional concepts like Information Warfare, to deter China. The author underscores that strong relations with Southeast Asian countries are a must in this regard. Another chapter builds upon third party involvement in the relations between the two nations, tracing the role of countries like Pakistan and the USA. It discusses India's anxiety vis-à-vis a two-front war with China and Pakistan as well as the current BRI strategy that aims to understand China's steps regarding geo-economic and geo-strategic gains.

Monish Tourangbam's 'The India-China Quandary: Looking Beyond the Bilateral' traces the bilateral relationship since 1949, and the role of countries like Pakistan and the USA in India-China relations. He forecasts that the increasing power asymmetry will push India-US closer inevitably. Two essays delve into the diplomatic angle of the Modi-Xi dynamics, and the use of sharp power by China to benchmark itself as the sole superpower in Asia. In 'Wuhan Spirit and Modi-Xi Dynamics', Prachi Aggarwal talks about how the informal summit of Wuhan and Mamallapuram created a sense that the two leaders enjoyed bonhomie. However, a lack of consensus on the disputed boundary prevailed. In 'Indo-Pacific: Anxiety or Strategy', Shekhar Sinha looks at how the Indo-Pacific construct has led to a more anxious China. As the unipolar moment unravels to bring in China as a competing power, as well as the rise of other middle powers, the USA's position has weakened. China has moved in to fill the vacuum left by the USA, using economic power and military coercion. Therefore, the Quad and Quad Plus countries in the Indo-Pacific and the coming together of democracies is a defence mechanism against

Chinese economic and military coercion. In 'Soft Power Conundrum and China-India Relations', Hema Narang takes up the Covid-19 pandemic to show how China's reputation has been challenged while that of India has improved.

'Taiwan in the India China dynamics' is an interesting take on the role of an external power like Taiwan. Sana Hashmi states that while India should refrain from playing the 'Taiwan card', engagement with an economically strong and democratic Taiwan will go a long way in establishing a non-China dominated world order. Taiwan's Southbound policy meshes well with the Indo-Pacific, and should be exploited to ensure a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

The book closes with the editor Shakti Sinha's views, expressed in 'China's Anxiety, and Aggression', on how an anxious China has stepped up its aggressive tactics in the Indo-Pacific region. Its aggressiveness emerges from the fact that it wants to alter the world order in its favour, and emerge as the sole superpower. However, the constellation of social, economic, and political factors domestically is making the Communist Party China anxious, especially under prevailing circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. The issues include the need for transitioning from an investment-based export-driven economy to a services-based consumption-driven one. Domestic issues, such as concerns regarding corruption, rising income inequality, changing demography as well as issues regarding the CCP's questionable legitimacy in Tibet and Xinjiang, are cropping up. There is deep-seated anxiety among the top leadership in China which has led to stepping up military coercion along the borders.

The book brings out how China has made it very clear to India about picking sides, and has shown this on issues ranging from Kashmir to Ladakh. The medley of essays brings out how a post-Covid-19 emerging world order requires the countries to speak to China in one voice. China wants to coerce countries bilaterally and therefore, the answer to Chinese policies lies in a multilateral order. India needs to develop issue-based partnerships with like-minded countries to deal with increased Chinese anxiety at home and disruptive military activities in its neighbourhood. The book is a must-read for India and China watchers, and scholars of International Relations.

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★★★

Anil Wadhwa, Arvind Gupta (Eds.), ***India's Foreign Policy: Surviving in a Turbulent World*****,** (New Delhi, Sage / VIF, 2020), Pages: 440 Price: ₹ 598.85 (K), ₹ 1,310.00 (HB) ₹ 1,230.00 (PB)

The decline of the unipolar world led by USA in the 21st Century has seen the rise of a revisionist and revanchist China, challenging the Western postulates of global governance. Under Xi Jinping, China has shed Deng Xiaoping's theory of foreign policy – 'Tao Guang Yang Hui' ('hide your claws and bide your time, and never assume leadership'), and pushed for a greater say for China in global affairs on its own terms. Xi has pushed aggressively for his view of a 'community of shared destiny' under Chinese leadership in the neighbourhood through its Belt and Road Initiative, a strategy that enables it to expand its geo-political and geo-strategic reach through a geo-economic squeeze at the expense of USA and other powers.

With its deep pockets, China has been able to use geo-economics to woo smaller nations in its neighbourhood and beyond - which the West has not been able to match. Its 'Make in China 2025' is seen as a direct challenge to USA's hold on Science and Technology, while the shadow organisations that China had established as a parallel to the Western global institutions, has been seen as a direct challenge to the Western concepts of global order. This has led China to a confrontation with the USA by way of a trade war, and the targeting of the latter's digital technology infrastructure, both with global repercussions. This, coupled with China's aggressiveness in the Indo-Pacific Region that it desires to control, has led to an emerging Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and an Ambiguous (VUCA) world order.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the responses from China and the world has only aggravated the aforementioned trend. In this light, Arvind Gupta, and Anil Wadhwa's book is very timely. It develops the framework and strategies for India's foreign policy which can be adapted to meet emerging challenges and the non-traditional threats in the new VUCA world order.

Written by leading experts in the field of foreign policy, who are both scholars and practitioners, this book predates the rapidly evolving VUCA world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, it retains salience as it identifies the drivers and trends in the turbulent period prior to the pandemic, and formulates strategies for Indian foreign policy to meet emerging challenges. These suggestions can easily segue to face new challenges which are similar

in nature but are now more pronounced than ever. Written in a simple and lucid style, the logic and reasoning in the book are easily comprehensible.

The book is spread over 23 Chapters, and divided into two parts. Part A, spread over 11 Chapters, deals with the drivers and trends of India's foreign policy. Apart from dealing with the traditional drivers - such as the emerging multi-polar world, strategising of soft power, multilateralism, science & technology, the Cold War strategies of India, Panchsheel to Détente, the Economy, and Intelligence - this book also looks at the internal dynamics, non-traditional threats, and national security as other key drivers. These aspects sometimes get missed in the current foreign policy debates and discussions.

Based on the assessment of the Drivers and Trends as discussed in Part A, Part B spreads over 13 Chapters. These discuss India's relations with the various regions of the world. This section elaborates the challenges, identifies the convergences, and provides a framework of recommendations to further India's international relations. It deals with India's immediate and extended neighbourhood, the EU, the USA, Russia, Latin America and - the elephant in the room - China. While it also deals with the political economy of India's international relations, the strategising of Soft Power, issues of national security, and the non-traditional threat dynamics of India's relations with its neighbours (both immediate and extended) and leading powers - although these could, perhaps, have been fleshed out a little more. Also, how defence diplomacy is emerging as a major tool could have been elaborated further.

For those interested in international relations, this book provides a good resource for further studies as it examines India's foreign policy, discusses its nuances, and the impact of the drivers and trends on policy formulation by decision makers. It is a good guide and reference book for grasping the manner in which foreign policy evolves based on changing external and internal dynamics, under the overarching umbrella of national security. It identifies and provides a view of the options available, and the manner in which India's core national interests can be protected in the turbulent times of a VUCA world. Extrapolating from this, interested students of international relations can transition to the current trends and options for India in the new world order post the pandemic, which are essentially similar in nature but are now more pronounced.

Overall, this collection of essays draws attention to the complex issues that drive a nation's foreign policy choices, and the options that can be derived from them to further India's core national interests in the turbulent times

ahead. It also emerges that there are no easy answers. However, the volume offers a perspective on the policies that India should adopt in the times to come.

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★★★

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(This review was earlier published in Volume 14, No. 1 of the journal, at Pages 74-78. It is reproduced here, being a review of a book on the subject of this special issue)

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