



# Vivek

*Issues & Options*

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Kick-starting Regional Cooperation in South Asia

The Trajectory of India's Nuclear Deterrence

Myanmar: Emerging Political and Security  
Scenario

A Chance to Recalibrate India-Sri Lanka Relations

*and many more ....*

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## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are happy to present the latest edition of Vivek for your reading pleasure.

As is the practice, the magazine has a rich variety of opinions and analyses from eminent diplomats, strategic experts and emerging scholars.

Ambassador Tariq Karim, who served as Bangladesh's High Commissioner in India for five years until very recently, puts forward a compelling argument for enhancing regional as well as sub-regional cooperation in South Asia while Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal (ret'd) analyses the journey of India's Nuclear Doctrine 17 years to the month after the Pokharan tests in 1998. A former intelligence officer PM Heblkar has examined Sri Lanka's current state of political affairs and suggested a way India can re-engage with Colombo.

Then there are perceptive pieces on Myanmar, developments in West Asia and the future of MQM in Karachi by our in-house scholars.

One interesting addition to Vivek this time is an article on the need for the Indian army to embrace Social Media as part of its outreach programme.

We welcome feedback from our readers on the latest issue of Vivek.

Nitin A. Gokhale  
Senior Fellow and Editor

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# Kick-starting Regional Cooperation in South Asia – the Way Forward

- *Tariq Karim*

The South Asian region has been plagued by festering intra-regional disputes since its independence from colonial rule. The peoples of this region have been unable to progress towards self-fulfillment and self-realization of their latent potentials, held hostage as they have been for the past nearly seven decades to a legacy of sustained and seemingly irreconcilable mistrust and deep-seated suspicions. These malaises have been progressively exacerbated by a politics of division eschewing mutual accommodation and joint cooperation. The approach to resolving these problems so far has been largely confined within the parameters of conflict-mitigation only. In the meantime, with the increasing fall out from the adverse consequences of man-made and natural disasters, even the modest progress that some of them have been able to so painstakingly achieve to date is in grave peril of being lost or

reversed. A new approach, embracing innovative thinking and bold action, is needed to galvanize the peoples to engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation with each other.

South Asia is home to a quarter of the world's entire population, with approximately a third of the world's entire Muslim population residing in this region. It has the world's largest (and steadily growing) middle-class, but roughly half the entire population of this region continue to languish abjectly below the poverty line. The region was described famously by President Clinton in 2000 as "the most dangerous place on earth"; it hosts two nuclear armed powers not yet signatories to the NPT, who have fought three wars since their Partition and independence over six and half decades ago, and continue to be engaged in arms and missile-development races. The region has acquired notoriety from having several insurgency

\* *Tariq Karim, Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India (August 2009 - October 2014) & Distinguished Fellow, VIF*

movements, including large numbers of Islamist militants. Nevertheless, there is no gainsaying the fact that the states of the South Asian region are all practitioners of democracy; it is home to the world's largest democracy (India), while the remaining countries are all struggling democracies at various stages of transition.

### ***Emulating the European model – comparing apples vs. oranges?***

The peoples of this region, perhaps enthused by the example of former enemies in Europe having come together after two World Wars in the last century to embark on European economic cooperation, did come together and decide in 1985 to launch their own version of regional cooperation by forming the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). A question often asked at most events on regional cooperation or integration in South Asia is: “why hasn't the South Asian region been able to successfully emulate the European model of cooperation and integration?” To be able to fathom this, one needs to take a comparative perspective of the

A question often asked at most events on regional cooperation or integration in South Asia is: “why hasn't the South Asian region been able to successfully emulate the European model of cooperation and integration?”

South Asian and European geopolitical landscapes, and also indulge in an exercise in social psychology, scrutinizing more closely the place where politics intersects with economics

A cursory look at the South Asian map reveals quite clearly that India's shadow looms overwhelmingly large in the perception of practically all its immediate neighbours, who also, for the most part historically, have tended to harbour, and even overtly display, manifestations of

a deeply entrenched legacy of mutual suspicion and mistrust. The near proximity of China and Iran (and USSR/Russia, once removed from Afghanistan/Central Asia) also no doubt tends to factor into the regional actors' view of themselves. Many in South Asia, most notably so from the smaller countries, attribute the failures of South Asian efforts at integration to India's huge size dwarfing all others. I question this somewhat naïve and overly simplistic explanation. Take a look at the European landscape. How does the EU geopolitical landscape differ from the South Asian

landscape? The post WW-II Treaty of Paris signed by France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands on 18 April, 1951 established the European Coal and Steel Community. This was followed by the Treaty of Rome signed on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 by the same six countries officially founding on January 1, 1958 the European Economic Community. However, what is important to note here is that the prime movers behind the originating and finalization of these two treaties were two former World War-II enemies, Germany and France. This seemingly modest, but bold, beginning signified recognition that even former enemies who had been rival colonial mega-powers needed now new sources of energy to refuel the next industrial revolution that was needed to rebuild their devastated countries by war; it also started the process of larger European integration that ultimately resulted in what we know as the European Union of today, comprising 28 states. If one were to take the original six-state configuration, the combined land mass of these two members also loomed much the larger in the perception of the other four member signatories.

While it is also true that these European countries shared similar intellectual and cultural heritage of the larger European configuration that may have facilitated the move towards ultimate unification, it should not be forgotten that South Asian countries also shared very largely similar, if not same, intellectual, cultural and historical legacies (at least until the 1930's, perhaps even until 1947) that should have impelled them also, post WW-II, to move towards integration in similar manner. The ironic differences are in-built here pointing to why these two regions, post WW-II launched into such widely divergent trajectories. Launching the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in December 1985, inspired as it was by the European model, by the seven post-colonial independent nation-states of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with hindsight was perhaps an overly romanticized aspiration on the part of these states. Why?

### *Centripetal vs. centrifugal forces*

We must not lose sight of the inescapable fact that the European continent (particularly Western

Europe) with its peoples, who had been at war with each other for centuries and then were ravaged so devastatingly by two successive mega wars, namely World War-I and World War-II taking place within the short span of forty years in the first half of the twentieth century, had spawned centripetal forces governing the post-war political dynamics that directed them towards gradual, but steadily enlarging process of integration. In sharp contrast, South Asia had centrifugal forces governing it post WW-II. Whereas in Europe, after several centuries of contestations and bloody war, most peoples and leaders, bloodied, bled white and exhausted at the end of World War-II, together threw up their hands, shouted “never again” and reached out to each other, in the Indian sub-Continent, despite millennia of having co-existed together, largely peacefully, (one could even assert as an undeclared “union”), after merely a couple of centuries of colonial rule the peoples and leaders of different communities populating South Asia transformed into becoming each other’s sworn and even mortal enemies. In South Asia, particularly partitioned Indian

In sharp contrast, South Asia had centrifugal forces governing it post WW-II.

sub-continent, the new logic of state formation was deliberately used by the leaders in the newly reconfigured states to deepen the divide and widen the chasm between their respective states and peoples. While the progressively expanding European integration also progressively reduced or outright demolished barriers to freely trading, communicating with and travelling across borders, the South Asian leaders single-mindedly embarked on severing connectivity with each other, whether in the realm of trade and commerce or people-to-people connectivity.

In Europe, efforts at unification had pre-existed first through conquest by Napoleon and Hitler; but schemes for voluntary grouping of the European states on terms of equality date back to only after the First World War (era of European Cosmopolitanism). Notable landmarks in this centripetal process were calls by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi of Austria, who in 1923 had envisioned a United States of Europe, and the efforts and writings of Aristide Briand, French Foreign Minister and his German counterpart

Gustave Stresemann in 1929 echoing similar aspirations. Those efforts failed, largely in the face of rising jingoistic nationalism and the growing imperialist tide that gripped Europe following the Treaty of Versailles after World War-I. However, following the unprecedented devastation from two World Wars, in which Europe was the main theatre, there was an overwhelming realization in divided Europe of its own great weakness and vulnerability, heightened by the emergence of the two new hegemonies (political, military & economic), namely the USA & USSR. The European move towards integration was propelled by conviction born out of suffering, and the aspiration for European cooperation was as much a rationale for self-preservation as a means for improving collective quality of life.

It must also be noted here that the graduation to European integration was not taken by its peoples in one great leap forward. It was a gradual, but steadily enlarging process, building block by block. Following upon the lead given by the inner six, namely Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, & the Netherlands through the forming of the European Coal and Steel

Community (ECSC) in 1951, there followed seven more states opting to join (the outer seven). A mushrooming growth of numerous regional organizations or groupings, initially unconnected with each other, took place: the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD); the Western European Union (WEU); the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or EURATOM) in 1957; and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. Significantly, in this steadily enlarging process, pragmatism trumped nationalist jingoism. The original six ceded part of their national sovereignty in order to form a cohesive, indissoluble & politically willed regional body with sovereign powers of its own that was independent of the comprising states and could adopt acts that had the force of national laws. This pooling of national sovereignty became known as "integration". Notably, the initiative came from several of the larger and economically stronger powers in Europe. Initially, UK and Nordic countries, Austria and Portugal had vehemently opposed this partial ceding of national sovereignty, and had formed a counter body called EFTA, but they increasingly realized that



they risked isolation and losing benefits accruing from participation in a larger, more integrated grouping with each other cooperating. What also made this initial thawing by mutually suspicious forces possible was the commendable and visionary big power modesty and readiness to bury the hatchet that was displayed by the Franco-German reconciliation which became the cornerstone of the new European order, and enlarged the reconciliation process across Europe. It set up a coherent and integrated economic framework within which border checks and other barriers were minimized if not entirely removed, and allowed free movement for persons, goods, services and capital. The results were not long in coming: Higher living standards, impressive economic expansion, and generation of vast opportunities for employment ensued. By 1986, this integrative process embraced 12 members and adopted “The Single European Act”, dismantling all internal borders and establishing the single market. By 1992, a further enlarged configuration of 15 members

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signed Maastricht Treaty on formation of the European Union. The Treaty of Maastricht is a remarkable example of how signatory States in the post-modern era voluntarily decided to gradually dismantle the ultimate symbols of their respective national sovereignties, pool resources for a greater cause, and announce boldly the assertion of a European Identity, comprising a single political union with ultimate Union citizenship. They also envisaged introduction of common foreign and security policies, to be followed by common defence policies as well. The process was not always marked by unanimity, but this did not derail the process. All members agreed that each and every member need not participate in equal measure and the same time in all activities, but could determine its own pace and time in deciding when to participate in any particular measure being undertaken jointly by others. Thus, when the European monetary union (EMU) was formed on January 1, 1999, only eleven of the 15 members joined in the launch of the EMU (birth of

the Euro), set to challenge the supremacy of the US dollar).

In sharp contrast with the genesis of the EU as described above, the South Asian integration process has been bedevilled from the start by the perception by others of India dwarfing all, in terms of sheer size, and political, economic and even military gravitas. The partition of colonial India into post-colonially independent India and Pakistan set each viscerally against the other in almost all spheres of inter-state interactions. Even after the formation of the SAARC as a body to revive and promote regional cooperation, this sheer disproportion in the scale of the economies, between India and the rest inhibited any significant growth of trade and commerce within the region. One cannot ignore that while in 1985, intra-regional trade in South Asia was almost negligible, accounting for only 3% of the region's global trade, a quarter century later, today it has grown by an abysmal 2 percentage points to 5% of its total global trade. Despite valiant, but excruciatingly painful and slow, efforts at first cobbling together a South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) that was supposed to lead to the South Asian Free

Trade Arrangement (SAFTA), no remarkable progress to date is evident of change in a sharply dug-in mind-set imprisoned seemingly in a time warp until very recent times. A important sign of change manifested palpably only very recently and points to the new Indian leadership finally taking a strategic, holistic and long-term view in their own self-interest.

So what should South Asia do now? While it is tempting to provocatively assert that if the only way for South Asia to replicate the European model of regional integration would be by replicating the preconditions that existed in Europe prior to their launching the process, that is by South Asia becoming the main theatre in a World War-III, obviously that is not only a foolhardy, but also an irrefutably irrational and immoral exhortation. At the same time, continuing to pursue the integration agenda using the SAARC process has been a chimera to date, apart from being inordinately glacial in moving forward, and dogged by multiple land-mines that have surfaced along the path we traverse. Now, more than ever before, the South Asian peoples need to

exponentially amplify their energies and meaningfully enlarge their individual and collective efforts towards attaining at least economic integration. With rapidly enlarging populations, and vastly reduced connectivity that had historically linked them before they were severed, the region is marked by growing militant unrest among marginalized and peripheralized peoples and communities. This perception has served to spawn numerous radical and militant anti-state movements. There is also an increasingly disturbing enlargement of radical faith-based agenda and threats by non-state actors. Some of these groups have vowed to even overthrow the state and take control of the state and its nuclear weapons. Nuclear war could be accidental with horrendous environmental consequences, and devastatingly adverse regional and global security implications. There are increasing manifestations of progressive environmental and ecological degradation already underway. In such a scenario, there is now a desperate need to change mind-sets as well as change strategy. It is imperative now that leadership across the board, and across borders, should view the larger picture

strategically, abjuring and fighting against obscurantism. The rhetoric of jingoistic nationalism has to be replaced now by the language of reconciliation and mutually beneficial pooling of nationalism. If we wish to replicate the EU process without replicating the preconditions of that process, we must remember that in the EU (as also in the ASEAN, that other region grouping which also has done very well since its inception), progress was achieved through putting in place smaller building blocks. SA too needs to adopt this approach. We need to first disaggregate the whole into smaller sub-regional segments, and then gradually the disaggregated segments, through an organic but voluntary process, will recombine into the re-aggregated whole.

### ***Block-by-block and dual track approach***

Conceptually, the entire greater SAARC region can be viewed as comprising three sub-regions. The one in its eastern flank comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, the contiguously located North Eastern States of India and West Bengal, and Nepal (BBIN)<sup>1</sup>; a middle zone comprising of Southern India, Sri Lanka and the

Maldives (ISM); and a western sub-region comprising, West & Northwest India, Pakistan and Afghanistan (IPA). What is of immediate interest to one sub-region may not necessarily be of interest to the other sub-regions. However, if the cooperative process in one is sufficiently significant, it may attract the attention of the other. Over a period of time the other sub-regions will, in all probability, want to join in and link up with each other, thus reforming the larger aggregate in a more dynamic way. Sub-regional cooperation thereby opens up the fast track pathway. At the same time, on the slow track – the entire region could continue at its more measured pace, with its multiple hiccups and occasional derailment, until a satisfactory resolution between the two large powers is arrived at. The sub-regional process need not be at the expense of existing SAPTA/SAFTA & other regional arrangements now in place or attempted to be put in place – in fact this could be the more practical and pragmatic pathway to larger regional integration.

### *Externalising the Enemy*

Additionally, we need to do one more thing. We need to stop continuing to be enemies to each other and instead identify a common external enemy (as indeed Europe, and even ASEAN, had done). From the eastern BBIN sub-region perspective, cooperating and collaborating together is of critical importance for its own survival, sustained growth and development. The entire BBIN sub-region comprises one integrated ecological and environmental region that is perhaps the most vulnerable. Environmental & ecological issues are interlinked and cannot be addressed piecemeal, since they transcend political borders and do not respect national redlines. They can only be addressed through cooperative interlocution and concerted action by all stakeholders. Addressing these holistically opens up huge opportunities for sub-regional integrated development. According to one respected theory<sup>2</sup> that appears to be re-establishing its relevance, as human population grows, global economic output may also grow exponentially, but

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renewable resources will decrease sharply. This is consequentially likely to result in depletion of aquifers, rivers and other water resources, with significant climate change and decline of food production and fisheries. Environmental scarcities were already contributing to conflict situations. The continuing scarcities and pressures will increase demands on the capacities of the states and their institutions, rendering adversely affected states fragile and causing them to circle the wagons. States will likely fight more over renewable (water, forestry, agrarian) than non-renewable resources in the future. Intra-state conflicts are likely to expand into inter-state conflicts.

The question then is: could this scenario play out in the South Asian region? Could this be the external enemy that will finally rally South Asians around to each other to address this huge existential threat? In my view, the BBIN sub-region is a disaster waiting to happen. Environmental degradation could trigger larger regional instability and insecurity, with wider implications in this extremely densely crammed region with substantially large populations,

widespread poverty and under-development, very frequent natural and environmental disasters, and festering insurgencies and extremist militant movements

Under one scenario, with a 2°C rise in global temperature, net cereal production in South Asian countries is projected to decline by 4 to 10% by the end of this century. In Bangladesh, production of rice may fall by just under ten per cent and wheat by a third by the year 2050. Already, there is now incontrovertible evidence that the Himalayan glaciers are in alarming retreat. Massive deforestation has already taken place as a result of anthropogenic activities. This massive deforestation in turn has also contributed to loss of biodiversity, exacerbating global warming (by reducing areas of carbon sequestration), and increasing soil erosion and in loss of agricultural and habitable lands. Bangladesh is likely to see more frequent and heavier rainfall, more severe flooding and increased land erosion (as well as increased river bed silting, which aggravates flooding). All this may well lead to frequent and longer duration floods, with crop damage/losses. The IPCC report

(2007) had identified Bangladesh as being extremely vulnerable to climate change. The rises in global temperatures already vary 3.6°F to 8.1°F above pre-industrial levels. Scientists believe severe monsoons every year caused by global warming, will result in even greater glacier melt in the Himalayas, and as a consequence, ironically, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra (and other Eastern Himalayan rivers) may become seasonal rivers in the near future.

### *The sub-regional route – The Modalities*

Adopting a cooperative approach on a regional/sub-regional basis in BBIN (that could include China at a later, more conducive stage) would include:

- Joint management of shared commons – waters resources and forestry, from the region of the headwaters to the mouth
- massive employment of human capital along the entire passage of the river, in concert
- employment generation multiplier effect on socio-economic matrix that will enhance security and stability

- Along with training these rivers could be undertaken
  - expansion of existing irrigation channels (that would also serve as overflow drainage channels during high season floods),
  - Dredging, for sustaining navigability that will result in increase of commerce
  - Creating water conservation reservoirs / pondage
  - generation of hydro-electricity
  - restoring navigability and re-opening the rivers to better and more optimized used of river transportation (least environmentally damaging, as compared to rail and road transportation, in that order),

This in turn will open up new service sectors and new (or reviving) upstream and downstream industries. Dying rivers would be revived and the ecology resuscitated. The generation of hydro-electricity would also serve the purpose of rendering surplus hydro-carbon resources for intra-regional use or

export abroad, thus contributing to long-term energy security. They would also dramatically reduce the current rate of deforestation (for fuel as well as for illegal logging). Regeneration of forestry and increasing forest coverage would create new, and enhance existing, carbon-sequestration zones. All these could be used as trade-offs, in terms of the existing provisions of the Kyoto Protocol. Soil erosion would be prevented through stopping such deforestation. Training of the rivers would prevent large chunks of the river banks from being washed away from uncontrolled floods. This in turn would save properties of people from the current washing away/destruction by rivers on the rampage during flood season, and progressive siltation of river-beds would be reduced.

### *Poverty reduction*

Most importantly, joint management of shared commons (waters resources, forestry) will also break the poverty trap by:

- Creating massive employment of human resources
- Training and taming rivers
- expansion of existing irrigation channels
- Creating water conservation reservoirs
- Generating hydroelectric power
- Preventing land loss that leads to more people being forcibly pushed into the poverty trap
- Restoring forestry
- reviving and opening up the rivers to better and more optimized use of river transportation
- Linking/extending infrastructure for communicating and trade
- Reviving and expanding Carbon sequestration zones
- Synergize linkages between activities by adopting a holistic approach

The BBIN sub-region is estimated to have natural gas reserves of 190 billion cbm, coal reserves of over 900 million tons, hydro-electric generation capacity of at least 75,000 MW (Nepal has 43,000 MW, Bhutan over 23,000 MW, and India overall of over 150,000 MW), oil reserves of at least 513 million tons, limestone reserves of over 4.3 billion tons, and a forest cover of over 25% of the sub-region. Harnessing and proper management and utilization of these resources would serve to

dramatically transform the sub-region, and drastically eliminate the causes of internal strife. Being able to harness and harvest all these resources in a sustainable manner will not only enhance overall security and stability of the region through development and economically benefiting people, but additional beneficial spin-offs would also follow:

- The incentives of trade, whether intra-state, inter-state or border trade, would increase dramatically;
- Ancillary supportive infra-structure would be developed simultaneously – creating more (and continuous) employment;
- More people-to-people contacts would be spurred, promoting better understanding and spiralling demand for “more of the same”.

***Political will and attitudes (mind sets) of key importance***

In Europe, the economics may well have driven the region to strive for political cooperation, but I would

posit that the initial decision to embark on integration was very much a manifestation of the collective political will to reconfigure the nature of relations. In South Asia the reality is that economics has been, and continues to remain, very much hostage to the political dynamics. The economic engine of any regional or sub-regional economic integration in South Asia will not run without its political spark plugs firing in unison (aligning the politics). Even if the ignition turns the engine and its cylinders fire in

The economic engine of any regional or sub-regional economic integration in South Asia will not run without its political spark plugs firing in unison (aligning the politics).

concert, the car will not go very far without fuel in the tank. This fuel in the tank is availability of cheap, cleaner /renewable energy, which continues to remain fallow and untapped for so long because of the “iron curtain” syndrome still dominating mind-sets and separating communities and peoples. Shattering that mind-set is all so important now. It is heartening to note that this seems to be happening in the BBIN sub-region at least. Unthinkable six or seven years ago, power grids are slowly being linked, between India and Bhutan, between India and Bangladesh, and between India



and Nepal. I daresay that this is the equivalent of four member countries of South Asian region attempting to replicate, almost six decades later, what six countries of Europe embarked on when they established the ECSC and Euratom. Senior officials of the four countries, who were given the political mandate by their respective political leadership, have met together and pronounced agreement to enlarge collaborative efforts in energy cooperation, and operationalising multi-modal connectivity, by road, rail, riverine and coastal shipping to boost trading with each other and revving the engines of economic growth and development. They have signalled that others in the region could decide when to join if they perceived benefits accruing to their peoples from such collaboration.

The strategic implications for security, stability and sustainable development of such sub-regional economic integration would be enormous, as has been explained above. By being able to mainstream marginalized communities or peoples, the *casus belli* for burgeoning anti-state movements would be removed, as well as the non-availability of

malevolent non-state actors stepping in to subvert the state. An economically integrated BBIN sub-region would transform into a powerful engine of growth for the countries of this region. It could open up connectivity with China and East Asia (thus reviving the old silk route). Greater connectivity, as conventional wisdom advises us, transforms into more trade and economic interlocution and expands the space for greater people-to-people contacts that foster better understanding and overall promote peace and collaborative development. Of critical importance would be another beneficial spin-off: greater cooperation in tackling the phenomenon of global warming and climate change would avert a potentially calamitous disaster (or a series of them) from happening, and result in a renewal of the endangered world. The success of one sub-region in any one or more of these endeavours would act as a powerful and exemplary model for other South Asian sub-regions to follow, and emulate. This is an exciting scenario for a win-win situation for all that we would create not just for ourselves, but for the larger common good.

## Endnotes:

1. In 1997, the SAARC summit agreed to the concept of sub-regionalism within the overall ambit of SAARC. The author had played a role in the insertion of sub-regionalism in the national agenda which then was placed before the SAARC leaders. Unfortunately, while the concept was accepted and the South

Asian Growth Quadrangle was formed with a Council of Foreign Ministers tasked to oversee its activities in several identified sectors, increasing intra-state political differences kept this initiative hostage and tethered from moving.

2. Thomas Homer-Dixon's "Environmental Scarcity and human conflicts"(2000)

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## Strange Bedfellows of West Asia

- *Alvite Singh Ningthoujam*

The ongoing crises in West Asia have ushered in visible shifts in the relations between different countries. What has triggered this turnaround? Firstly, it is the Iranian nuclear programme that opened ‘secret diplomacy’ between Israel, Saudi Arabia and a few Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries; and secondly, the Yemen crisis and Riyadh’s concerns with the Houthi rebels taking over the country, has kept the diplomats busy.

### Israel, Gulf States and the Iranian Nuclear Programme

Speculations about back-channel talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia surfaced some years ago with the disclosure of the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons programme. The perceptions that Iran would be a much aggressive foe with nuclear capabilities heightened the sense of insecurity both in Iran and Saudi Arabia. For Israel, this is clearly their topmost existential threat. The Saudis too are worried about the “Iranian influence expanding and encircling them in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon”,

and in countries such as Bahrain and Yemen. Iran’s support for its proxies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas in the Gaza Strip and to Syria is equally viewed with concerns. This led to an unprecedented coordination between Israel and its adversaries. As an Israeli official aptly says, “Necessity creates alliances.”

The commonly-shared threat perceptions have expanded longstanding unofficial ties to the point that both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Israel feel less constrained in publicly acknowledging their contacts and signalling a lowering of the walls that divide them. A report in early-May 2013, mentioned that “Israel is preparing to agree to a defence co-operation deal with Turkey and three Arab states [Saudi Arabia, the United Emirates and Jordan] aimed at setting up an early warning system to detect Iranian ballistic missiles.” It further talked about the access Israel will have to real time data from radars stationed in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. In

\* *Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, Research Associate, VIF*

a region where states and their security apparatus are collapsing and sectarianism on the rise, a democratically stable and militarily superior Israel is often viewed as a bulwark against Iran. Therefore, for Israel and the Arab Gulf states, containing Iran's quest for a hegemonic role in the region has become their primary concern. The 2010 diplomatic cables released by the Wikileaks exposed several covert exchanges between these countries and their anxieties about the Iranian nuclear programme.

The discomfiture of Israel and Saudi Arabia vis-à-vis Iran was witnessed when the negotiators were about to reach an interim nuclear agreement in Geneva in November 2013. As a contingency plan, Riyadh reportedly granted permission to Israel to use its airspace in the event of an attack, and to cooperate further for the use of rescue helicopters, tankers planes and drones. However, Saudi officials called the report as "completely unfounded." The Israelis too denied it. But, more such reports emerged in the succeeding years. In first-of-its-

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kind public disclosure in May 2014, Amos Yadlin, the former head of Israel's military intelligence (2006 to 2010) and Prince Turki bin Faisal al-Saud, the director of the General Intelligence of Saudi Arabia (1979 to 2001) met in Brussels and discussed foreign and security policy issues of West Asia. Iran found no mention but resolving the Palestinian problem (including refugees, border and Jerusalem) was an important agenda. The Saudi leader reiterated that Israel will be recognised by the Arabs if

it withdraws from the territories occupied during 1967 War. In early 2015, in continuation to their 'quiet contacts', Israeli and Saudi intelligence officials reportedly shared information on Iran. The Saudis were believed to have prepared to assist Israel for any anti-Iran mission, including refuelling the latter's aircrafts and use of its airspace. However, as conditions, the Saudis expected "some kind of progress" on the Palestinian issue. This exhibited their ambitions to remain as the genuine advocate of the Palestinian rights, and will make the Saudis to "balance their national security considerations

with their internal and regional legitimacy concerns.”

On a similar note, the April 2 Lausanne nuclear framework agreement between P5+1 countries and Iran raised eyebrows. Besides Israel, a few of the Gulf countries showed mixed feelings, and they remained cautious about the efforts taken up by the West. Saudi Arabia, in particular, despite its public welcoming of the deal, remains extremely concerned with this gradual rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran. Saudi Arabia already has differences with the US policies in the region. For example, King Abdullah, before his death, was incensed that the US administration under President Barack Obama facilitated the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, a long-time ally, and its failure to act against the Assad’s regime in Syria.

Apparently, the Obama administration is assuaging the fears of the Arab states by reorienting its policies. President Obama is going to reassure that the US will back its allies if they come under attack from Iran. It is in this direction that the talks of selling weapons to the Arabs have begun, but this will see Israeli

objections. As a result, appeasing all the sides will remain a major challenge for Obama administration.

### **Yemen Crisis and Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia’s involvement in the ongoing Yemen crisis is another manifestation of its unease about Iran wielding influence in its immediate backyard. Israel is keenly observing this development, in conjunction with Iran’s nuclear programme. The takeover of large parts of Yemen by the Houthi rebels of the Shiite Zaidi sect, allegedly backed by Iran alarmed the Saudis. The Zaidis constituted one-third of the Yemeni population, and ruled the northern part of the country for almost 1,000 years, until 1962. Houthis resentment towards the Yemeni political establishment dates back to 1990 when Ali Abdullah Saleh became the president. But when the tide of uprisings swept across the Arab world, including Yemen in 2011, Saleh was replaced by Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi in 2012, another figure backed by Washington and Riyadh. This increased the antagonism between the elected government and the Houthis. In 2014, the problem became severe when the rebels took control of capital Sana’a

which ultimately resulted in the resignation of Hadi on 22 January 2015.

The current crisis is viewed as a part of that power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which shares a 1,800 km border. Moreover, Yemen holds a strategic importance because of its location on the Bab-el-Mandab strait linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden--a route through which world's major oil shipments passes. Through this strait flows approximately 8 per cent of world trade, including nearly 4 per cent of oil and petroleum products. As a result, countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt do not see the Iranian regime's alleged supply of arms, which is believed to be in place since 2009, on a good note.

Riyadh demonstrated its strong disapproval about Tehran backing its proxy in the neighbourhood by ordering air strikes on the rebels after president Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia on 26 March. That eight other Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan and the UAE, agreed to be a part of the air coalition spearheaded by Saudi

Arabia reflected similar concerns. Calling it "genocide", Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, equated the Saudi-led strikes to Israel's bombing in the Gaza Strip. This conglomeration of the Arab countries takes the debate to another level- the dwindling influence of the U.S. in bringing order and stability in West Asia.

It appears that the mindsets of the moderate Sunni monarchical regimes have changed fundamentally, and they are getting increasingly concerned with the external players who do not seem to have solutions to the problems engulfing the region. For instance, the agreement by the Arab League states to create a joint military force during its Sharm el-Sheikh summit in Egypt (in March) could be attributed to the above presuppositions. Although the main idea for such establishment is premised on the rising threats from the Islamists elements, it is primarily because of the discomfort the traditional Arab powers have with the expanding Iranian influence in the region. In

Riyadh demonstrated its strong disapproval about Tehran backing its proxy in the neighbourhood by ordering air strikes on the rebels after president Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia on 26 March.

short, the effort is also to checkmate Iran. The process will itself take months, and it is yet to be seen how effective this military force will turn out to be.

### **Conclusion**

The open cooperation between the aforementioned countries will continue to remain for some time to come, but whether this will lay a foundation for the improvement of Arab countries' ties with Israel is still uncertain. Their engagements are likely to remain based on their strategic interests, and the Iranian issue appears to be an incentive for furthering the 'back-channel diplomacy.'

As far as Yemen is concerned, there is no end in sight to the conflict. If countries such as Saudi Arabia and other Arab states continue to remain as one bloc against Iran, the situation will only worsen. This will lead to more destabilisation of the region, and it would only encourage non-state actors to pursue their goals inside the country. Finally, it remains to be seen if the full nuclear deal between the US and Iran would bring stability in West Asia. As long as the proxy war and sectarian politics find their space in West Asia, the conflicts will continue casting their shadows in the region.

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# Myanmar: Emerging Political and Security Scenario

- *Vinod Anand*

The year 2015 is being seen as very crucial for democratic transition of Myanmar as it is due to go for elections in November. From an Indian perspective a peaceful transition in Myanmar remains very important as the countries in India's neighbourhood especially Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh to an extent have elements of instability of varying degree.

In 2011, Myanmar discarded military dictatorship in favour of some sort of semi-democracy. A number of political, economic, social and administrative reforms were introduced; though there has been some movement forward in the reforms, this movement has largely been excruciatingly slow. The military dominated or one could say quasi-civilian government still wields considerable influence and has been rather reluctant to dilute its hold over levers of power.

At a year-end press conference in 2014, the pro-democracy Burmese

leader Aung San Suu Kyi had said that for the great majority of Burmese people, there has been very little improvements to their lives. "I don't think 2014 is exactly the kind of year that you can be particularly proud of. We have to work a lot harder in 2015."

Although it is difficult to predict how things will eventually turn out in Myanmar's long march to democracy, it can be said that the journey is most likely to be a slow, painful and long haul. The possibility of complex power games between the various stakeholders as also likelihood of violence cannot be ruled out.

## Political Power Play

Despite the political tussle between various influential players, it is quite certain that the elections will be held in latter part of the year. However, there are many challenges before both people and leaders of Myanmar in order to achieve the goals of peace, stability and prosperity in the

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country.

Political and security trends indicate that there is an intense struggle between the various elements of the dominant political dispensation. The question of amendment to the Constitution, especially to accommodate Aung San Suu Kyi, continues to hang in balance and the goal national reconciliation seems to be still far away; The issue of federalism versus unitary state issue is deadlocked while the military continues to call the shots.

Myanmar's ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), or one could say the Army's own Party remains in dominant position; the distribution of power structure based on 2008 Constitution is such that the USDP along with military members of the Parliament enjoy overwhelming power. On other hand, it can also be said that they do not necessarily hold similar views on a number of political issues. If USDP wins the election--which cannot be ruled out given current political scenario--the question is who would be at the helm of affairs post elections?

Political and security trends indicate that there is an intense struggle between the various elements of the dominant political dispensation.

For one, President Thein Sein who has implemented the ongoing reforms in the last three years and was seen as one term President is apparently in the run for the second term too. Shwe Mann, the speaker of the lower house of parliament, and who is Chairman of the USDP is another contender and has often depicted himself as keeping parliamentary oversight or rather envisioned himself as a check on Thein Sein's executive branch of government. During his visit to the US in end April Shwe Mann has remarked that he was

open to cooperating with Aung San Suu Kyi and if necessary could form a coalition government. He

also mentioned that his party had "aspirations" to change the military-dominated constitution, but indicated time was running short ahead of November general elections.

On the other hand, Khin Aung Myint, the Speaker of the Upper House has been hinting that he is not in favour of amending Constitution to enable Suu Kyi to stand for presidency. Many Myanmar watchers believe that this is just a tactic or politics at best to paint a situation where two

factions, one hard line and the other pro-reform exist in USDP whereas in reality there is no such division and all the USDP leaders are all united in their goal to prevent Suu Kyi from coming to power.

And then there is the military's commander-in-chief, Min Aung Hlaing, who is also believed to be in the fray. Though the general wisdom is that the competition is more between Thein Sein and Shwe Mann and Min Aung Hlaing has been backing the president so far despite some indications that he could also run for the presidency.

Undoubtedly, Aung San Suu Kyi remains the most charismatic leader who could pose a threat to presidential ambitions of aforementioned contenders. The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) headed by Suu Kyi remains the largest opposition party and is expected to gain ground in the elections though it is not particularly strong in many ethnic areas. The last elections of 2010 were boycotted by the NLD but it took part in by-elections of 2012 for the central parliament where it won 44 out of 45 seats indicating a groundswell of support in favour of NLD. Aung

San Suu Kyi has been campaigning for amendment of the Constitution that bars her from becoming the President. There has also been some degree of criticism within NLD on Suu Kyi's political astuteness or lack of it as she has again warned the government that she may boycott of coming elections if Constitution is not amended. But there are others who believe that this is just a tactic to force the military dominated government to hasten political reforms especially bringing in the amendment to the Constitution.

### **Amending the Constitution: A Bridge Too far**

In a major development in early February, Myanmar's President had approved holding of a referendum in May on amendments to military-drafted Constitution. The Election Commission was to give out a date for the process to begin but no preliminary work has been done so far. It is quite evident that the current dispensation is in no hurry to usher in amendments to the Constitution. Aung San Suu Kyi has been at pains to push the issue primarily because of the extensive powers that the Constitution grants to the military

under the current arrangement. The talks between six different entities--President, Lower House and Upper House Speakers, the Army Chief, ethnic parties' representatives and Aung San Suu Kyi--took place in early April to discuss Constitutional reform the outcome was inconclusive.

According to reports, the results in the referendum for amending the Constitution even if it were to be held, would only be approved after the 2015 election. In any case, amending the Constitution

becomes a well nigh impossible proposition with 75 per cent law makers required to vote in its support.

The prospects look difficult when 25 per cent members of Parliament are serving officers of the military. Thus, right now the military exercises an effective veto over any changes to the Constitution. Further, the relevant procedures prescribed in the Constitution do not specify a time frame for the Parliament to ratify successful amendments.

Electoral reforms in the shape of substituting the present system of first past the post with proportional representations or a

mix of both have also been mooted. It was perceived that proportional representation system would have helped USDP at the hustings but strangely the proposal did not find favour with the ruling dispensation. In any case, it appears that at the current juncture not enough time is left for introduction of such a major electoral reform before the November elections.

### **National Reconciliation: Not an Easy Task**

Apparently, in end-March this year a tentative agreement between the Government and the National Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) representing 16 ethnic groups was reached.

Ethnic groups and their reconciliation with the Myanmar's regime remains one of the most significant factors that can bring in political

stability in the country. Apparently, in end-March this year a tentative agreement between the Government and the National Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) representing 16 ethnic groups was reached. Signing a nationwide cease-fire agreement was viewed as being central to the success of reform and development in the country. It was decided that the draft of the agreement would be considered by each of the groups before being ratified by

them. Once confirmed, the agreement is expected to lead to a political dialogue resulting ultimately in resolution of the long-pending issues between the ethnic groups and the government.

While the 16 ethnic groups are part of the tentative agreement, there are other groups like National Democratic Alliance Army of Kokang region, United Wa State Army, Arakan Army and Tang national Liberation Army are out of the purview of the agreement reached recently. In fact, in early May these groups in a meeting at Pangshang on the Sino-Myanmar border have made it clear that they will not abide by the agreement reached by the NCCT with 16 ethnic groups. Sporadic clashes between the Kokang, Palaung and Arakanese rebels and the government troops have been taking place. This development goes against the general trend wherein a forward movement was taking place in working towards a solution to the vexed issue of national reconciliation.

there are major points of differences. While the ethnic groups seek large degree of autonomy under a federal structure, the Myanmar

government is more inclined towards granting a nominal autonomy under a federal structure. The rebel groups refer to Panglong Conference negotiations with Baman leader General Aung San and other ethnic leaders in 1947 as the right model to be followed. The agreement accepted 'Full autonomy in internal administration for the Frontier Areas' in principle and envisioned the creation of a Kachin State by the Constituent Assembly. It continued the financial relations established between the Shan states and the Burmese federal government, and envisioned similar arrangements for the Kachin Hills and the Chin Hills. In the current scenario the ethnic groups have talked about various types of federal systems, such as those of Switzerland, Germany, India and Brazil. Some of the armed ethnic groups prefer a federal model based on the United States because all US states have their own constitutions. However, Myanmar regimes have been strongly opposed to autonomy that they believe has elements of separatism.

Thus a degree of decentralization and devolution of powers is a must

for any viable political solution to emerge. Recognition of ethnic rights with autonomy and power-sharing by the provinces/regions are critical aspects that need to be addressed by the Myanmar government. It also seems unlikely that a political solution would be found before the November elections given the complicated political and security scenario and inability of the stakeholders to strike a compromise on several contentious issues.

## Conclusion

While there are many uncertainties associated with ongoing political and security transition,

successful conclusion of the coming elections and transfer of power to the next dispensation is expected to contribute to political stability. Tatmdaw which has been at the helm of affairs for several decades will not find it easy to give up its power and privileges enshrined in the current Constitution. Though the military has embarked on the path to reforms the progress has been very limited. In the coming elections Suu Kyi's NLD Party is likely to gain majority of the seats though the USDP would also be a

Tatmdaw which has been at the helm of affairs for several decades will not find it easy to give up its power and privileges enshrined in the current Constitution.

serious contender. The question of Suu Kyi being allowed to run for the presidency remains in a state of flux. Accommodating Suu Kyi and letting her stand for the presidency would show the current regime in a good light. However, most indications are that present regime is unlikely to amend the Constitution in a manner that enables her to stand as a presidential candidate. Possibilities of rigging and violence during the elections cannot be ruled out either.

Though the national reconciliation would contribute greatly to the political and security transition

the chances of eventual reconciliation taking place before the elections do not seem to be bright. Making peace with the ethnic armed groups and devolution of powers to the provinces and local administrations would go a long way in ushering in long term stability and prosperity. Depending on the election results some power sharing arrangement between the main contenders like Shwe Mann, Thein Sein and Suu Kyi is likely.

In so far as India is concerned, it needs to encourage the ongoing political, security and economic transitions without appearing to be interfering in Myanmar's internal affairs. Democratization and opening up of Myanmar to the

West would be strategically advantageous to India in many ways especially in pursuit of its 'Act East' policy.

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# Pakistan Army Targets MQM's to Regain Control of Karachi

- *Sushant Sareen*

‘Give a dog a bad name, and hang him!’ This is an English proverb that the all-powerful military establishment of Pakistan has internalised and deployed effectively against those who fall out of favour or those who become a liability. In recent weeks and months, it is the predominantly Urban Sindh based Mohajir political party, Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), which is in the cross-hairs of the infamous ‘establishment’ of Pakistan. While the MQM has been steadily pushed against the wall for over an year now, things really turned ugly after the Sindh Rangers raided the MQM HQs in Karachi in early March in which the authorities claimed not only recovering illegal weapons but also arresting some nasty criminals and terrorists who they had been searching for years.

The raid on ‘Nine-Zero’ – MQM HQs – was followed by the mysterious release of a recorded confession by a death row prisoner hours before his execution. In this, he implicated top leaders of the party in incidents of target killings. A few weeks later, a mid-ranking police officer accused the MQM of being more dangerous than the Taliban and working at the behest of the Indian intelligence agency RAW. In the ‘swallow and vomit’ journalism (to use the evocative phrase coined by Arun Shourie) that is the norm in Pakistan, it didn’t take long for the MQM (already a *bête noire* for the Punjabi dominated media) to be painted in lurid colours. Since then things have gone downhill pretty fast for the MQM and there are now demands for the party to be banned, or for Altaf Husain to be expelled or extradited from UK to Pakistan or at least prosecuted in the UK for inciting violence

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inside Pakistan.

A full blown campaign has been launched against the MQM in Pakistan's 'independent' media, the strings of which are being pulled from Aabpara (ISI HQs) and the DG, ISPR (the military's PR spin doctor). This is the third time since the MQM was formed in the 1980s that it is facing an existential threat. In the 1990s, the MQM faced two extremely brutal operations by first the military and later the police.

These operations tried to physically and politically eliminate the MQM. Back then

This is the third time since the MQM was formed in the 1980s that it is facing an existential threat.

too the MQM was accused of trying to break Pakistan and carve out an independent 'Jinnahpur' with Indian support. The Pakistani media had lapped all this up without question. But just a couple of years back, one of the architects of that campaign, the former IB chief Brig Imtiaz Ahmed, revealed that the whole 'Jinnahpur' conspiracy was a cock-and-bull story aimed at destroying the MQM. Now a third attempt is

underway to finish the MQM, only this time the 'establishment' is not openly declaring its intention. Quite to the contrary, the stand that the military establishment has taken is that the operation is against criminals and terrorists regardless of their political affiliation. But since only the MQM seems to be under fire, the spin being put by the military's PR managers is not convincing anyone. Nevertheless, the MQM is facing a most serious existential crisis and challenge and whether or not it can survive this remains an open question.

Since the ouster of former military dictator, Gen Pervez Musharraf in 2008, the MQM has been in a state of siege. Musharraf patronised MQM both because the political configuration in Parliament and Sindh necessitated it, and because being a Mohajir himself, Musharraf had a natural affinity for the MQM and saw in it a possible constituency for himself. From around 2002 until Musharraf's ignominious exit,



MQM had an almost free run, not only in Karachi but also in rest of Sindh. What is more, even in the Centre the MQM held plum portfolios.

The 2008 elections, however, heralded the start of the MQMs fall from favour. The slide was not immediate, but was slow and for a fair bit of time it wasn't even apparent. Even though the PPP had a comfortable majority in Sindh and didn't need MQMs support in the province, it didn't have the numbers in Islamabad. With around two dozen seats in the National Assembly, the MQM pretty much held the balance of power and as such retained its relevance. The PPP had really no choice but to put up with the MQMs tantrums, somersaults, and its unpalatable antics on the streets of Karachi. Despite the ostensible power that the MQM enjoyed even after 2008 elections, somethings had started to change in Karachi.

From around the mid-1980s, the MQM had a virtual monopoly over street violence in Karachi. Except for the two brief periods in the

1990s when the MQM faced full blown security operations in which an estimated 15000 of its cadres were extra-judicially murdered, the MQM had a vice-like grip over Pakistan's commercial and financial capital. There were widespread allegations that the MQM ran the biggest and most lucrative criminal network – extortion, protection rackets, mafias of all sorts and what have you – which it backed with the political power it wielded. Over time, MQMs politics and criminal activities started feeding on and reinforcing each other.

After 2008, for the first time the MQM started facing competition from other players in Karachi. The PPP and the new player ANP – Karachi is reputed to be the largest Pashtun city in the world – had their pockets of support and they started backing gangs that took on the MQM. The next six odd years saw violence levels spike in Karachi and the phenomenon of 'target killing' became part of the city's lexicon. Thousands of people were killed in the political turf wars between these three parties.

Meanwhile other players also entered the scene – the Taliban and Al Qaeda set up base, the sectarian groups started indulging in their own blood-letting and there were the omnipresent criminal gangs which also entered the fray. Despite a lot of tall talk of cleaning up Karachi, the political compulsions of the main parties prevented any meaningful action on ground. This was what led to the start of disillusionment with the MQM among sections of its supporters,

something that was reflected in the 2013 elections where despite

There were essentially two, even three, prongs of this operation. The first was against the ‘criminal’ elements belonging to the MQM.

retaining all the seats, MQM saw its relative vote share fall in the face of a reasonable challenge from Imran Khan’s PTI.

Even as the MQM was facing a challenge to both its street power and its political popularity, the results of the elections – a comfortable majority for Nawaz Sharif in the National Assembly and the same for PPP in Sindh assembly – robbed MQM of the chance to hold the power to make

or break a government in both the Centre and the province. While PPP under Asif Zardari was quite happy to not rub the MQM the wrong way lest it destabilise his party’s government, Nawaz Sharif and his party had no love lost for MQM. The PMLN government in Islamabad had made it clear quite early in its tenure that it wasn’t going to stand by and watch Karachi slide into chaos. In 2013, within months of assuming office, Nawaz Sharif initiated the initial

operation to clean up Karachi with the Sindh Rangers spearheading the campaign.

Although there was no specific targeting of the MQM, but it was apparent that MQM would face the brunt of the crackdown. There were essentially two, even three, prongs of this operation. The first was against the ‘criminal’ elements belonging to the MQM. The second was against the gangs of the Karachi neighbourhood of Lyari. This was aimed at the criminals linked to PPP. The third prong was against the Taliban

elements who had become quite active in the metropolis. Within months however the operation lost steam and it seemed that it was back to business as usual. This was despite regular reports of 'encounters' in which alleged TTP members were killed and the law enforcement agencies managing to break the back of the Lyari gangs. The MQM too continued to be targeted in a low key manner. Over a year and a half, MQM complained that nearly 40 of its workers had been picked up by the law enforcement agencies and then murdered in cold blood with their bodies being thrown on the wayside.

Even as the situation in Karachi continued to simmer, the MQM was faced with new threats. There were reports of growing divisions in the party ranks between the moderates and the more militant leaders. Some senior leaders had already distanced themselves from the party and left the country to escape any possible retaliation. The party supremo, Altaf Husain, who is rumoured to be not in the best of health, shuffled the

organisational structure of the party a number of times. Nobody was sure anymore of his position or status in the party. Meanwhile, the heat was being turned on the MQM leadership, especially Altaf Husain, in the UK where a money laundering case and an investigation into the 2010 murder of the virtual number two, Imran Farooq, was hanging like the Sword of Damocles on the party. Reports that the murderers of Dr Imran Farooq were in the custody of the ISI in Pakistan and were being kept as a leverage against the MQM leadership had also caught the party in a bind.

The military operation targeting the MQM has come against the backdrop of all the other onerous challenges it has been facing. Perhaps the Pakistan army has made the calculation that MQM is at its weakest right now and has therefore gone in for the kill. The sheer lack of response from the MQM seems to be bearing out the assessment of the military, at least for now. In the 1990s, the MQM retaliated strongly and by force of arms. Today, however,

there are only verbal missiles being fired on the airwaves, which are anyways loaded against the MQM. The inability of the MQM to hit back through strikes and shut downs suggests a wariness among the party cadres and leaders that such a tactic may backfire. But this is a Catch-22 situation: by not retaliating, the MQM is losing ground both in terms of street power and political power because their workers, supporters and their opponents will reach the conclusion that MQM is a spent force; on the other hand, if the MQM resorts to its old tactics to

bring Karachi to a grinding halt, it may provoke a severe backlash from not just the military but also lose public support. And if there is widespread violence, the Pakistani establishment might well use their growing closeness with the American and British authorities to fix the MQM in the money laundering and Imran Farooq murder case. Clearly, the future appears very bleak for the MQM and the Mohajirs in Pakistan.

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# A Chance to Recalibrate India-Sri Lanka Relations

- *PM Heblikar*

The euphoria generated by results of the January 2015 presidential polls in Sri Lanka has gradually evaporated. The country is heading towards a complex political situation not originally envisaged by any of the principal actors. The focus is now on four stalwarts including the incumbent President Maithripala Sirisena. The others are former Presidents Chandrika Bandarnaike Kumaratunga, Mahinda Rajapaksa and the current Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

While President Maithripala Sirisena is assured of completing his tenure, the others will have to fight a tough political battle to remain relevant or retain importance especially, when the country is poised towards far reaching constitutional and political changes. To his immense credit, President Sirisena has

remained loyal to his election manifesto, as witnessed by several changes made immediately following his inauguration. The recent passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution is an important landmark. There are other equally significant ones on the anvil. He has at multiple times stressed the importance of political stability in the country and in this direction the role of Ranil Wickremesinghe as head of government.

## Need for reconciliation:

There are different schools of thought on the future of the politics of rapprochement initiated by the present political leadership under President Maithripala Sirisena. One definite pointer is on the need to strengthen the process of reconciliation in both constitutional and political terms so as to address the desires and

*\* PM Heblikar is Managing Trustee, Institute of Contemporary Studies Bangalore (ICSB) and former Special Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat with long stints in Sri Lanka and Myanmar*

aspirations of the minorities, both Tamil and the Tamil speaking Muslim community. The appointment of former President Chandrika to head a special presidential task force on reconciliation is a step in the right direction. Observers add that the Indian Origin Tamils (IOT) community too needs redress of its own set of problems. The Task Force will, no-doubt, require support of the cross-section of the community cutting across political spectrum to deliver acceptable and workable solutions.

**Battle of political figures:**

All major political parties meanwhile are grappling with their internal issues and also preparing to face what could be a decisive period in the post-conflict period. The Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP) has to contend with the enigmatic personality of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has several years of active political life ahead. The former President can still be the kingmaker, if he chooses to do so. The manner in

which he became the party chief in 2005 is a classic example of his political acumen which he retains even now. Criminal cases against his brothers Basil and Gotabaya and others may well cause the Rajapaksa camp to close ranks and bide their time. That said, the popularity of the Rajapaksas cannot be discounted. However, Mahinda Rajapaksa, for reasons best known to him, has failed to elevate himself from the role of a master strategist to national statesman. He had everything going for him till the desire for absolute power caused his

downfall. On the other hand, Chandrika Kumaratunga may not be the power that she was several years ago. It is doubtful if she has forgotten or forgiven the manner of her ouster from the top party post and the presidency. The SLFP therefore has a tough balancing act on its hands. The next couple of weeks will perhaps provide the compass to its future direction. The SLFP is now caught in a bind as it has to carefully deal with three power centers in

Observers add that the Indian Origin Tamils (IOT) community too needs redress of its own set of problems.

Chandrika Kumaratunga, Rajapaksa and Sirisena.

The UNP, which is the senior partner in the current government, is not without its share of problems. The leadership issue is of paramount importance. Ranil Wickremesinghe is no doubt the frontrunner in the leadership race. There are others who have aspired for the top posts in the party as also in the parliamentary group. They are biding their time for the opportunity to oust Wickramasinghe. Outside the UNP, the chances of a Ranil tie-up with Chandrika may well be on the cards. Both may need each other to remain politically strong in the run up to the next parliamentary polls. In fact the continuing popularity of Mahinda Rajapaksa will be the main reason for them to close ranks.

### **Tamil scenario:**

In the Northern Province, the scars of the civil war are healing slowly. The post conflict period of relief and rehabilitation is over and the process of redevelopment is underway. Politically speaking, there is considerable ground to be

covered. The four-party Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is yet to come to terms with the reality of post-Prabhakaran period and importantly address political issues and to create an effective second line of leaders. The TNA has to step up to the plate and seriously contemplate its new role and responsibility. It withstood the overwhelming dominance of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remarkably well. It is under no duress or threat now from any quarter. Obviously, the TNA has a major role in the process of rapprochement and has to earnestly build bridges with the current dispensation. Failure by the TNA leadership to grasp opportunities created by the current situation will only be to its detriment and the community it represents.

R. Sampanthan continues to remain the tallest TNA leader and his influence over the Tamil discourse is evidently an important factor. Sampanthan's deep knowledge of the subject and proximity to leadership on both sides of the Palk Straits is well known and so are his expectations

equally of them. For India, there is considerable comfort with him in the saddle. He needs to look to a new point of contact to carry forward the dialogue with the relevant stakeholders. A senior politician who holds the trust of both sides and the Tamil community will have to be identified and groomed for the task. Several political analysts tend to question the efficacy of the TNA in handling sensitive matters due to personality and perception issues. While it is left to the TNA to burnish its credentials locally in Sri Lanka, it has to cover considerable distance with India and improve the trust factor. India may also need to identify and cultivate the best among them.

**Minorities:**

There is unanimity in the assessment of leading observers that the minorities “faced the music” in the post-May 2009 period, especially following the violent end of the LTTE. It is a

fact that the then Colombo government did not have an effective post-conflict contingency plan, on the same lines what India had following the Peace Accord with the Mizo National Front (MNF) in June 1986.

Unfortunately in Sri Lanka, there was no peace dividend for the minority communities. The previous regime failed to rein in extremist political elements and anti-Tamil

. The previous regime failed to rein in extremist political elements and anti-Tamil chauvinistic party such as Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) as also the Buddhist radical group namely the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS).

chauvinistic party such as Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) as also the Buddhist radical group namely the Bodu Bala Sena

(BBS). It will be remembered that the JHU was a member of the then government. Attacks on places of worship by these groups incited communal tensions at regular intervals due to an administration, which controversially remained a mute spectator. Mahinda Rajapaksa of course paid dearly for dereliction of responsibility in protecting the minorities.



The minorities constitute between 25-30 per cent of the population and have considerable role to play in electoral politics. Efforts would therefore be necessary for the government of President Sirisena to ensure that the benefit of peace dividend is extended to the minority communities. Further, an assurance that the law will severely deal with petty chauvinistic groups intent on vitiating the communal harmony. The minorities require assurance of safety, security and equal opportunities from the highest political authorities in the country.

### **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment:**

The debate on the full implementation of the XIII amendment has been a matter of national concern and international interest ever since its promulgation nearly 30 years ago. It continues to hold center-stage even now. The two major political forces in the country, namely the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and United National Party (UNP) have a huge stake in addressing its constitutional and political

requirements. The Tamil community, as also the Muslim community, holds the political balance in the Northern and Eastern provinces respectively. In any future redrawing of parliamentary constituencies or raising the strength of the Parliament to 250, the minority parties may have chances of improving their clout. The Tamil community has received support from the top leadership of country. However, full Implementation of the 13th Amendment is need of the hour. There should be no compromise on it. It is for the benefit of the entire country and benefits should flow equally. But, as admitted by politicians, academics and legal experts, the devolution of revenue and police powers to the provinces remain the bone of contention. This has seriously impacted the process of reconciliation.

Removal of the irritants is this necessary. But what are the realistic options? There are many to consider. The threat of terrorism no longer exists and there is no chance of its recurrence. So it should not be

cited as an impediment. The situation has changed radically in post-January 2015 period. It will be recalled that during the tenure of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the JVP took the legal route to demerge the Eastern provincial council from the North. While the demerger assuaged the security concerns of Sinhala parties such as JVP, it became precursor for restoration of the democratic process in the formerly troubled provinces.

Recently, the Government had sought opinion of the Supreme Court on matters pertaining to the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment.

The government now has a Supreme Court mandate to call a referendum on transfer of powers of the Executive President to the Parliament and on the independence of media.

The government now has a Supreme Court mandate to call a referendum on transfer of powers of the Executive President to the Parliament and on the independence of media. It would therefore be worthwhile to revisit and strengthen if necessary, the constitutional position of 13<sup>th</sup> amendment on devolution of revenue and police powers in the light of contemporary developments.

Jayampathy Wickremaratne, the parliamentarian, who drafted the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, has proposed writing of a new constitution. In an interview with *The Hindu* (May 05, 2015), he argued in favor “of stronger provincial councils and power sharing at the Centre.” He added that “this should be done to strengthen the Centre without weakening the periphery”. He advocated that a new statute should include a fresh bill of rights

and address the issues of devolution of powers to provincial councils and sharing of powers with the central

government. The door on full devolution of powers is still open as per the above interview of Jayampathy Wickremaratne.

According to a diplomatic correspondent with long experience of covering Sri Lanka, the need of the hour is to strengthen Sri Lanka’s secular credentials in a manner that equal rights and opportunities are available to its citizens from all walks of life. The Chandrika

Kumaratunga-headed special task Force on Reconciliation will have to address this important aspect and bring about relevant recommendations.

**Mechanism for sharing revenue and police powers:** Politically too, there is the need to consider creation of a revenue sharing mechanism between the Centre and the provinces. This will be in line with the provisions of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment. A Finance Commission based on the Indian model may be one option. The other could be under the aegis of Central Bank of Sri Lanka to monitor revenue generation and expenditure. There was a fear during the civil war that affected provinces could misuse the revenue powers. The situation has radically changed and any chance of misuse for anti-national purpose is remote.

Another area is to strengthen police administration in the provinces by a well calibrated process of decentralization as the first step. A central police force may also be established on the lines of India's Central Reserve

Police Force, which will relieve the military of its internal security charter. It is important for the downsizing of the military gradually and considering outsourcing more army units on UN and other assignments.

### **India factor:**

The inauguration of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in May 2014 and the election of President Maithripala Sirisena in January 2015 has reset the compass on bilateral relations. The positive impact of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, the first by an Indian Head of Government in 28 years, was unprecedented in character and substance. It has helped to revive the sagging relationship. That said, President Sirisena's maiden visit as Head of State to Delhi is equally important especially for the personal chemistry between the two leaders as also for the several assurances given by him on matters of mutual interest.

India-Sri Lanka relations are based on mature strategic calculations. This was evident

especially during the period 2001-2004, when Ranil was Sri Lanka Prime Minister. New Delhi too had established an excellent rapport with him. It will be recalled that the slide began in April 2004 when Ranil lost the parliamentary elections and India voted a Congress led government into office the same year. The period under Mahinda Rajapaksa for ten years saw stagnation in political and diplomatic terms.

In the prevailing situation, India obviously needs to carefully calibrate its response to developments in Sri Lanka. The first priority should be to look at the irritants that have held the relationship to ransom. The fishermen issue has to be tackled earnestly directly between New Delhi and Colombo without provincial governments on both sides getting into the act. Local political compulsions in India and Sri Lanka must be taken into account but not allowed to dictate the trajectory of talks.

With Sri Lanka set on a series of constitutional and political changes, it will be very useful for dissemination of ideas and views. India must involve the cross section of Sri Lanka representatives in such a dialogue.

The government of India may also need to examine role of the TNA especially that of some of its leaders. India's position on the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment must be made clear to them as also importance of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. India's views can also be articulated by conferences, seminars and workshops on the subject involving stakeholders on both sides of the border. Public discourse on the broad spectrum of

India-Sri Lanka relationship is an inescapable activity. There is hardly any debate in India or Sri Lanka on it. With Sri Lanka set on a

series of constitutional and political changes, it will be very useful for dissemination of ideas and views. India must involve the cross section of Sri Lanka representatives in such a dialogue.

Meanwhile, the relationship with the TNA must require a thorough review from a national interest point of view and not necessarily from local Tamil Nadu perspective. The situation in the

IOT areas calls for an efficient mechanism to help overall development of this community. The present IOT leadership needs an efficient second line of leaders who can gradually take over from the present lot.

The thorny issue of devolution of powers as envisaged under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment will no-doubt occupy considerable space in weeks to come. Prime Minister Modi has indicated India's views on it during his recent visit to Sri Lanka. The situation of the minorities is important and needs constant attention of Delhi. The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord 1987 is an all encompassing document that needs more attention. Time has

come to expand it to a Comprehensive Partnership Agreement to take forward the economic, political, strategic, defense and cultural aspects in a well-organized manner. For the first time in a decade, India has a team of friendly interlocutors in Sirisena and Ranil. India's past friendship with Chandrika is well understood. Like-wise, Sri Lanka now has the comfort level to relate with Delhi, which is not shackled to coalition politics. Both countries have five years of political stability to build better relations and make up for lost opportunities.

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# Understanding Sri Lanka's Important Constitutional Amendment

- *Anushree Ghisad*

**T**wenty-eight April, 2015 will be marked as a historical day in the contemporary political history of Sri Lanka. On this day, the Constitutional Bill adopted by the Parliament with an unprecedented majority, a new phase of Sri Lankan constitutionalism has begun. Some legislators feel that this amendment is crucial for creating a better democratic society, while others saw it as an opportunity to atone their past mistakes; essentially hinting at their support for infamous 18<sup>th</sup> amendment which led to consolidation of majority of powers in the hands of President. This was an electoral commitment of President Maithripala Sirisena under his '100 days action plan'. The main constitutional proposals of 19A to transform the Presidential form of government to a modified Westminsterial system of governance and restoration of the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.

## Evolution of Lankan constitution

*\*Anushree Ghisad, Research Intern, VIF*

## and Presidential powers

Sri Lanka has had four Constitutions till day, starting from Donoughmore Constitution which governed the nation from 1931 until its replacement by Soulbury Constitution in 1947. Under the Prime Ministership of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the first Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka was promulgated in 1972. It envisaged appointment of a President as a 'nominal head' by Prime Minister for a period of 4 years. It was J.R.Jayawardene who changed Sri Lanka's political system on the lines of French Gaullist Constitution. Its striking feature was devaluation of Prime Minister's power and advocacy of an Executive Presidency, which had a chilling effect on democratic institutions. Thus the architect of second Republican Constitution in practice became, what D.B.S. Jeyaraj calls as the 'Constitutional Dictator' of Sri Lanka. Thereafter, the legacy of 'Executive Presidency' remained unabated. Many former Presidents, from

Chandrika Kumaratunga to Mahinda Rajapaksa resolved to get rid of this ghost of 'Executive Presidency' hovering around Sri Lanka, but in practice it did not happen.

Mahinda Rajapaksa who achieved an exemplary feat by vanquishing the LTTE and thus freeing his country from the clutches of a protracted, devastating civil war. While riding high on the wave of popularity, he missed a golden opportunity to consolidate his position by ushering in Constitutional reforms. Instead, he enacted the 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment, increasing his own grip on power.

Mahinda Rajapaksa who achieved an exemplary feat by vanquishing the LTTE and thus freeing his country from the clutches of a protracted, devastating civil war.

pro-Rajapaksa factions, he led a path breaking organization called 'National Movement for Social Justice.' Founded in 2012, this organization provided a platform for Lankan citizens from all the walks of life--from political leaders to activist clergy, civil society groups, professionals, media persons, farmers--all of whom had a single clear goal in mind: to save the democracy by abolishing Executive Presidency. They initiated this proposed 19A amendment. This movement finally culminated in the adoption of Constitutional Bill on April 28 ending the Executive Presidency.

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#### 19A: How did it begin?

Finding a leader to arrest the rapid authoritarian trend was the biggest challenge for those who fought for democracy in Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> A much revered Buddhist monk and social activist, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera spearheaded a movement to end what he termed the 'evil' of Executive Presidency which trampled upon the spirit of constitutionalism in Sri Lanka. Tagged as 'Lankan Khomeini' by

So what does it entail? Owing to the Supreme Court's intervention on one hand and lack of consensus among political parties on the other, the original draft of 19 A went through series of changes. The actual content of Amendment is yet to come into public domain, but the rough idea of the key provisions is circulated by Lankan media and various political personalities.

One of the most important provisions of this Amendment

pertains to curtailment of Presidential powers. Presidential tenure has been limited to five years, as against six-year tenure enshrined in second Republican Constitution of 1978. It has also restored a two-term limit on incumbents, a restriction that was lifted by Mahinda Rajapaksa under 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to make a bid for his third term at the recent Presidential elections, which he lost to Maithripala Sirisena. It curtails the Presidential power to dissolve Parliament after one year. Now it can be dissolved only after four and a half years. This discretion has been abused in the past by President either to blackmail the MPs or to take advantage of a conducive political atmosphere which assured his/her comeback. Dissolution of Parliament by former President Chandrika Bandaranaike in year 2004 is one such example.

Previous governments in Sri Lanka were severely castigated for appointing jumbo Cabinets, despite the huge cost to the public exchequer. The Cabinet size has now been restricted to 30.

The 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment had proposed a provision for Constitutional Council and Independent Commissions. Though this Amendment

facilitated the formation of a ten member 'Constitutional Council', its nature and composition had been a bone of contention among major political parties. Seen as an important tool to depoliticise Independent Commissions as it nominates members to them, Constitutional Council was meant to comprise five members outside the Parliament by Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader in consultation with each other, apart from ex-officio members like the Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader. But many political parties insisted that it should be confined to politicians alone leaving no major role in it for anyone from outside. The opposition had its way and Constitutional Council is now a Parliamentary body. It has been empowered to nominate members to various Independent Commissions like Public Service, Police, Bribery, Human Rights and University Grants Commission. President, in consultation with Constitutional Council is the appointing authority of Supreme Court judges.

Under the provisions of new law, dual citizens have been barred from becoming Members of Parliament. The Amendment has



also done away with the practice of urgent bills, which many a times bypassed the procedures of Constitutional scrutiny under the guise of national interest.

### Implications of 19A

Amendment 19A has infused a fresh vigour in Sri Lankan polity and a positive step in the direction of democratization of political structure. The Two term limit imposed by this Amendment has effectively debarred Mahinda Rajapaksa from making a Presidential bid. Now reportedly, he is nursing ambitions to make a comeback into politics as a Prime Ministerial candidate in the next General Elections, which will take place post dissolution of Parliament and after adoption of 20<sup>th</sup> Amendment & Right to Information. However, even if he manages to make a successful re-entry, he will have very limited powers, as the post of Prime Minister has not been empowered as envisaged in the original draft. Also the bar on citizens with dual citizenship from becoming Parliament members will also come as a big blow to the

In a way this voluntary devolution of power for the larger good of country by President Maithripala Sirisena can be compared only to Bhutan where the initiative for democratization of the Bhutanese political system was taken by the King himself.

aspirations of the Rajapaksas since at least two of the four brothers reportedly hold US citizenship.

### Achievements of this legislation

This legislation has the potential to change the flavour and tones of polity and governance in Sri Lanka for good. Initiatives by new Lankan government towards securing inclusive development by consolidating its pluralistic nature has already won accolades from the United Nations and other international players. In a way this voluntary devolution of power for the larger good of country by President Maithripala

Sirisena can be compared only to Bhutan where the initiative for democratization of the Bhutanese political system was taken by the King himself. Though it was not a revolution from above for Sri Lanka as in case of Bhutan, the intent of the top brass was equally important. In addition to this, Sirisena has made it clear that he has no intentions to contest Presidential elections for second time. This is even more striking

against the record of former executive Presidents.

### **Reception within and outside Sri Lanka**

Adoption of 19A is seen largely as an exercise to restore democracy in the country and build good governance. Religious dignitaries including members of Mahasangha, National Catholic Mass Media Circle, Insaniah Arab School, all have expressed their satisfaction over the development and commended President Sirisena. The Global Tamil Forum too congratulated Sri Lanka, saying passing of this crucial Amendment to the Constitution has significantly altered the unfortunate political culture and practices adopted in Sri Lanka in the recent past. Even U.S Secretary of State John Kerry, who visited Colombo just a day after its enactment was all praise for the government.

### **Criticism**

However, there is some criticism of the bill too. Many view this bill has having fallen short of the pledges to clip Presidential powers. The government itself has gone public saying that it could not go the full distance. Jayampathi Wickramaratne, a constitutional lawyer who was

involved in drafting 19A commented that only 60 to 65 percent of powers of the top post have been reduced. It needs be underscored that the political will cannot be blamed for it, as the original draft bill did proposed transfer of a wide range of Presidential powers to Prime Minister. It was Supreme Court who ruled in its determination of the constitutionality of the Bill that some of the clauses pertaining to transfer of power need to be subjected to a referendum. In accordance with that ruling, the President will continue to remain head of the state, head of the executive and the commander-in-chief of Armed Forces.

Some analysts has also commented that curtailment of Presidential tenure and term does not necessarily translate into dilution of Presidential powers, as they only soften the clout of the President rather than abrogating his powers.

In any case, this is a landmark event in Sri Lanka's history. It now remains to be seen how it translates in reality.

Endnote:

19<sup>th</sup> Amendment: How did it all  
begin? The Monk and the man

who changed history- Ravi  
Jayawardena

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# The Trajectory of India's Nuclear Deterrence since May 1998

- *Gurmeet Kanwal*

India conducted five nuclear tests over two days on May 11 and 13, 1998, and declared itself a state armed with nuclear weapons. Since then, India's nuclear deterrence has been effectively operationalised.

With a pacifist strategic culture steeped in Gandhian non-violence, India is a reluctant nuclear power. It shares borders with China and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed neighbours, with both of which it has territorial disputes. India had sought but had been denied nuclear guarantees and had no option but to acquire nuclear weapons. India believes that nuclear weapons are political weapons, not weapons of warfighting. Their sole purpose is to deter the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

India's nuclear doctrine is built around the concept of 'credible minimum deterrence' and a 'no first use' posture. As a corollary to its 'no first use' posture, India has declared its intention of launching

massive retaliation following a first strike on India. Consequently, India follows a policy of 'deterrence by punishment' through a 'counter value' targeting strategy aimed at inflicting unacceptable damage, as against a 'counter force' strategy aimed at destroying the adversary's nuclear forces.

Over the last decade and a half, some analysts have questioned the desirability of absorbing punishment in a first strike. The BJP's manifesto for the 2014 elections to Parliament had promised to review the doctrine; however, Narendra Modi, the BJP's candidate for the post of Prime Minister, was quick to announce that India's 'no first use' pledge will not change.

India's nuclear force structure is based on a land, sea and air-based triad: Prithvi I & II SRBMs and Agni-I to IV IRBMs manned by the Missile Groups of the Indian Army; nuclear glide bombs under-slung on Mirage 2000 and SU-30

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*\*Brig Gurmeet Kanwal, Visiting Fellow, VIF*

MKI fighter-bomber aircraft of the Indian Air Force; and, in due course, SLBMs on SSBNs with the Indian Navy. While INS Arihant, the first indigenously designed SSBN, is undergoing sea trials at present, the second SSBN is reported to be under construction.

India has willingly abjured the use of 'tactical' or 'battlefield' nuclear weapons as these are inherently destabilising. Tactical nuclear weapons are mainly employed against armed forces targets in the TBA (tactical battle area) and tend to lower the threshold of use due to the proclivity to 'use them or lose them'. These also involve complicated command and control mechanisms, enhance the risk of unauthorised and accidental launches and are complex and costly to manufacture and maintain.

The total number of warheads that India needs for credible minimum deterrence in a no first use scenario, has not been articulated by the government. In the views of Indian analysts the requirement varies from a few dozen warheads at the lower end of the scale to

over 400 warheads at the upper end. In terms of yield these range from 10 to 12 kilotons to megaton monsters.

After the Pokhran nuclear tests of May 1998, in which warheads based on both fission and fusion designs were tested, India claimed that it had acquired the capability to manufacture nuclear warheads with yields varying from sub-kiloton to a maximum of 200 kilotons. Notably, India's nuclear capabilities are completely indigenous despite the stringent technology denial regimes and sanctions that India has been subjected to since 1974 when a 'peaceful nuclear explosion' (PNE) was conducted ostensibly for civilian purposes. While some of these sanctions have been lifted, many others still remain in place.

Unlike in China, which has an authoritarian regime, and in Pakistan, where the army calls the shots on key policy issues, India's nuclear weapons are firmly under civilian control. The Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) is the apex body of India's nuclear command and control system. The Political Council of the NCA is

Tactical nuclear weapons are mainly employed against armed forces targets in the TBA (tactical battle area) and tend to lower the threshold of use due to the proclivity to 'use them or lose them'.

chaired by the Prime Minister. All policy decisions, including the decision to employ nuclear weapons, are vested in the Political Council. The Executive Council is headed by the National Security Advisor (NSA). It provides inputs to the Political Council for nuclear decision making and executes its directives.

The Chiefs of Staff of the army, the navy and the air force are members of the Executive Council, but India does not yet have a Chief of Defence Staff to provide single-point military advice to the government. It is imperative that the appointment of CDS be approved as early as possible. The Strategic Planning Staff provides secretariat support to the NCA and the NSA.

The Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Forces Command (SFC) advises the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC) on all aspects of nuclear deterrence and exercises operational and technical control over the nuclear forces. The nuclear delivery assets (ballistic missiles groups, fighter-bomber squadrons and the SSBNs) are raised, manned, equipped and maintained by respective Services HQ.

A chain of succession has been formulated. India has established a National Command Post (NCP) that will also act as a tri-Service operations centre during war. Rehearsals and joint exercises involving simulated retaliatory nuclear strikes are carried out periodically.

Adequate checks and balances for the safety and security of nuclear warheads, the prevention of unauthorised use and the minimisation of the possibility of accidental detonation have been built into standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the custody, storage, handling and transportation of nuclear warheads during peace time. Nuclear warheads are kept unmated and are stored separately from the launchers. The nuclear cores are in the custody of personnel of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the high explosive triggers are in the custody of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

With the 'cannisterisation' of some of the ballistic missiles carried on mobile launchers, it would be prudent to assume that limited mating of warheads would have taken place, but with permissive

action links (PALs – electronic locks) having been installed to arm the missiles and the warheads. The launch platforms are manned by the armed forces and are not deployed till necessary. This reduces the risk of accidental and inadvertent launch and enhances peace time safety.

India has consistently been a strong advocate of total or universal nuclear disarmament. This policy, enunciated by the Nehru government after independence in 1947, did not change even after the Pokhran tests of May 1998 as nuclear disarmament is seen to be in India's interest.

Despite not having signed the NPT, the CTBT and the MTCR, India has complied with all the provisions of these treaties and supports the early conclusion of discussions on the FMCT.

India views these international treaties as important enablers of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament measures that are necessary for regional and international peace and stability. India has voluntarily renounced

further nuclear testing and has an unblemished non-proliferation record among the nuclear weapons powers.

India has invested deeply in strategic stability; this is reflected in the nuclear doctrine, the no first use posture, the force structure and the arrangements for command and control. India has never flaunted its nuclear weapons and has exercised immense strategic restraint despite grave provocation, particularly from Pakistan – by way of a quarter century old proxy war being conducted through state-sponsored terrorism.

The Indian government opted not to cross the LoC during the Kargil conflict in 1999. In the 2001-02 stand-off, though the armed forces were mobilised, India did not retaliate militarily despite a terrorist attack on the country's Parliament in December 2001 and on the army's family quarters at a base in Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, a major terrorist strike was launched by the ISI-backed LeT on multiple targets in Mumbai in November 2008. However, neither

India has never flaunted its nuclear weapons and has exercised immense strategic restraint despite grave provocation, particularly from Pakistan – by way of a quarter century old proxy war being conducted through state-sponsored terrorism.

the Indian political leadership nor the people of India are likely to tolerate another major terrorist strike that is sponsored by the Pakistan government or any of its organs. Military retribution for such a strike will inevitably follow.

India is willing to discuss and institute nuclear confidence building measures (CBMs) and nuclear risk reduction measures (NRRMs) with both China and Pakistan, but its overtures have not been suitably reciprocated by either of them. In fact, China still does not recognise India as a nuclear power and refuses to discuss nuclear CBMs. The nuclear CBMs in place with Pakistan are cosmetic in nature and need to be upgraded to more substantive ones.

India's conduct as a responsible nuclear power was recognised in the US-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement signed by

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush in July 2005.

Since then, India has signed and ratified an Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and placed its nuclear reactors under international safeguards, with the exception of those that are committed to the nuclear weapons programme. India has now fulfilled all obligations necessary to be given membership of the NSG, the MTCR, the Australia Group and the Wassenaar arrangement as a state armed with nuclear weapons.

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# Indian Armed Forces Need to Embrace Social Media as a Tool for Perception Management

- *SK Chatterji*

For decades the military leader has tried to correctly identify the Centre of Gravity (CoG) of the enemy forces. The CoG is that criticality which if addressed successfully would maximize effects on the enemy, disbalance him, and adversely affect his force cohesion, command and logistics. The search for the CoG has more often than not lead to a bridge critically important for the enemy maneuver forces and logistics to negotiate in order to reach the combat zone. Mountain passes that are critical for movement have been focused upon; just as command elements, communication hubs and logistics dumps have been debated. However, today there is a shift; the element that is often being considered as the CoG is the populace of the area where own forces would be deployed.

## **Military Objectives: Primacy of Populace's Perception**

Influencing the populace of the region

where forces are to be employed has become the all-important CoG that commanders are focused upon. Gone are the days of WW 1, when carpet bombing to flatten the area was the objective. Also obsolete are the barrages of WW II. It's precision strikes, minimum co-lateral damage, and focused perception management operations that have emerged as the new challenges. With populace having become the focus, the earlier emphasis on attrition has reduced. The other objective of minimizing attrition is the requirement, post winning the battle, of rebuilding the infrastructure. The winner is more often than not the one who has to source most of the funds. The story in Iraq and Afghanistan substantiate these arguments conclusively. The management of the re-build phase and stabilization of the area are again critically dependent on support of the populace.

The ascendance of populace and its friendly perceptions to the top of the

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military commanders' wish list has led to attrition being relegated in prioritization. Kinetic means of war: a bullet, missiles, bombs etc.; are being supplemented increasingly by a new force multiplier: media. It provides the means of reaching out to the populace, shape their perceptions and create an atmosphere where the forces employed are considered as partners in their journey to a better life ahead.

### **Social Media as a force multiplier**

The social media, defined loosely, encompasses any media that utilizes the internet for its propagation. Thus, all such appliances like Face Book, Instagram, WhatsApp, Viber, Skype and a whole family of such communication platforms which provide the bandwidth to communicate concurrently and instantaneously with a large segment of subscribers, falls within its purview.

### **Social Media: 9 Clinchers**

**Contact on a Broad Front.** As on March, 2015 Facebook had over a billion accounts while Twitter had 288 million. Some other sites like WhatsApp have 700 million, LinkedIn 347 and Skype 300 million. An overwhelming percentage of the users,

use the media repeatedly in a day. The social media provides the opportunity for making contact with a huge audience. It's an opportunity that was barely conceivable a few years back.

### **Tool for better Understanding of Local Communities.**

Better understanding of local communities holds the key to better tailored perception management initiatives. Following the accounts of people from the communities and populace that is the military commander's focus could provide an insight into the communities' priorities and sensitivities.

Simmering issues that have the potential to flare up can also be

identified.

### **Barometer of Community Response.**

Social media can also be used as a barometer to measure community response to own initiatives. Of course negative responders would be more likely to post their opinions; yet, over a period of time an analysis of the comments could lead to gaining better insight.

### **Establishing an Interactive Connect.**

Social media provides inter-active platforms Messages are posted, users write their comments, the initiator has

an option of responding. Well-tailored messages and sensitive messages go viral inviting thousands into the vortex of the issues that these messages address. These comments can also be used for redefining the initiatives or modifying these for greater positive affect.

### **Perception Management Tool.**

Perception management requires reaching through a variety of media to ensure penetration of the message directly to maximum members of the community. Social media is an ideal tool for such an endeavor. The facility of share on most social media platforms, transforms the recipient of the message to be acting as its propagator too.

**Combating Jihadi Propaganda.** Free societies and democratic nations are faced with the challenge of asymmetric warfare launched by jihadist groups that even overwhelming conventional might of nations is finding more and more difficult to address. This fraternity of terrorists uses social media extensively for multiple purposes. Their funding, recruitment, planning and a host of other functions are based on social media platforms. There is a need to cause a rift between them and the populace by using the same weapon as they use: media.

Jihadi propaganda on the social media needs to be contested aggressively and social media provides the wherewithal. The same communities that the jihadi targets, will need to be the focus of the militaries and the means to fight are the same as those used by the Jihadis.

**Boosts Traffic to Website.** Social media could be easily utilized to popularize websites maintained by military forces. Greater details to serve perception management could be posted on the website to further own objectives.

### **Converting the Recalcitrant.**

Interactivity on social media can be utilized as a tool for sowing seeds of doubts in users as far as their faith in jihadi groups or local leadership and projected ideology are concerned. The major advantage of uploading visuals provides a strong tool for exposing such leadership by continuous information feed on their opulent lifestyles and lack of concern for the populace. It impacts the fence-sitter and also his family and friends who in turn influence him.

**Cost Benefits.** Social media provides the cheapest possible platforms for messaging. Its wide reach combined with low costs allows almost unlimited usage. The costs are mostly in terms of handlers to be employed, who have to

be deft and also be empowered to ensure speedy communications.

### **Military Strategy for Utilization of Social Media**

**Integration at National Level.** The way militaries communicate with their audiences would necessarily have to be aligned to the policies of the state. Broad parameters defining thrusts on issues will need to cascade down from the government to all its departments. The military being generally involved in activities in troubled areas with sensitive audiences will need fine tuning with government policies and objectives in the area of deployment.

Force Headquarters created in areas of deployment will certainly require specialist officers irrespective of force levels deployed.

**Resource Allocation.** A cell is required at the National Security Council to strategise perception management initiatives. The cell needs the capability for dynamic evaluation of perception management themes. It should be capable of evolving themes for propagation by relevant ministries. Perception management directorates are also required in more important ministries, and definitely in the Defence, External Affairs, Home and Finance. Information Operations and Mass Media Engagement Directorates are also required in all service

headquarters. A permanent cadre of communication specialists is a must for militaries today. Officers from such specialist cadres need to be available up to the Corps level. Force Headquarters created in areas of deployment will certainly require specialist officers irrespective of force levels deployed. The function of media engagement can also be entrusted to officers employed for perception management in order to economize on manpower. Necessary software, hardware and finances will also need to be allocated.

**Execution Model: Command Driven - Staff Detailed - Advised by Professionals.**  
Perception

management and use of media needs to be a command function. While it may be argued that there is already a rather heavy load on commanders, it needs to be perceived that media has evolved as the provider of the most potent weapons of influence in his area of responsibility. He will require staff officers to work out the details of the perception management and media usage plans. At the level of execution it may be advisable to use consultants from the media to frame messages that trigger the affect desired.

**Media Integration in Operational Planning.** To enable utilization of media as a force multiplier it would be essential to evolve the media plan simultaneous with the operational plans. Media has to address all the constituencies that are within the ambit of the commanders' goals to be attrited/influenced. To illustrate, in an insurgency environment, there would be a need to cause a divide between the insurgents and the local populace, between the various insurgent groups, within a group between the leaders and rank & file etc.

**Continuous Monitoring and Flexibility in Response.** Flexibility is intrinsic to media operations. Fleeting opportunities to project own forces positively while magnifying violence, intolerance and such negative missteps of inimical forces will need to be immediately capitalized upon. The response can be timely only if adequate monitoring capabilities are catered for and commanders prioritize/decentralize execution to appropriate levels.

### **Conclusion**

The 'battle space' exists within a larger 'information space'. Dynamic developments, beliefs, opinions and attitudes of the populace, community leaders and stake holders (who may

sustain or undermine the military effort) exist in the larger 'information space', exponentially influencing the minds of military ranks in the 'battle space, more so in the current 'information age'. Thus an adversary in the 'battle space' can effectively be manipulated by smart perception management initiatives and operations targeted at the stakeholders who populate the relevant 'information space'

Social media provides multiple platforms for intensive communication with communities in the area of interest of military commanders. Embedded, too often in such communities are inimical elements and groups that propagate violence, intolerance and ideologies that appeal to a small section of the community. To combat their influence on such communities social media can be utilized in all phases of a battle, starting well before the attrition option is initiated and kinetic means of war brought into use.

Relationship building with the local populace, incipient issues that could explode, studying own approach and correcting if going tardy, ensuring the enemy does not hijack our well intentioned steps and paint them black are some areas where the dividends lie. In fact, it provides a host of such information as would serve to enhance

the forever inadequate situational awareness of the area of responsibility; a critical requirement for all commanders.

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## Joint VIF-RUSI-CICIR Conference on Afghanistan

A trilateral conference on the theme of “China, India, UK and Afghanistan- A partnership for Stability” was organized at the VIF premises from 02 to 05 March 2015. The main objective of the deliberations was to find ways and means of cooperation amongst the regional powers in order to bring peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan. The Royal United Services Institute, UK delegation was led by Prof. Malcolm Chalmers and included Mr. Raffaello Pantucci and Edward Schwark and Ms Emily Winterbotham. The Chinese delegation was represented by Senior Colonel (Retd) Bai Zonglin, Dr. Jenny Jiang and Mr. Hebotao. Dr. Amrullah Saleh and Amb. Sultan Ahmed Baheen formed part of the Afghan delegation. The Indian side was represented by Gen. NC Vij, Lt. Gen RK Sawhney, Amb. TCA Rangachari, Amb. Jayant Prasad and Brig. Vinod Anand as the main speakers along with a large number of Indian strategic community including Amb. Kanwal Sibal, Mr. C Sahay and Mr. Jaidev Ranade.

The seminar was divided into eight sessions over two days. On the first day, the participants discussed the emerging security situation in Afghanistan where problems of equipping and funding the Afghan National Security Forces were highlighted. Continued funding and support in terms of air and surveillance cover was underscored. In session two, the need for connectivity and building of infrastructure and investment in Afghanistan was highlighted. Here, the possibilities of synergies between China’s Silk Road Economic Belt and India’s Connect Central Asia Policy were discussed. There was a degree of consensus that cooperation between China and India in the fields of agriculture, health and education in Afghanistan could be possible. The third session was devoted to the state of reconciliation process in Afghanistan with the latest developments of China taking the lead as also President Ashraf Ghani’s reliance on Pakistan to push forward the process. Session four involved discussions on future of Afghanistan and how various

regional organizations could be helpful in stabilizing Afghanistan.

On the second day, the Deputy National Security Advisor, Dr. Arvind Gupta gave out his perspective on various aspects of the evolving situation in Afghanistan and India's approach to the same. This was followed by a session on how Indian investors assess the environment in Afghanistan for investing their funds. Mr. Manish Mohan, Regional Director South and Central Asia, Confederation of Indian Industry explained at length the nature of presence of Indian companies in Afghanistan. Mr. Rakesh Gaur, Vice President, KEC International outlined his company's activities in Afghanistan and problems and issues connected with operating in Afghanistan. The Company is involved in power transmission, distribution, telecommunication and railways in Afghanistan and has undertaken a number of projects in Afghanistan. Even the

power transmission and distribution aspects of CASA-1000 project are being handled by the company but the project has not made much headway because of the recent happenings in Peshawar which is considered more unstable as compared to places in Afghanistan. The last session on 4<sup>th</sup> March involved group discussions on how to take out a publication based on the deliberations of the conference.

The last day involved an interactive session with local and international media where the participants interacted with print and electronic media on the evolving scenario in Afghanistan, different perspectives of the regional powers and possibilities of cooperation in Afghanistan. The conference received a wide coverage in the newspapers, online publications and on TV channels.

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## Visit by a US Congressional Delegation

A five-member bipartisan US Congressional delegation, led by Ed Royce Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, visited the VIF on 10 March 2015 for an interaction with faculty members and other strategic experts on the dynamics of evolving Indo-US partnership, driven largely by the growing needs of containing terrorist threats in the region, US rebalancing in Asia, and India's quest for self-reliance in defence production, among others. The interaction encompassed issues of mutual strategic and economic interests, broadly envisioned in the joint statement of US President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi early this year.

General NC Vij, Director VIF, welcomed the delegation and introduced them to an august group of policy experts and intellectuals who had assembled for the event. In his introductory remarks, the Director expressed satisfaction over the current pace in bilateral relationship, and hoped the road ahead should be of warmth and promise. Drawing attention of the house to the rise of China and its increasing

assertiveness, Gen Vij underlined the need to mainstream China in the global rule-based systems and manage its rise, especially to the benefit of the region. In so far as Indo-US defence cooperation is concerned, General Vij accentuated the need to change the matrix of bilateral relationship from 'buyer-seller' to that of a co-partner in design, development, and production of defence equipments.

In his opening remarks, Chairman Ed Royce, a key facilitator of the 2006 U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement and former co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, shared his perspective both on the geopolitical shifts currently sweeping the region and the investment opportunities available for American businessmen in India. Towards the latter, he said India needs to push through the next phase of economic reforms for the US investment to go up, especially stressing on the need for India to move away from the old license and permit Raj. Besides, the need for an early resolution of the investment disputes in India was also flagged by the US lawmaker. However, the Chairman concluded

India, with a rule-based system, is a better destination for US investment, as compared to China.

Chairman Royce also underlined the economic imperatives of India's defence modernization. He remarked that for India to develop a credible and effective deterrence against its adversaries it is imperative to develop first a strong and vibrant economy. Lauding India's remarkable contributions towards stability in Afghanistan, anti-piracy and others, the Senator said India has the capacity to keep peace in the region and beyond. Urging on the need for the higher level dialogue on counter-terrorism and an increased level of cooperation on intelligence sharing between India and United States, Chairman Royce came down harshly on the Gulf States for financing terrorist networks in Central and South Asia, especially in Pakistan. He reiterated United States and India have an enduring desire for a free and secure world.

Accompanying the delegation, Nita Lowey, a Ranking Member of the House Appropriation Committee, also shed light on the imperatives of stronger strategic

partnership between India and the US, two countries sharing similar traits of DNA and similar sets of challenges. She said there is broad recognition that an India that is strong at home can take on challenges more confidently and more strongly outside the borders. She reaffirmed the view that the growing level of cooperation between US and India is not only mutually beneficial but is also in the interest of the region.

Two presentations were made from the VIF side. While Ambassador Kanwal Sibal, former Foreign Secretary, covered Asia Pacific and Asia Pivot in light of vision statement by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi, Dr VK Saraswat, Member NITI Aayog (a newly constituted body that replaced the Planning Commission) & former DG, DRDO & Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, unraveled the underpinnings of India's quest for self-reliance in defence and 'Make in India'. Some of the country's best known practitioners of diplomacy and security attended the event.

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## Interaction with Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, CEO of Afghanistan

**A**midst growing uncertainties about Afghanistan's future, the VIF hosted the Chief Executive Officer of the national unity government in Afghanistan His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah to deliberate upon a wide spectrum of issues, including, among others, the post drawdown scenarios in Afghanistan, the ongoing efforts towards peace and reconciliation among various warring factions, the need for capacity-building by Afghanistan's national army, the Taliban's potential resurrection, the role of regional actors in Afghanistan, and India's continued relevance in Afghanistan. Ambassadors of the two respective countries, Shaida Mohammad Abdali and Amar Sinha were among the strategic experts who participated in the interaction.

In his opening remarks, General Vij, Director VIF, raised a bevy of questions, bearing relevance to Afghanistan, but also strategically relevant to India. Putting a question mark over the fragile peace process which is presently underway in Afghanistan, the Director asked how durable the

peace process would be, especially in light of the fact that different stakeholders have divergent views and often conflicting interests. The recent months have witnessed a spike in violence in Afghanistan where the armed forces, fighting a resurgent Taliban, have to take substantially high rates of attrition. The Director questioned the capabilities of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) to absorb the high rates of attrition over a longer duration. He further underlined the need to restructure the ANA and equip it with the necessary wherewithal. Among other notable issues brought before H.E. Dr. Abdullah, the Director urged the need for a better understanding of China's role in the emergent situation in Afghanistan and the latter's growing bonhomie with Pakistan. While questioning Pakistan's continued thrust for a strategic depth in Afghanistan, the Director also stressed the need for Afghanistan to draw redlines both for Pakistan and Taliban. A former Chief of the Indian Army, General Vij, forewarned Afghanistan about the danger inherent in any potential

reinstatement of the Taliban in the ANA. The opening remarks by the Director also raised the most significant question from India's perspective, where does all of this leave India which has invested so much in Afghanistan?

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, a seasoned diplomat and a military professional of high eminence, replied forthrightly and with utmost candidness to all the questions raised by the Director in his opening remarks. He not only elaborated upon the situation that led to formation of the Unity Government but also shed significant light on the political road ahead, especially dwelling upon the prevailing politico-security situations in Afghanistan. A large part of Dr. Abdullah's speech was devoted towards allaying India's apprehensions that investments made by her in Afghanistan will not go waste. India has not only supported Afghanistan economically but also helped it nurture democratic roots. The Chief Executive further said Indian activities in Afghanistan are perfectly aligned with Afghanistan's national interests.

Admitting Afghanistan has serious issues with Pakistan, Dr. Abdullah said both countries need

to sort out their differences. Pakistan however will be tested against its actions and not words, he said. In so far the capacities of the ANA to deal with insurgent threats are concerned, Dr. Abdullah admitted there are some weaknesses, but he also reposed faith in his troops who are courageously taking on Taliban in areas where it was difficult for the foreign troops to operate earlier. Nevertheless, Afghanistan needs international assistance in so far as beefing up its security apparatus is concerned. On the political front, Afghanistan needs stability which again is the key to resolving the security challenges. Political maturation however will take time, Dr, Abdullah added. He further assured the house that Afghanistan will not turn into an Islamic Emirate that it once was, and that hardcore Islamist forces will be kept at bay. Afghanistan's tryst with the Taliban, China's thrust into Afghanistan, and Afghanistan's bilateral security agreement with the US were among host of other subjects comprehensively discussed during the interactive session. The audience also chipped in with lots of insightful questions.

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## Conference on India-US 2015: Partnering for Peace and Prosperity

The Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) in collaboration with the Atlantic Council, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and U.S Embassy in New Delhi organised a two-day international conference titled, “India-US 2015: Partnering for Peace and Prosperity” on March 16-17, 2015. The conference brought together a number of distinguished speakers who deliberated on the emerging contours of the Indo-US bilateral relations. The conference began with a welcome address by General N C Vij, Director, VIF. General Vij shared his optimism for strong Indo-US bilateral ties in the near future. He stated that the two countries have been remarkably successful in overcoming the strong mistrust that plagued the bilateral ties during the cold war. He expressed his sincere hope that the conference will generate useful ideas that will contribute to building a strong bilateral Indo-US strategic partnership.

Shri Chandrajeet Banerjee, Director General, CII, appreciated

the significant role played by Foreign Secretary Dr S. Jaishankar in guiding the Indian industry to acquire a global outlook in order to compete on an equal footing with global companies. He further mentioned that as the two countries build a robust economic partnership, they needed to move beyond being transactional and should look for ways to ramp up mutual investments in their respective economies, encourage Joint Ventures in third countries through crafting joint identities. The two countries must promote knowledge economy and promote strong cooperation from ‘people to people’ to ‘institution to institution’.

Governor Jon M Huntsman, Jr., Chairman, Atlantic Council in his opening remarks warmly reflected on his association with India and India-American community in USA. He remarked that a robust people to people partnership has been crucial in transforming relations between the two countries. He further added that in an interconnected world, no one society is capable of unilaterally

resolving their challenges and global leaders must navigate together to shape our collective fates. As world events continue to develop at an alarming pace, the Atlantic Council is engaged in a forward-looking and strategy-focused agenda to galvanise global allies and friends to work collectively for global good jointly with like-minded institutions.

In his special remarks at the Inaugural, Foreign Secretary, Dr. S Jaishankar cautioned about the dangers emanating from the past that might affect future opportunities. He also stated that the two countries need to overcome a “conceptual problem” in order to move away from the post-World War II mindset which is still alive and realise the full potential of partnership between the two countries. Both needed to realistically assess opportunities for bilateral engagement and not make “unrealistic” demands on each other. India needed to improve its domestic business environment to attract economic investment. Both countries have done well to settle many of the residual issues from the past and he shared his optimism about the new direction in which the bilateral relations are moving and emphasised the need for greater

strategic thinking to deepen the relations.

Dr Arvind Gupta, Deputy National Security Advisor, delivered the keynote address at the conference. In his address, Dr Gupta chalked out some of the visible trends in the foreign policy of the current government. He stated that India has been making significant efforts in assessing the emerging global trends and is willing to engage on regional and global levels. Most significantly, he outlined that, there is a greater linkage of India’s domestic interests with its foreign policy priorities. The ‘Make in India’ campaign is an important example of a growing linkage in India’s domestic and foreign policies. On regional and international security issues, India is engaging with like-minded countries to guard the interests of global commons. Cyber security has emerged as an important area where the world was today willing to cooperate with India. The changing geopolitical environment marked by developments in West Asia, the rise of non-state actors, terrorists networks, emergence of weak states, cyber security etc. are all common threats that create growing interdependence and the future of Indo-US relations

therefore has great potential. Other key speakers at the conference were, Railway Minister, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, who inaugurated the opening session on Day 2 of the conference and spoke about the importance of trade and economics in furthering the US-India security partnership; Mr. Piyush Goyal, Minister for Power, Coal and New & Renewable Energy and US Ambassador to India, HE Richard Verma, spoke at the Conference dinner at the end of Day 1 of deliberations.

The conference comprised five main sessions spread over two days and covered key areas like Emerging Regional Security Order in East Asia, Security situation in the Af-Pak region, Indo-U.S. trade and economic relations, India-U.S. Middle East strategy and the security of global commons. While there was a congruence of interests over the securing of the Asia-Pacific region in the wake of increased Chinese assertiveness in a region which is primarily driven by a US determined security architecture, how do India and the smaller regional nations secure their own economic and security interests in this vital region without getting embroiled in the great game politics? There was

general consensus that time effective Indo-U.S. strategic partnership would be a positive force to counter challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

The session on Afghanistan focussed on the emerging situation there, the thinking of the new government, prospects for its success and its implications for U.S. and India to cooperate in helping Afghanistan achieve political stability and make its economy sustainable. Here, the Americans seemed to support the move by the Afghan Government towards a peace deal with Taliban and Haqqani network as also a change in the Afghan approach in the form of engagement with Pak Army and to get their support for peace process. The US also seemed to support the growing Chinese role in Afghanistan in providing economic assistance to deal with instability. But the Indian view was that while the new Afghan government has taken its first steps to secure peace and Pakistan outwardly seems to be helpful to the peace process so far, the situation is very tentative and the Afghans have to be prepared for talks but also for the battles to test their military power. There was also some scepticism about the prospects for peace in

Afghanistan due to involvement of too many players and also the will of the two key players, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, who have shown tremendous sagacity so far, to be able to work together over the long term.

The third working session of the conference assessed the importance of economics to the India-US security relationship. It was agreed that there has been an exponential increase in US-India trade in recent years but to further increase trade and take it across the proposed US \$ 500 billion mark, much more needs to be done by both countries. For its part, the Government of India has introduced steps to reform India's labour laws and is also taking measures to promote ease of doing business so as to move India among the top 50 countries in terms of this vital parameter for economic progress. The 'Make in India' initiative of the Prime Minister is built around the idea of making domestic economy more strong. The pace of ongoing reforms is significant and in a recent report, the U.S. trade council has expressed optimism about India's market and economic potential especially in sectors like railways, telecom, defence, construction and insurance etc.

India must anchor its economic policies in the strategic perspective because a strong economy contributes to a strong national security environment. But the US too needs to address some of India's concerns especially the Indian IT companies operating in U.S. as they face several challenges which need to be redressed. These Indian firms are primarily at the receiving end of U.S immigration policies that create labour mobility issues. On the whole, a very positive environment exists to keep the momentum going and both countries do realise that knowledge economy constitutes the core of US-India bilateral partnership.

India-US Middle East strategy was the theme of the fourth session. This is a region of great importance to both India and the United States and other parts of the world too on account of its vast oil reserves. For India, the Gulf provides for 60 percent of India's energy security and large numbers of Indians live in the gulf region. India is therefore cooperating with Gulf countries on a range of issues such as counter-terrorism, curtailing terror financing activities, keeping tabs on money laundering etc. India is also



contributing to peacekeeping efforts in the region and proliferation of WMDs is a concern for all. The emerging geopolitical instabilities in the region are of serious concern especially in the surge of ISIS after Arab spring and the growing Shia-Sunni fissures. The role of external players such as U.S. and India therefore become important in securing this region which is also grappling with lack of opportunities for the youth, lack of legitimacy of the state systems. This instability brings together several disgruntled elements that will further challenge peace and stability in the region. Export of extremist ideology from the region is already a worrisome phenomenon. Therefore civil society, business community etc, are important actors in shaping the public policy discourse to secure this region and for this academia, individual experts, and others would all have to play an important and committed role in generating ideas that can influence policies.

The last session of the conference discussed the important and new theme of securing the global commons especially the cyber and maritime domains. The discussion began with a focus on information

security and its moving ramifications. It was observed that so far information security had been an area of concern in the space and defence areas but the definition of critical information security had now been extended to healthcare, telecom and financial services. Therefore any disruption in information security can have a disastrous impact on a nation's financial infrastructure. Similarly, cyberspace, though man made and also the youngest global common, spans the entire globe almost seamlessly, is not restricted by national boundaries, is central to economic growth and global security, and is vulnerable to attacks and crimes that can be committed from anywhere. We therefore require an international legal framework duly supported by international laws to ensure human security which is the right of every human being. There were complementarities in views regarding various facets of maritime security and the conference ended on a positive note that common threats require a holistic approach to tackle these challenges with both India and the US recognising the dangers posed by these shared challenges and the need to cooperate.

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## Rise of Islamism: A Direct Consequence of the Creation of Pakistan: A Talk by Tarek Fatah

**N**oted columnist and author of 'Chasing the Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State', Tarek Fatah, delivered an insightful talk on 'The Rise of Islamism: A Direct Consequence of the Creation of Pakistan', on March 25, 2015 under the Vimarsha lecture series at VIF. A gusty speaker, known widely across the Muslim world for his secular, progressive and liberal views, Tarek Fatah, gave a brilliant exposition on the evolution of political Islam in the sub-continent, attributing much of the radicalisation going on across the world to the creation of Pakistan.

According to Fatah, Britain and the United States helped create and sustain Pakistan largely to obfuscate the communists after the Second World War. Pakistan, however, owes its existence to the hatred against India, a sworn enemy. Pakistan has a huge stockpile of nuclear weapons and its nuclear arsenal consists of low-yield short-range tactical weapons which could be used against India.

India needs to remain wary of Pakistan's nefarious designs and must give up any hope of reconciliation with her. The Pakistan-born author also had a set of policy recommendation for India: 'Aman ki Aasha' should be scrapped as it is nothing but a shameful exercise and a one way traffic of ISI aunties coming to India and doing circles in India; the beating retreat at Wagah, or 'the march of roosters' as the speaker indignantly called it, must cease without any further delay, because it gives Pakistan a sense of parity with India. Tarek Fatah further underlined the need for India to support the Baloch insurgents in its own interests.

In so far as the status of Muslims in India is concerned, Tarek Fatah said India is the only country in the world where Muslims exert influence without fear. Muslims are better equipped in India than in Pakistan and Bangladesh. India offers a future in terms of what the nation state would be and how to accommodate languages, races and religions with all the

difficulties that go with that. Rather than looking up to the Arab world, the Muslims of the sub-continent need to draw inspirations from their own ancestry and the Indian civilization, advised the speaker.

The views expressed by the speaker found resonance with the audience who had turned up in large numbers.

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## RTD on the Current Situation in Bangladesh

Even as Bangladesh continues to face the worst political turmoil in its history, a Round Table Discussion was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) on April 7th, 2015 to discuss the current political situation in Bangladesh. The interaction, a bilateral exercise between the VIF and the Bangladesh Institute for Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), encapsulated the broad spectrum of political and security challenges confronting Bangladesh today and their implications for the bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh. The interaction apparently aimed at exploring the reasons behind the prevailing conflict in Bangladesh and finding out practical and workable solutions to end the persisting deadlock between the two major political parties in Bangladesh namely the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

The BIPSS delegation consisted of two members – Maj Gen ANM Muniruzzaman, President BIPSS, and Shafqat Munir, Associate Research Fellow, while the VIF contingent, a wide array of policy

experts from different backgrounds, comprised, among others, Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, Maj Gen PK Chakravorty, Amb Veena Sikri, Amb TCA Rangachari, and Mr, Amitabh Mathur. With General NC Vij, Director VIF, in the chair, the discussions were moderated by CD Sahay, former Secretary RAW.

In his opening remarks, General NC Vij, Director VIF, underlined India's close proximity to Bangladesh both in terms of geography and historical and cultural linkages. He however, rued that despite physical closeness and India's remarkable contribution towards the liberation of Bangladesh, the political relations between the two countries have often remained subjected to the whims and fancies of the ruling political dispensations in Bangladesh. While he stressed the need for Bangladesh to correct this anomaly in the bilateral relationship, he also urged that a stronger partnership would mutually benefit both Bangladesh and India. Maj Gen Muniruzzaman, on his part, said

that persistent political unrest in Bangladesh could have deep and far reaching implications for India's security, especially because the radical groups in Bangladesh are most likely to exploit the situation to their advantage. He averred that the recent Burdwan blast in India is a manifestation of this growing menace. In so far as the current political crisis in Bangladesh is concerned, the BIPSS President said it is the result of a faulty election held in January 2014. The VIF experts however held that while in a democracy it is perfectly legitimate for the people to have their right to protest, the 'bandhs' and 'hartals' have a limit; carried too far they begin to lose their significance. Further, the association of BNP with Jamaat-e-Islami was contributing negatively to BNP's image. Jamaat is well known for its acts of violence. The

need for a dialogue between the leadership of two major political parties i.e. Awami League and BNP is need of the hour. The interaction also underlined the need for a Track-II to end the political impasse and reining in the radical groups in Bangladesh if there were some problems in direct talks.

The format of the interaction was designed in a manner that encouraged wide participation from the delegates as well as those who attended it. Two presentations, one each on the political situation and the radical groups in Bangladesh were made by Maj Gen Muniruzzaman and Shafqat Munir respectively, and these were followed by VIF responses and open discussions.

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## 'Make in India' in Defence Sector

With the 'Make in India' drive of the government promising to change the entire industrial landscape in the country, the VIF organised its monthly talk 'vimarsha' on the 'Role of Technology in the Manufacture of Defence Equipment' on 23 April 2015, delivered by Vice Admiral Puri, former Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, who is presently associated with the Foundation as a Distinguished Fellow. Spelling out the imperatives of 'Make in India' in defence, General NC Vij, Director, VIF, said in his opening remarks, India's excessive dependence on foreign suppliers to meet the critical requirements of the country's armed forces is an unviable proposition in the long run. While on the one hand, it dents the country's hard-earned foreign exchange reserves, on the other hand, it also leaves the armed forces with a frightening prospect of supplies getting dry at crunch situations. General Vij, a former Chief of the Indian Army, further stressed that while direct

purchases of foreign-made weaponry may be the easiest option to pursue in the short run, a country of India's size and might can not perennially remain dependent on foreign equipment manufacturers to meet the growing requirements of its armed forces.

Vice Admiral Raman Puri, who long has been associated with India's premier Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in steering the course of indigenization in defence production, stressed that evolving nature of modern warfare has put the additional onus on the armed forces to continuously upgrade its weaponry. India, which had to put up with sanction regimes in the past, has tried too often with offsets as a measure to boost indigenous production. But, till date technology acquisition through offset has not resulted in acquisition of even a single technology. The speaker urged on the need for government to establish world class science and

technology base and provide our Defence Services decisive edge by equipping them with internationally competitive systems and solutions. He expressed optimism that DRDO has the necessary technological edge to move in the right direction. Citing ‘Tejas’ (multi-role combat fighter) and ‘Arjun’ (main battle tank) as the shining examples of success of the DRDO, Adm Puri said experiences gained in research over the past few decades should not be frittered away. The DRDO has often been blamed wrongly for running into cost and time overruns. He, however, said

many of the problems associated with the DRDO could be set right by proper planning, but even more importantly, by staying the course. A great advocate of self-reliance in defence production, Adm Puri also opined that joint research with private players would result in spinning off technologies which would be beneficial to both. Views expressed by the speaker found great resonance with the audience who had turned up in sizable strength to hear Raman puri on a very scintillating subject.

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