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India-Brazil ‘Strategic Partnership’: Rhetoric and Reality

Priti Singh and Devika Misra

The recent visit of the Brazilian President, Jair Bolsonaro, as the chief guest at India’s celebration of its Republic Day in January 2020 has given a new impetus to India-Brazil relations. While a ‘strategic partnership’ had been formalised in 2006 (during the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Brazil), in the course of this visit, an Action Plan was formalized to further strengthen that partnership.

This paper defines what ‘strategic partnership’ means for India, tracing its usage in Indian foreign policy. While assessing briefly the importance of the partnership for Brazil’s foreign policy goals, an attempt is made to discuss whether the India-Brazil strategic engagement is an effort at political image building or whether it is more a move towards a concrete economic relationship? The paper analyses and evaluates the significance of Brazil as a ‘strategic partner’ for India.

Concept of Strategic Partnership

It has often been a complaint of scholars that Indian foreign policy has been plagued by the absence of a grand strategy, and where there is no real long-term strategic thinking.¹ It has also been said that it has been characterised by a desire for India to emerge as an internationally recognised major league player, prompted by a search for ‘status and symbolism’.² Guided by its historic policy of nonalignment, defined by its quest for strategic autonomy in decision making, and following the maxim of ‘cautious prudence’ is what seems to define policy making in the Indian context. It also entails a distaste for entering into iron clad alliances and agreements. India’s international interests are pursued in a manner that is shaped less by a strongly enunciated

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central 'idea', and more by situationally defined imperatives, as and when they may acquire importance. It is argued that 'strategic partnership' used as a foreign policy tool allows it to do just that, which probably explains the wide range of India's strategic partners which range from the USA to Rwanda - where India did not even have a functional embassy at the time of entering into the partnership.

So, what does strategic partnership mean for India?

With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent dispersion of the bipolar alignment, there has been a proliferation of agreements to forge 'strategic partnerships' in the international arena. Various and widely used, the concept 'remains ill defined.'³ There is a certain aura of common sense about the usage of the term, but it has little to no definitional clarity, so much so that it has been called 'the new joker of international politics.'⁴

Nevertheless, attempts to define strategic partnerships point out that they are bilateral in their membership, geared towards the promotion of cooperation between members in several important arenas, and their composition is such that members share common values as well as are similarly positioned in their worldview. For example, Jonathan Holslag offers the following definition:

Strategic partnerships are characterized by five main features, which include 'identified common interests and expectations'; are 'formulated for the long term'; are 'multidimensional and operationalised in the economic, political and military areas of interest'; have a 'global range'; and are relationships in which incentives should be of such a nature that they cannot be achieved without partnership and serve to distinguish it from other relationships.⁵

Giovanni Grevi has also stressed that the mere nomenclature of a partnership as 'strategic' does not automatically make it into one: '... partnerships do not become strategic by virtue of defining them as such', and that both parties must view the strategic partnership as 'essential' to the achievement of basic goals. Strategic partnerships therefore, are 'important bilateral means to pursue core goals.'⁶

However, when these definitions are viewed in context of their diverse usage in the international system in the 21st century, there are contradictions in several important and identifiable strategic partnerships. It is a term that is used to define relationships as disparate as the EU-India strategic partnership and a simpler trade-based relationship like the Argentina-China strategic partnership. It is this diffusion of the usage of the term that underlines the limitations of available definitions to explain both the widespread popularity

and employment of the term 'strategic partnership' as well as what constitutes a partnership so defined. Luis Fernando de Moraes Blanco argues that, instead of attempting to fix definitional criteria, it is more useful to view each strategic partnership as having a 'variable meaning', differing with each bilateral relationship where it is employed.⁷ Further, he also argues that the mere decision undertaken by a state to utilise the nomenclature of 'strategic partnership' offers a normative intent that distinguishes, and that such a marked differentiation ranks and marks the partner as special. Therefore, 'strategic partnership' is not merely a descriptive concept, but is also a political one, employed by political actors to act upon their counterparts. It is a context specific term where its usage significantly alters its meaning.

Despite the definitional ambiguity, the term and its usage as a foreign policy tool has gained traction in the last few decades. Firstly, with the end of the Cold War and the subsequent diffusion of ideologically organised politics, the change in the foreign policy orientation of newly liberalised and 'emerging economies' like India, as well as the impressive economically growing countries like China, there was a need for a foreign policy tool which, unlike earlier alliance-based cooperation agreements, did not require complete consonance in value structures between the partners to become functional. 'Strategic partnership' emerged as a concept, which enunciated a language that 'moves the focus from a discussion on 'values' to a discussion on 'common goals'... This 'pragmatic move' is a discursive tool to enable cooperation while avoiding a discussion on axiological incompatibilities which could undermine cooperation between the parties.'⁸

Secondly, though 'strategic partnership' can be situated in the gamut of cooperation terminology already available – like 'special relationship', 'essential relationship' and so on – the usage of this particular term allows for an instantiation of hierarchisation, where by the very act of being so prioritised, the degree of the bilateral relationship assumes significance. This is precisely why Blanco terms 'strategic partnership' as a performative 'speech act' where value is imbued not only by the content of the agreement signed, but by the marked preference expressed, allowing states to manoeuvre the rigors of international politics. The way this strategic partner label is assigned to specific partners and the different relationships that are constituted by means of this 'speech act' show that the use of this term transcends the limits of bilateral interaction and become part of a broader foreign policy discourse with systemic implications.⁹ Hence, a strategic partnership allows for unlikely, disparate states to overcome the value gap that may curtail cooperation possibilities. It also allows for the setting of a

diverse, context specific agenda to bolster their own normative outlook as well as for the functionality of maximum economic cooperation in a highly globalised world. It is therefore 'a bilateral instrument to achieve not only bilateral but also systemic goals.'¹⁰

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that the biggest transformation in the orientation of Indian foreign policy has been its acknowledgement of the necessity of interdependence in a globalised world; it is propelled by the immediate necessity of economic success but ultimately directed by its search for 'status' in the international system. Motivated by the dynamics of power transition and system transformation, Indian foreign policy has attempted to reflect its interests at the international level in its bilateral engagement as well - especially as is the case with its strategic partnerships with the countries of Latin America.

India boasts a wide gamut of strategic partners, ranging from major powers, such as the USA, Russia, China, Germany, France, Japan, to the wide dispersion of the same with countries like Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico and Rwanda - all located in diverse regions of the world. It may be surmised, then, that Indian policy makers have found the concept of a 'strategic partnership' useful, and are comfortable in employing the same in policy formation.

The Indian stand on comprehensive alliances - for example, something like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation - has always been diffident. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta explains, its approach to alliances has been 'pragmatic and motivated by a concern for maintaining its own foreign policy autonomy.'¹¹ Further, the choice of partners is defined less by concerns of balancing and more by 'contingent circumstances.' The proliferation of strategic partnerships in India, therefore, is best understood in the context of this cautionary outlook where the ambiguity of strategic partnerships allows their utilisation by India as 'declarative instruments of policy... an effort to underline its commitment to build a longer-term relationship... by deepening ties and promoting convergence in external policies on issues of mutual interest.'¹² The aforementioned 'value gap' between members is also rendered easily traversable by the 'non-alliance' character of strategic partnerships, where historical or present ideological inimicalities are not allowed to become a problem in the matter of economic, political, and strategic cooperation.

Thus, a strategic partnership is a 'politically convenient' concept for a country defined and shaped by its long history of nonalignment. Indian strategic engagements are 'compatible with the philosophy of engaging with countries

with a variety of political and economic profiles, without any desire to get caught in rivalries or threaten peace and stability.¹³ It is, as Ankit Panda puts it, a type of 'beneficial ambiguity' for India.¹⁴

Brazilian Aspirations and Expectations from the Strategic Partnership

Brazilian foreign policy has been marked by its aspiration to 'achieve international recognition in accordance with the belief that it should assume its natural role as a big country in world affairs.'¹⁵ Marked by its own exceptionalism¹⁶ within its region, Brazilian foreign policy has been uniquely attuned to finding an intermediary middle power role of importance for itself by emerging as a mediator in the realm of inter-state affairs. Coupled with this has been its search for autonomy and development, especially via the conduit of economic security.

Though its commitment to participation in multilateral fora as well as emerging as an arbitrator of international norms is historic, it is the quest for *grandeza*¹⁷ that has been wholly embraced by its leaders post the democratic transition which ended the isolationist stance adopted under a military dictatorship. The India-Brazil strategic partnership formalised in 2006 represents the perfect vehicle for the achievement of Brazilian goals of autonomous development and international leadership in the garb of an economically beneficial and ideologically coterminous partnership.

The strategic partnership between the two countries came to fruition in an environment of unprecedented proximity that was favoured by a mix of international and domestic developments.¹⁸ The booming IT and pharmaceutical trade between the two countries, the sustained growth in Indian GDP that compelled the world to take notice, the sustained cooperation in multilateral fora, the formation of IBSA and G4, and the coordinated participation in G20+, all combined to render the partnership as extremely amicable to both sides.

The 2006 document laid down a tripartite level of engagement as part of the newly defined strategic partnership - the three levels being bilateral, regional, and international.¹⁹ At the bilateral level, a commitment was made to 'intensify' links in trade, agriculture, and science and technology. Along with this enunciation, the two countries signed various MoUs, ranging from those in science and technology, plant health protection as well as the conduction of 'culture weeks' in both states. In terms of regional coordination, both states agreed to start a 'strategic dialogue' on 'regional and international issues' having wide coverage, ranging from energy security to international terrorism.

Finally, various international institutions and the need to reform them was underlined, including reform in the UN Security Council and the IMF. A commitment was made by both to bolster closer coordination in international forums. The released statement underlined the mutual desire to impart a strong impetus to the growing bilateral ties with a view to realising the full potential of the relationship between the two countries.

The next important document in terms of defining goals and the evaluation of the status of the strategic partnership between the two countries was the 2016 Joint Statement by President Temer and Prime Minister Modi, released at the eighth BRICS Summit in Goa. This statement was directed towards a 'reinforcement' of their strategic partnership, with a commitment by both leaders to 'scale up' their engagement.

Much like the decade old 2006 statement, cooperation between the two countries was again defined at the bilateral, plurilateral, and international (or multilateral) levels. This statement, however, delved into the discussion of institutional mechanisms containing the list of a fairly large number of commissions, committees, and panels for dialogue, and hammered out convergences to cover a host of issues from trade to agriculture, science and technology, to animal husbandry.

At the bilateral level, a commitment was made towards building 'a forward-looking' relationship by 'deepening' engagement, and 'better leveraging' existing complementarities. Energy, food and agriculture, defence, space, cyber security, and infrastructure development were some of the identified issues for cooperation.²⁰ More specifications were introduced in defining the areas of cooperation, like the production of pulses in Brazil; Brazilian investment in the poultry sector in India; R&D in 'second generation biofuels'; and the joint development of 'five chemical' and 'five biological' products so as to make medical treatment 'affordable' and 'universally accessible' for tuberculosis, among other areas of cooperation. Three new MoUs were signed for cooperation; these were in the fields of genetic resources; Zebu cattle genomics and assisted reproductive technologies; and pharmaceutical production regulations.

At the plurilateral level, the coordination of India and Brazil at forums like BRICS, IBSA, BASIC, G-20, and G-4 was highlighted. Further, their mutual commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement was reflected in the discussion of the International Solar Alliance and Biofuel Platform.

During the recent visit of President Bolsonaro to India, an action plan was signed with Prime Minister Modi in order to revitalise the strategic

partnership. For Brazil, apart from the 'multilateral nexus' along which its relationship with India operates, the partnership allows for the possibility of carving out for itself an important bargaining position in negotiations with its largest trading partner, China. It also hopes that access to India might allow for increased access to emerging markets in South and Southeast Asia as well as bolstering international solidarity in an international scenario where it has largely abandoned its regional policies within Latin America.²¹

Thus, the India-Brazil strategic partnership is a complex, multi-layered, and dynamic phenomenon. It is guided by the individual pursuit of each country for greater autonomy in its foreign policy decision-making as well as transforming the international agenda to include its national interests. It is also emboldened by their shared economic pursuits, with Brazil finding in India a source for pharmaceutical and technological skill exchange, and Brazil representing the answer to India's quest to become secure in its needs for energy and food.

India-Brazil Strategic Partnership: Rhetoric & Reality

The Foundation for National Security Research (FNSR) group published a report in 2011 offering a comparative assessment of India's strategic partnerships with six different countries.²² It emphasised that, as a concept, a 'strategic partnership' entails ambiguity and a great degree of specification case to case, 'some partnerships are more comprehensive than others, depending on the number of areas in which the two sides can fruitfully and actively engage to mutual benefit and the scope and depth of their relations.'²³ The partnerships were evaluated along three parameters that were individually defined: political and diplomatic cooperation, economic cooperation, and defence cooperation. Brazil was not among the countries surveyed because, as is the case in most literature on Indian foreign policy, it was not considered 'strategic' enough.

This section has utilised the variables as defined by the FNSR group to conduct an analysis of the India-Brazil strategic partnership. As has been discussed in the definitional section of this research essay, a strategic partnership, however, is a diffuse category where the very act of defining a partner as 'strategic' belies normative, structural, and systemic significance. This section adds to the parameters identified in the FNSR report where those mentioned are found lacking in explanatory potential in the case of the India-Brazil relationship. An important corollary must be mentioned here. While the FNSR has conducted a quantitative analysis of this calibration, in this

case, the analysis is qualitative as the research is subjectively and eclectically constructed, without access to similar data sets utilised by the research group. Further, this essay is concerned with situating the India-Brazil partnership in the hierarchy of India's strategic partners.

Political and Diplomatic Cooperation

The FNSR report identifies concomitancy in political stands between partners as an important measure of the usefulness of strategic partnerships. In the context of India, they have identified three different issue areas where a partner could lend support to increase its own importance in the hierarchy of India's strategic partners. These three issues are: firstly, support given to Indian policy in the matters of the issues of Pakistan and Kashmir, or its fight against terrorism in general; secondly, support for India's Nuclear Policy; and lastly, support extended to India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

In terms of political support on the matter of Pakistan, Brazil has an operational embassy in Islamabad, and there have been discontinuities between what India would have liked the Brazilian position to be and what it has been. This has been evident in the 2009 sale of MAR-1 anti-radiation missiles by Brazil to Pakistan, which went through despite Indian opposition to the said deal.²⁴ The Brazilian government justified its stand, and enunciated the necessity of separating the state of Pakistan from the terrorist factions that may be functional within it. The two countries have also cooperated with each other on matters of food security, especially with the launch of the initiative 'Zero Hunger Action Plan' by the Pakistani government, which was inspired by the 'Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme.' Under the recent leadership, Bolsonaro and Modi have met thrice in the last three months; and, of the two visits he has made to Asia, one has been his recent attendance as the honorary guest at the Republic Day celebrations of India.

As far as the matter of Kashmir is concerned, Brazil has safely employed the option offered by the tool of a 'strategic partnership' not to interfere in the domestic concerns of its partner. There has been some criticism on the silence that Brazil has maintained on the issue of Kashmir, and the human rights violations that have occurred during the conflict there.²⁵ The Brazilian External Affairs minister, Maura Vieira, had argued in 2015 that while Brazil as a nation supports non-intervention in domestic affairs, if asked to play peacemaker in the India-Pakistan conflict, it would be willing to employ the lessons it has learnt in conflict resolution in South America in this case as

well. Neutrality seems to be the name of the game. While India has faced some international criticism over the abrogation of Article 370, the Brazilian leadership has not spoken out against the Modi government. In fact, the hardliner attitude adopted by President Bolsonaro on national security further anoints him as an ally of the Indian government.

Both India and Brazil have presented a united front against terrorism, and have strongly advocated a 'determined' policy without 'distinction' for counter-terrorism. Both countries have advocated a counter-terrorism policy at the UN, and Brazil has extended its support to India in its fight against terrorism, a support that was acknowledged by Prime Minister Modi at the 2016 BRICS Summit.²⁶ Under the close alliance between the Bolsonaro government and the Trump led USA, the Brazilian stance on anti-terrorism has only solidified.

Both countries have also reaffirmed their partnership in the early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. Thus, while the Brazilian position on the matter of Kashmir and Pakistan is neutral, it is a firm supporter on the anti-terrorism stance that India has adopted.

Due to its own pacifist history as well as being a signatory of the Tlatelolco treaty, Brazil had long opposed India's nuclear policy, and expressed its displeasure when India conducted its 'peaceful' nuclear tests. However, there has been a shift in the Brazilian stand today, and it has firmly extended support to India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), with an expression of keenness to collaborate in the peaceful usage of nuclear technology and energy despite its own non-weaponised stance. This support has been acknowledged by Prime Minister Modi who thanked his Brazilian counterpart Temer in 2016 for 'understanding' the necessity of India's bid to join the NSG.²⁷

As far as the support to India's candidacy for a permanent membership in the UN Security Council is concerned, there can hardly be a bigger champion for India's cause than Brazil. This is due to the consonance of its own interests in India's bid. As members of the G4 grouping, Brazil and India both represent two countries from the developing world who petition for reform in the structures that exist, along with Germany and Japan. In a recent meeting conducted in September 2018 in New York, the G4 countries strongly voiced the need for UN Security Council reform as well as extended support for the candidature of the other members of the grouping for permanent membership.

The FNSR report identified Russia as the biggest political ally of India in terms of the support it lends to India on the three identified issues. While

Brazil's stand on the matter of Pakistan and Kashmir may be neutral, it has extended support on the other two identified issues of NSG membership and, especially, India's bid for permanent membership to the UN Security Council. Thus, as far as diplomatic and political cooperation is concerned, India and Brazil seem to be strong allies.

Defence Cooperation

According to the SIPRI Fact Sheet 2018,²⁸ India is the largest importer of arms in the world, with a significant increase in the percentage of arms imported from the last assessed cycle. India accounted for 12 percent of the global total, with Russia being its largest supplier with a share of 62 percent. Among the other big suppliers were the USA and Israel. Brazil featured as the penultimate country on a listing that identified the top twenty-five suppliers of arms, with its largest exports being to Afghanistan.

Due to the pacific bent of Brazilian foreign policy as well as its position as a signatory of the Tlatelolco treaty, Brazil generally refrains from forging international defence cooperation. India and Brazil, moreover, exist in very different security environments and have less exigencies to collaborate in security areas. While India has become the largest importer of arms to face the challenges it confronts, Brazil seeks to project its soft power.

Nevertheless, defence cooperation is routinely an area mentioned in the joint statements released by both countries. They signed an agreement for defence cooperation in 2003 which calls for cooperation in defence related matters, markedly in the field of research and development, acquisition, and logistic support between the two countries.²⁹ A Defence Wing was established in the Embassy of India in Brasilia in 2007, and the same was carried out by the Brazilian Embassy in New Delhi in 2009. A Joint Defence Committee, which came to be because of the Defence Cooperation Agreement between the two, has met regularly since its inception. In a meeting between the Defence Ministers of the two countries in 2017, both agreed to explore cooperation in the areas of ship building, aircraft manufacturing and space and concluded its sixth meeting in Brasilia in 2019. In the fifteen agreements signed between the two states in January 2020, defence cooperation has again been specified as an important area for cooperation, with private Indian players like the Jindal Defence and Taurus Armas of Brazil signing a joint venture for the manufacture of small arms.

In terms of defence cooperation, there remains a lot to be achieved by Brazil and India. As per the parameters of this level of cooperation at least,

this partnership leaves a lot to be desired, and Brazil is nowhere in the league of India's other strategic partners like Russia, the USA, or Israel.

Economic Cooperation

The authors of the FNSR report have argued that trade flows, their sustained nature as well as their potential for growth are an important indicator of the importance of a partner for India. As has been mentioned in a previous section, Indian policy makers have understood the importance of a 'strong economic base' for the propulsion to great power status.

Brazil has traditionally been an important partner for India, especially in the LAC region. With its production of high-quality agricultural products and energy resources, it has acquired significant importance in the trade structure of India. This has consequently led to growth in bilateral trade between the countries post liberalisation. Further, it also represents an important market for Indian products with the terms of trade routinely being in favour of India. However, with the fall in commodity prices, rising inflation, and the growth slump it is currently experiencing, overall trade has suffered a setback in Brazil. Total trade between India and Brazil was USD 5.64 billion in 2016, which was 28.62 percent less than the total trade recorded in the same period in the previous year (USD 7.90 billion).³⁰ Both countries represent a very small share in each other's markets. However, this trade has recovered lost ground and has grown to around 8.2 billion USD for the 2018-2019 cycle. Several agreements have been signed to bolster trade and commerce between India and Brazil, with a commitment to double trade figures to USD 15 billion by 2022.

In this category, the USA trumps all other strategic partners of India with an extremely large margin. Nevertheless, the immense natural and energy resources of Brazil as well as the growing middle class of the nation spell an important economic destination for India. There is immense potential for growth in trade between the two countries, especially with India being viewed in favour as compared to China by some Latin American firms regarding the diversification of its trade export structure.

Conclusion

Given the suitability of 'strategic partnerships' for India's broader foreign policy goals, it is not surprising that India has entered into several such agreements, including with the USA and China. India also has strategic

partnerships with Mexico (2016) and Argentina (2019) in Latin America. While the security component may be identified in every strategic partnership, either explicitly or implicitly, not all strategic partnerships need to be security driven - they can cover a broad range of issues. Given that Brazil and India are medium-sized, less developed states in an increasingly interdependent environment, they seek to pursue more than power and economic advances. They are equally concerned with the kind of gains that come from cooperative games: image, reputation, and identity building. Perhaps this is what explains that even though India's largest trading partner in the Latin American region at a point of time was Venezuela, the two countries did not sign a strategic partnership. This supports the claim that India's strategic engagement in Latin America is driven by 'systemic' and not 'transactional' concerns.³¹

While the strategic partnership between the two giants of the Global South, India and Brazil, portends - and is propelled by - almost an unprecedented vista of possibilities, it remains a political project of solidarity and often falters in terms of real economic cooperation. The participation of both these countries in multilateral endeavours is driven also by the intention to address domestic needs. Thus, what is most important to identify in these partnerships is the 'political intent'. An observer of India's foreign policy making has emphasised the significance of strategic intent as opposed to a strategic plan. A strategic plan simply fits 'current capability into a medium-term objective', whereas intent implies a well-conceived long-term core goal that is achievable and innovative.³² This is what India has lacked so far. The increase in high level diplomatic meetings in the last year suggests renewed policy priorities on the part of both countries. At the moment, the relationship remains one of rhetorical importance, especially in the light of Brazilian setbacks within the region, but may grow more robust depending on the clear focus of political intent and strategy.

Notes :

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 - ⁷ Luis Fernando de Moraes Blanco, 'On the Uses and Functions of 'Strategic Partnership' in International Politics: Implications for Agency, Policy and Theory', Ph.D Thesis, 2015, Bielefeld: Bielefeld University, p.8.
 - ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
 - ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84
 - ¹⁰ Giovanni Grevi, 'Making EU strategic partnerships effective', Working paper (FRIDE), no. 105, December 2010, quoted in Luis Fernando de Moraes Blanco, 'On the Uses and Functions of 'Strategic Partnership' in International Politics: Implications for Agency, Policy and Theory', Ph. D. Thesis, 2015, Bielefeld: Bielefeld University, p. 79.
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Act East in India's Foreign Policy: India-ASEAN Relations

M. Ganapathi*

We live today in an interdependent world. The concept of the 'Global Village' is a part of India's culture, and we see 'Vasudeiva Kutumbhakam' as a part of our ethos. A country's foreign policy contributes immensely towards its progress and prosperity in a globalising village. This reinforces the idea that the foreign policy of any country cannot be divorced from its domestic policy and governance - the influence and outcome of each impact with equal measure on the other.

A hundred years ago, the guns fell silent after World War I. It is 75 years since the end of World War II. The developments in the history of war and peace during this period had Europe at its centre. The predominant influence of the USA on world affairs became evident since the mid-1940s. The rush towards influencing the course of events in global affairs led to the Cold War between the USA led alliance of the West and the allies of the Soviet Union in the East. The idea of Non-alignment among India's founding fathers was born as a by-product to these militarised alliances.

The days of the Cold War are long gone. Nearly two decades of the 21st Century have gone by. Despite reports to the contrary, the USA will continue to hold strategic predominance in the years ahead, especially in the political, financial, and geo-strategic areas. The Russian Federation, the Successor State to the Soviet Union, has struggled to hold its erstwhile power and heft. However, Russia, under President Vladimir Putin, is slowly regaining its influence. The Euro-Atlantic no longer continues to dominate headlines. With the gravitational shift in global dynamics, it will be the Indo-Pacific which

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will play a determining role in international relations in the coming years. The Cold War of the 20th Century might be long over; and the nature of this debate has taken an altogether new dimension.

As we move towards the third decade of the 21st Century, new and significant players have emerged to influence relations between States and developments among the comity of nations. The election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the USA and the statements emanating from Washington have created confusion in a world which perhaps earlier had some semblance of order. The rapid rise of China and its dominant role in deciding the course of events around the globe is unmistakable. Its non-transparent Belt and Road Initiative has generated more suspicion than comfort. The US-China trade dispute is seen as being stage managed with a larger political objective. Europe is in a state of flux because its pre-eminent position in international relations has suffered. And, BREXIT has brought in new uncertainties in an already struggling Europe.

In his address to the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA) in June 2019, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar had noted, “Globalisation is under stress due to new and emerging geo-political and geo-economic fault lines. India supports a rule-based order in Asia, as in the rest of the world”.¹

The state of international relations is not static but dynamic. There are areas which stand out as possible sources of tension, conflict or discord. India needs to keep a close eye on such developments, and respond appropriately to the evolving situation. Challenges will always be there, but they also throw up opportunities. These opportunities need to be looked at in the larger national interest.

The thrust of India’s foreign policy in pursuit of its national interests has been a work in continuity in response to various global developments. By and large, there has been across the board political consensus regarding its foreign policy, barring some differences in nuances.

Relations with its neighbours dominate India’s Neighbourhood First foreign policy, and are a priority. This is followed by the states of ASEAN and Japan, which come under the ambit of its Act East policy. Coined by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, when he was Foreign Secretary,² the Think West idea in India’s policy formulation includes the states of West Asia and the Gulf. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the European Union are accorded significant importance. Greater attention is now being given to countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean and

Oceania. Indian leaders have visited some of these countries which had never seen an Indian VVIP before.

India has had extensive interaction with countries of East and South East Asia over the centuries. This interaction started with commerce but expanded rapidly into other areas. The influence of Indian art, culture and religion is significant in many of these countries. Buddhism acquired strong roots in the region while the influence of Hinduism was also seen in some of the countries. The Kalingas had trading relations with the different countries in the region, and the Chola Empire also ventured politically and economically into many of these countries. The Asian Relations Conference and the Bandung Conference brought the countries of the region closer together. India has a multifaceted mutually beneficial partnership with ASEAN as a group as well as with its individual members. The development of India-ASEAN relations in the future would bring greater progress and prosperity to the North-Eastern States of India.

ASEAN celebrated its 50th Anniversary in August 2017. From its five founding members in 1967, ASEAN today has 10 members. Timor L'este could be included as the group's 11th member in the not too distant future. ASEAN today is the most successful and harmonious regional grouping.

At their 34th Summit in Bangkok in June 2019, ASEAN leaders saw three main themes at the Summit. These were: (i) "Advancing towards a "Digital ASEAN"; (ii) "Partnership" both within ASEAN and with Dialogue Partners while reinforcing the ASEAN-centred regional architecture; and (iii) Building sustainability in all dimensions. The "ASEAN Community Vision 2025: Forging Ahead Together" will be the driving force in advancing this partnership towards sustainability.

India became a Sectoral Dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992. In 1994, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao announced India's Look East Policy while speaking at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore.³ India became a Full Dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1996. The partnership was raised to a Summit level in 2002, and to that of a Strategic Partner in 2012. In his opening statement at the 12th India-ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, on 12 November 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated, "Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become [the] 'Act East Policy'".⁴ The geographical contour of this policy was supposed to extend from Bangladesh to the western seaboard of the USA. In 2012, India commemorated twenty years of its Partnership with ASEAN, and ten years of Annual Summits. Leaders from all ten ASEAN countries participated in the commemorative event.

The general statement of principles of the 2004 document relating to the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity⁵ was incorporated into a more comprehensive Vision Statement during the 2012 ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit.⁶ The rather free flowing Plans of Action for 2005-2010 and 2010-2015⁷ were upgraded to a more structured and detailed Plan of Action for 2016-2020.⁸ This document underlines India's support to the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and its three pillars: the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

India and ASEAN commemorated 25 years of their association in 2018 as a "historic milestone". All the ten leaders of ASEAN participated in the commemorative event. A "Delhi Declaration of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark the 25th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations" was adopted at the Summit Meeting.⁹ Besides their participation in the commemoration events, the ten ASEAN leaders were Chief Guests at India's 69th Republic Day celebrations, a first of sorts.

Over these 25 years of partnership, India's relations with ASEAN as a group and bilaterally with each of the individual ten countries have increased exponentially. There are 30 dialogue mechanisms which not only include annual Summit level interactions but also Ministerial meetings covering a wide range of areas, as those on External Affairs, Defence and Security, Commerce, Telecommunications, Agriculture, Energy, Environment, and Tourism.

As strategic partners, there is wide-ranging cooperation between India and ASEAN in the political and security spheres. India is actively associated with various ASEAN-related defence and strategic institutions. These include the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+), and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. India's bilateral defence ties with the region and with each individual ASEAN member has expanded significantly.

The common challenges confronting India and ASEAN have led to enhanced joint cooperation and exchange of information in combating international terrorism, piracy, money laundering, organised crime, drug trafficking, arms trading, human trafficking, cybercrime, the clandestine proliferation of nuclear materials, and missile technology, among others.

The Indo-Pacific region occupies a pivotal position in India's Act East policy. In his speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore in June 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that the Indo-Pacific region is home to a vast array of global opportunities and challenges. He said,

The ten countries of South East Asia connect the two great oceans in both the geographical and civilisational sense. Inclusiveness, openness and ASEAN centrality and unity, therefore, lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific. India does not see the Indo-Pacific Region as a strategy or as a club of limited members.¹⁰

He noted “India’s own engagement in the Indo-Pacific Region - from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas - will be inclusive”.¹¹

At its 34th Summit in Bangkok in June 2019, an ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific was adopted.¹² The Outlook emphasised that “ASEAN will continue to play a central and strategic role in the Indo-Pacific”. India “warmly welcomed” the Outlook proposals, noting “we see important elements of convergence with our own views, especially from the standpoint of principles, as well as its approach and ASEAN’s listing of areas of cooperation”.¹³ Most of the important countries recognise the significance of the Indo-Pacific region, and have welcomed the ASEAN Outlook. China and Russia use the nomenclature of ‘Asia-Pacific’ for the region, and do not recognise it as the ‘Indo-Pacific’ region. These two countries see the Indo-Pacific construct as driven by US interests, and with a strong anti-China viewpoint.

India and ASEAN emphasise the importance of peace, stability, maritime safety and security, equal access as a right under international law to the use of common spaces in the sea and in the air that would require freedom of navigation and over flight in the region as well as unimpeded commerce and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law. They have supported the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and look forward to an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC).

There are many sub-regional multilateral forums such as the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which have provided additional platforms for engagement between India and ASEAN. India has an annual Track 1.5 event, the Delhi Dialogue, to discuss politico-security and economic issues between ASEAN and India.

ASEAN figures indicate that two-way trade between India and ASEAN increased by 8.4 percent, from US\$ 73.63 billion in 2017 to US\$ 79.83 billion in 2018.¹⁴ DGCI & S statistics indicate that Indo-ASEAN trade in 2017-18 was US\$ 81.34 billion (approximately 10.6 percent of India’s overall trade), and in 2018-19 US\$ 96.79 billion (approximately 11.5 percent of India’s overall trade).^{15,16} For the first month of 2018-19, the trade turnover was nearly US\$

8.0 billion (approximately 9 percent of India's overall trade). ASEAN is India's 5th largest trading partner. India is the 8th largest trading partner of ASEAN. The leaders of India and ASEAN had set a trade turnover target of US\$ 100 billion by 2015,¹⁷ which is just being achieved. Achieving the rather ambitious target of US\$ 200 billion by 2022¹⁸ will need a lot of effort. New opportunities and products need to be explored, along with attractive incentives in order to achieve this target.

Bilaterally, Singapore is India's largest trading partner, with a trade turnover of US\$ 27.85 billion in 2018-19¹⁹. This is followed by Indonesia at US\$ 21.12 billion²⁰ and Malaysia at US\$ 17.25 billion.²¹ Besides these three countries, Vietnam and Thailand also find a place among India's 25 largest trading partners.

Based on the Ministry of Commerce & Industry data, cumulative FDI inflows into India from ASEAN between April 2000 and March 2018 were US\$ 68.91 billion, which represents approximately 18.28 percent of the cumulative inflows received. As per the Ministry of Finance data, Cumulative FDI outflows from India to ASEAN countries, from April 2007 to March 2015, were about US\$ 38.67 billion.

The conclusion of the ASEAN-India Trade and Goods Agreement and the ASEAN-India Services and Investment Agreement allows for the creation of an ASEAN-India Free Trade Area. However, both sides need to monitor progress to remove whatever obstacles there may be in the smooth operationalisation of these agreements.

With a combined population of nearly 2 billion in India and the ASEAN region, and a combined GDP of over US\$ 5 trillion, the opportunities are immense. Both sides have sought greater private sector involvement in the expansion of trade and investment. An ASEAN-India Business Summit took place in New Delhi in January 2018. The ASEAN-India Business Council has been reactivated. The ASEAN-India Business Fair and Conclave has also taken place.

At their November 2012 Phnom Penh Summit, the Heads of States/Governments of ASEAN and ASEAN's Free Trade Agreement partners endorsed the "Guiding Principles and Objectives for Negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership" (RCEP) adopted by their Economic Ministers in Siem Reap, Cambodia, in August 2012.²² The objective of the RCEP was to

achieve a modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement; establishing an open trade and investment

environment in the region to facilitate the expansion of regional trade and investment and contribute to global economic growth and development; and boost economic growth and equitable economic development, advance economic cooperation and broaden and deepen integration in the region through the RCEP.²³

This was supposed to build upon the existing economic linkages of the partners.

The members of the RCEP include the ASEAN 10, the ASEAN+3, viz. China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, and the three Dialogue Partners, viz. India, Australia, and New Zealand. The agreement aims to cover goods, services, investments, economic and technical cooperation, competition, and intellectual property rights. The membership of the RCEP would represent 47.4 percent of the global population, 32.2 percent of the global economy, 29.1 percent of global trade and 32.5 percent of global investment flows.²⁴ RCEP Ministers have noted that it is “the most important trade agenda in the region, supportive of an open, inclusive, and rules-based trading system, and an enabling trade and investment environment”.

Many rounds of talks have been held among RCEP members towards negotiating an agreed document. At the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in June 2019, Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, suggested that he was ready to push forward in concluding the Agreement even without some members for the time being, implicitly implying India.²⁵ India is also keen that the Agreement be concluded by the next 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, but would like its concerns to be adequately addressed. Australia and New Zealand also have some concerns on the RCEP document.

During his visit to Singapore in June 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi touched upon India's commitment to the RCEP noting, “I also conveyed India's firm commitment to an early conclusion of the RCEP Agreement and hoped for a fair, balanced and comprehensive agreement.”²⁶ He did not want India to be seen as holding out. At the Shangri La Dialogue, he said “RCEP must be comprehensive, as the name suggests, and the principles declared. It must have a balance among trade, investment and services.”²⁷

Significant progress has been made in the market access negotiations of goods. Similar efforts are called for towards making progress in negotiations relating to services as they constitute more than 50 percent of the GDP of most of the RCEP countries. Services are expected to play an important role in the future. India continues to seek a modern, comprehensive, balanced, and mutually beneficial agreement.

India's main areas of concern include: the lack of transparency in the conduct of business in some partner countries; its own burgeoning deficit in trade in goods; taking advantage of loopholes in the rules of origins provisions by RCEP partners; difficulties in market access; the lack of interest by partners in satisfactorily addressing India's concerns on services, among others.

While looking for a win-win by signing the RCEP, India would like to ensure that the agreement is balanced not only across its key sectors - trade in goods, services, and investment - but also within each sector. India has said that there should not be an unequal balancing of tariff reductions in goods and services - partners need to ensure equal high levels of tariff reduction in services as in goods, with binding commitments. Right now, ASEAN has proposed a common concessions approach in goods with up to 92 percent tariff elimination, 7 percent tariff reduction, and 1 percent in the exclusion list. India is also concerned at some of the provisions of the Investor-State Dispute Settlement process (ISDS). Many industry groups have submitted memoranda to the Government highlighting their concerns. [India has since conveyed its intention to withdraw from the RCEP at the 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in November 2019.]²⁸ In parallel with the RCEP negotiations, India and ASEAN have agreed to review their trade pact.

ASEAN-India connectivity is a priority for India as also for the ASEAN countries. In 2013, India became the third dialogue partner of ASEAN to initiate an ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee-India Meeting. India shares a seamless boundary with the ASEAN countries through Myanmar. Upgrading and strengthening connectivity should not only help develop India's relations with ASEAN further but also, more importantly, provide avenues for development and progress in the North-Eastern States of India.

India is committed towards the completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Friendship Highway, its extension to Laos and Cambodia, and onwards to Vietnam. India is associated with the completion of the Rhi-Tiddim road enabling connectivity between Mizoram and Mandalay in Myanmar; the construction of the Kalewa-Yargi road section; the construction of 69 bridges in the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa to improve connectivity, among others. India is developing the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project in Myanmar. This will link Mizoram to the Myanmar port of Sittwe as also Kolkata and Sittwe ports. The waterways component of the project has been completed. The construction of the road component should be completed soon. An India-ASEAN Connectivity Summit was held in Delhi in December 2017.

China's proposal of a Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 has been seen as a form of a neo-colonial approach towards dominating or taking over assets in debt-laden developing countries. The Belt and Road Initiative is supposed to connect 65 countries, and the total cost outlay is over US\$ 1 trillion.²⁹ Nearly US\$ 750 billion has been committed to BRI projects in ASEAN. ASEAN-China trade reached US\$ 479.4 billion in 2018 or 17.1 percent of ASEAN's total merchandise trade. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from China to ASEAN amounted to US\$ 10.2 billion in 2018, or 6.6 percent of total ASEAN FDI.³⁰

India's cultural imprint is visible in most ASEAN countries. ASEAN and India have agreed to preserve, protect, and restore symbols and structures which represent civilisational bonds between India and ASEAN countries, including those in Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Borobudur and Prambanan in Indonesia, Wat Phu in Laos, Bagan in Myanmar, Sukothai in Thailand, and Mù Sôn in Vietnam.³¹ The Indian epic *Ramayana* is an important thread culturally binding India and ASEAN.

People-to-people contact forms an important element of ASEAN-India cooperation. Tourism provides a significant platform in facilitating this cooperation. There is a greater need for encouragement and awareness for tourists from India to visit ASEAN, and vice versa. The setting up of the Nalanda University is an important step in highlighting the dimension of Buddhism and education in India's cooperation with ASEAN. 3.45 million Indian tourists visited ASEAN in 2017 while under a million visitors from ASEAN countries visited India during the same period. The ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series and ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks are some of the other areas promoting ideas and avenues to further India-ASEAN cooperation.

The role of a strong Indian Diaspora in ASEAN in acting as a bridge in developing close partnership with the countries of their adoption and in the economic development of India, and in bilateral commercial and economic cooperation, needs no reiteration.

India's engagement with ASEAN has been paying good dividends. This needs to be continued and developed further to maintain the momentum. India and ASEAN need each other in a complex region where one super power is stepping back, and a more combative and supremely ambitious power is emerging at the global stage. While India has done well in the political, security, cultural, and people-to-people areas, a lot more needs to be done on the trade, economic, and connectivity fronts with ASEAN to

help the relationship blossom further. This will provide traction for growth, development and security bilaterally between India and ASEAN members, individually as well as collectively with other members, in the Indo-Pacific region as a whole.

Notes :

- ¹ External Affairs Minister's address at 5th CICA Summit 2019 in Dushanbe, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/31448/External_Affairs_Ministers_address_at_5th_CICA_Summit_2019_in_Dushanbe
- ² Speech by Foreign Secretary at Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi on 2 March 2015, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/26433/Speech_by_Foreign_Secretary_at_Raisina_Dialogue_in_New_Delhi_March_2_2015
- ³ Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's speech: "India and the Asia-Pacific – Forging A New Relationship", October 1994, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore
- ⁴ Prime Minister Modi Act East, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/24230/Opening_Statement_by_Prime_Minister_at_the_12th_IndiaASEAN_Summit_Nay_Pyi_Taw_Myanmar
- ⁵ ASEAN-India Partnership, at https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-india-partnership-for-peace-progress-and-shared-prosperity-2
- ⁶ ASEAN India Vision Statement, at https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20982/Vision_StatementASEANIndia_Commenerative_Summit
- ⁷ Plan of Action 2010–2015, at https://asean.org/?static_post=plan-of-action-to-implement-the-asean-india-partnership-for-peace-progress-and-shared-prosperity-2010-2015
- ⁸ Plan of Action 2016–2020, at https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2015/August/POA_India/ASEAN-Indiaperc20POAperc20-per cent20FINAL.pdf
- ⁹ ASEAN India Delhi Declaration, at https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29386/Delhi_Declaration_of_the_ASEANIndia_Commenerative_Summit_to_mark_the_25th_Anniversary_of_ASEANIndia_Dialogue_Relations
- ¹⁰ Prime Minister Modi's Shangri La Dialogue address, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime_Ministers_Keynote_Address_at_Shangri_La_Dialogue_June_01_2018
- ¹¹ Ibid
- ¹² ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, at https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf
- ¹³ India on ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook, at https://mea.gov.in/response-to-queries.htm?dtl/31470/Official_Spokespersons_response_to_a_query_on_Indias_view_on_the_recently_announced_ASEAN_Outlook_on_the_IndoPacific
- ¹⁴ See, <https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Overview-ASEAN-India-as-of-July-2019-fn.pdf>

- ¹⁵ India-ASEAN Import figures, at <https://commerce-app.gov.in/eidb/irgn.asp>
- ¹⁶ India-ASEAN Export figures, at <https://commerce-app.gov.in/eidb/ergn.asp>
- ¹⁷ ASEAN India Vision Statement, at https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20982/Vision_StatementASEANIndia_Commemorative_Summit
- ¹⁸ See, <https://asean.org/asean-india-reaffirm-commitment-to-strengthening-cooperation/>
- ¹⁹ See, <https://commerce-app.gov.in/eidb/iecnttopn.asp>
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² RCEP Guiding Principles, at <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2012/documents/Guidingper cent20Principlesper cent20andper cent20Objectivesper cent20forper cent20Negotiatingper cent20theper cent20Regionalper cent20Comprehensiveper cent20Economicper cent20Partnership.pdf>
- ²³ RCEP – Launch of negotiations, at <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/2012/documents/Jointper cent20Declarationper cent20onper cent20theper cent20Launchper cent20ofper cent20Negotiationsper cent20forper cent20theper cent20Regionalper cent20Comprehensiveper cent20Economicper cent20Partnership.pdf>
- ²⁴ RCEP Inter-Sessional Ministerial Meeting, at https://asean.org/storage/2019/08/RCEPISLMM8-05-Draft-JMS-FINAL_cln.pdf
- ²⁵ Mahathir Mohamad interview to CNBC, at <https://www.cbc.com/2019/06/24/malaysia-mahathir-rcep-can-go-on-without-india-for-the-time-being.html>
- ²⁶ Prime Minister Modi in Singapore, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29941/English_Translation_of_Press_Statement_by_Prime_Minister_during_visit_to_Singapore
- ²⁷ Prime Minister Modi's Shangri La Dialogue address, at https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime_Ministers_Keynote_Address_at_Shangri_La_Dialogue_June_01_2018
- ²⁸ India's withdrawal from RCEP,
- (a) Addressing the RCEP Summit in Bangkok in November 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The present form of the RCEP agreement does not fully reflect the basic spirit and the agreed guiding principles of RCEP. It also does not address satisfactorily India's outstanding issues and concerns. In such a situation, it is not possible for India to join the RCEP agreement", adding "When I measure the RCEP agreement with respect to the interests of all Indians, I do not get a positive answer. Therefore, neither the Talisman of Gandhiji nor my own conscience permits me to join RCEP." See, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/neither-gandhi-s-talisman-nor-my-conscience-allows-to-join-rcep-pm-modi/story-MwoYlJchVp3S1OK1EKilHK.html>

- (b) Briefing the press at the conclusion of the RCEP Summit, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs said, on 4 November 2019, “We have conveyed our decision not to join the RCEP to the participating countries. The reasons for not joining are the participating countries aware of it and I can say that we have had a very clear and a principled position for a fair and balanced outcome of the RCEP but when we did not see that ... We took the right decision in national interest.” See, https://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/32007/Transcript_of_Media_Briefing_by_Secretary_East_during_PMs_visit_to_Thailand_November_04_2019
- (c) The Joint Leaders’ Statement on The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) observed, “India has significant outstanding issues, which remain unresolved. All RCEP Participating Countries will work together to resolve these outstanding issues in a mutually satisfactory way. India’s final decision will depend on satisfactory resolution of these issues.” See, <https://asean.org/storage/2019/11/FINAL-RCEP-Joint-Leaders-Statement-for-3rd-RCEP-Summit.pdf>

²⁹ See, <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/belt-and-road/overview.html>

³⁰ ASEAN-China, at https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/Overview-of-ASEAN-China-Relations-Dec-2019_For-Web.pdf

³¹ ASEAN India Vision Statement, https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/20982/Vision_StatementASEANIndia_Commemorative_Summit



The Indian Ocean and Smart Ports¹

Vijay Sakhuja*

The Review of Maritime Transport (RMT) 2019, published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (*UNCTAD*), has projected a positive outlook for global shipping which is expected to grow at an annual average growth rate of 3.4 percent for the next five years.² The RMT urges states to ‘adopt a multipronged approach’³ to address shortcomings in port operations, and notes that ‘digitalization and automation are transforming the shipping sector and requiring new skills’.⁴ Furthermore, new technologies and innovations are offering ‘new opportunities to achieve greater sustainability in shipping and ports, as well as enhanced performance and efficiency.’⁵

There are visible trends in the use of digital technologies in maritime trading eco-system to enhance efficiency and productivity, particularly in port operations. The port-digital ecosystem is built around the Cyber-Physical System (CPS): that is, physical infrastructure and cyber facilities to augment efficiency at various levels along the ship-shore-ship supply chain - ships, ports, and associated supply chains that connect the production hubs in the heartland back to the ocean. The CPS is enabled by a host of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, also referred to as Industry 4.0, such as Artificial Intelligence Machine Learning, Blockchain, Big Data, Autonomous Systems, etc. These are up-scaling the efficiency of the maritime connectivity eco-system.

In early 2019, the global fleet comprised of 92,294 seagoing ships, accounting for nearly 1.97 billion dead-weight tonnage (DWT).⁶ There are several thousand ports (big, medium, and small) across the globe; but 99 per cent of world’s mercantile trade moves through only 835 sea ports and inland ports.⁷

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India is a maritime nation, and its external trade (90% by volume and 70% by value) is handled by 12 major ports and approximately 200 non-major ports which dot the 7516 kilometres long coastline. There are 1719 vessels under Indian register (1.83 of the world's total) and, in 2017, 1011 vessels were engaged in India's sea borne trade, and 885 vessels were under national flag and 126 foreign flagged vessels.⁸ The maritime trade has been expanding, and the focus is on infrastructure development and the capacity enhancement of ports. India's Sagarmala Programme features port led development,⁹ and there are 574 projects to be implemented during 2015–2035. Moreover, as of 30 September 2019, as many as 121 projects have been completed and 201 projects are under various stages of implementation, development, and completion. Some ports have begun data related transformations at the organisational and operations levels.

In the above contexts, this paper is an attempt to understand the impact of 4IR technologies in the port sector. It identifies three ports in the Indian Ocean that have assimilated, or are at various levels, of using 4IR technologies in operations. The paper also highlights the role of 4IR in the Chinese Belt Road Initiative through the Digital Silk Route, and briefly focuses on the status of the digitalization of Indian ports.

The Definition of Smart Port

A 'connectivity eco-system' is a process which facilitates the movement of goods that are transported on board carriers which move on the road, on the rails, in the air, over the seas through sea ports and dry ports, and through services that are delivered through digital platforms, including fibre optic cables in support of port operations. It is dynamic in nature, and lies at the heart of globalization which is the highpoint of the global economy marked by economic prosperity and maritime trade. In this eco-system, ports are the important nodes which connect the land to the sea, and it is here that bulk of the trans-shipment of goods takes place. There are numerous port development projects mushrooming across the globe, including expansion programmes for existing infrastructure, and are attracting 'Smart Port' thinking.

It is useful to define a Smart Port to obtain a clearer understanding of the term as also to identify the various technologies that go into making a port smart. Numerous definitions have been propounded to define the term; but a simpler version is "Smart Port uses automation and innovative technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, Internet of Things (IoT) and Blockchain to improve its performance."¹⁰

At the heart of this definition are two important issues: first, 4IR technologies enable ‘efficient data-driven decision making’;¹¹ and second, enhancing the efficiency of the supply chain. This is not to suggest that it is only the ports that require 4IR technologies; instead, these technologies are now embedded in every facet, and the operation of the supply chain in which the port is one of the many stakeholders.

Many seaports across the globe have begun using 4IR technologies, and the major players are in Europe and the USA, barring one in Asia.¹² The future global market for the smart port segment is very encouraging, and is projected to touch US\$ 5.3 billion by 2024 from an estimated US\$ 1.7 billion in 2019, at a CAGR of 25 percent. In this, the Blockchain segment (control over information, the privacy of the user, and the prevention of the manipulation of data) is expected to be the fastest-growing market during this period.¹³ Some industry experts believe that “smart ports are the only ports that will survive.”¹⁴

4IR Technologies in Port Operations

4IR technologies provide unique opportunities, and can potentially revolutionise the entire supply chain ecosystem built around multiple stakeholders, such as shippers, freight forwarders, terminal operators, carriers (trucks, rail, and ships), other connected service providers such as port customs, security agencies, and emergency services, all of which are connected to each other in real time.

It has been noted that,

introducing IoT techniques into container terminal operations enables port terminal operators and other port related entities to collect, process, and store bulky digitalized data from daily terminal operations on a 24 hours and 365 days per year basis no terminal staff intervention.¹⁵

Moreover, Artificial Intelligence will “learn port operation skills and practices by analyzing the big data”, and the automatised container terminal yard “will assist the terminal staff in all over daily operations and management works”. Some of the important functions would be assisting terminal planners about stowage and yard plans, crane time optimisation, and the control and processing of container cargo traffic, etc.¹⁶

Blockchain technology is critical for enhancing operations in business, governance, management, security, and defence, as also in human-social engagements. The use of Blockchain technology is well known in crypto

currencies, such as the Bitcoin's gold, Ethereum, Zcash, Litecoin, Dash, Ripple, Monero, etc. These are now accepted as legal forms of payment and tools of financial exchange.

A Blockchain platform enables the exchange of information on the provenance of goods, tariff codes, classification data, import/export data and certificates, manifests and loading lists, customs values, status information, and all other information about goods within the supply chain ecosystem was available for all parties involved at any time and everywhere.¹⁷

What emerges is a protected and paperless supply chain which contributes to not only transparency but also enables track-and-trace. For example, before entering a port to discharge its cargo, a ship transmits a variety of data to port operators, the customs department, security agencies, and other service providers which can be authenticated and approved through artificial intelligence tools and speed up pre-arrival requirements, thereby adding to efficiency, reducing the turnaround time of ships, and the delivery of cargo to the end-users.

A Hong Kong-based company '300cubits' has put out an expression of interest to "partially replace US dollars in the container shipping industry with a token soon to be launched on Ethereum".¹⁸ It plans to sell tokens to industry practitioners which will be "used as booking deposits for container shipping where value could be lost if a customer does not turn up with a cargo or a container liner does not load a cargo according to a confirmed booking". This is consequent to the company's belief that trust between liners and customers is critical given that "customers in container shipping do not bear any consequences for not showing up for bookings".

The commercial maritime world has already embraced Blockchain technology in a few sectors; but its use in other marine related activities will potentially change the industry, making it more transparent, efficient, and secure.

Ports in the Indian Ocean

There are a number of important ports that dot the Indian Ocean littoral, but there are only few major ports.¹⁹ These include: East Africa: (Durban (South Africa), Maputo (Mozambique) and Djibouti (Djibouti)); West Asia and Persian Gulf: (Aden (Yemen) and Jebel Ali, Dubai; South Asia: Karachi (Pakistan), JNPT, (India), Kolkata and Haldia (India), Chennai (India) Colombo (Sri Lanka),

Hambantota (Sri Lanka); Southeast Asia: Singapore (Singapore) and Port Kelang (Malaysia); and Australia: Port Freemantle and Melbourne Port. However, only two major ports (Jebel Ali, Dubai, UAE, and Singapore) in the Indian Ocean figure in the top 20 container ports; however, there are at least 10 ports listed in the top fifty container ports of the world.²⁰

Lloyd’s List, a major maritime conglomerate, is of the view that there would be trade expansion through port infrastructure investment in the South Asia, Middle East, and Africa (SAMEA) region, and the smaller ports would

Rank	Port	2018	2017
		(in Million TEU)	
1	Shanghai, China	41.02	40.23
2	Singapore	36.60	33.67
3	Ningbo-Zhoushan, China	26.35	24.61
4	Shenzhen, China	25.73	25.21
5	Guangzhou Harbour, China	21.92	20.37
6	Busan, South Korea	21.66	20.47
7	Hong Kong, China	19.60	20.76
8	Qingdao, China	19.31	18.30
9	Tianjin, China	16.0	15.07
10	Jebel Ali, Dubai, UAE	14.95	15.37
12	Port Klang, Malaysia	12.32	11.98
18	Tanjung Pelepas, Malaysia	8.96	8.38
25	Colombo, Sri Lanka	7.05	6.21
32	JNPT, India	5.05	4.71
37	Mundra	4.44	3.98
35	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	4.12	4.15
48	Salalah, Oman	3.39	3.95

be the ‘game-changer’ for ports and trade.²¹ Further, new global Blockchain initiatives by major shipping companies necessitate data synchronisation between maritime ecosystems across the value chain. This is becoming critical. All stakeholders, including customs and port authorities, would be able to share a database which would not only be secure but also add to transparency and efficiency. In the succeeding sections, this essay discusses three major trans-shipment hubs in the Indian Ocean: the Port of Singapore; Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP), UAE; and the Port of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The Port of Singapore

Singapore began using mobile devices and 4G wireless connectivity for communications and improving productivity as early as 2015, and mobile Apps were introduced to ‘passenger experience and business operations at the terminals’. For instance, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore’s (MPA) App, ‘myMaritime@SG’, is available on the iTunes App Store and Google Play, and can be operated by both iOS and Android mobile devices. The App enables the maritime community and the public to obtain maritime information on related issues and services.²²

The MPA has been the catalyst to make Singapore a Smart Port through a number of initiatives. The Smart Port Challenge, started in 2017, is a platform which offers opportunities for start-ups to embrace 4IR technologies to transform the maritime sector and deliver solutions.²³

After an eighteen month study of the performance and capabilities of the 5G network for port applications, the MPA and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) are all set to work on 5G network infrastructure development, and catapult port operations for future applications across the various verticals of the industry.²⁴

Similarly, the Singapore port is preparing to dock Maritime Autonomous Surface *Ships* (MASS) - that is, autonomous ships. In that context, a Centre of Excellence for Autonomous and Remotely Operated Vessels (CEAOPS) was announced.²⁵ The chief executive of MPA remarked that,

Digitalisation and new technologies will disrupt the future of the maritime industry, and the evolution of MASS could potentially enhance global maritime trade more efficiently and safely in how we ship goods around the world. We’re pleased to support the establishment of CEAOPS as it will enhance MPA’s efforts in establishing Singapore as a MASS ready port and a leading technology cluster for MASS technologies.²⁶

In March this year, *PSA Polaris*, a 27 meters long MASS, a jointly funded ‘IntelliTug’ project of the MPA and the Maritime Innovation and Technology (MINT) Fund, successfully completed the first commercial trials in the port, and ‘demonstrated its capability to avoid a variety of obstacles, including virtual and real-life moving vessels’.²⁷

Abu Dhabi Ports, UAE

Like Singapore, the UAE has been at the forefront of building ‘Smart Ports’. As early as 2013, DP World had promoted the idea, and one of its top

functionaries for the UAE region noted that the company had

created our smart port concept, one that offers traders mobile applications and round the clock electronic transaction facilities giving them real-time information, 365 days a year, through their smartphones and from any location.²⁸

The UAE is also developing infrastructure to operate autonomous ships to add to safety as also to lower the cost of operations. The Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP) has signed a deal with Robert Allan Ltd. to develop fully unmanned autonomous marine tugs.²⁹ The tugs will support towing and manoeuvring operations within ports for autonomous container ships. The leadership of ADP believes that for it to lead the charge towards digitalising the region's maritime operations, "adopting digital solutions and keeping up with the changing demands of global trade have proven to be key drivers for economic growth, and are integral towards achieving our goal of being a smart port".³⁰ ADP is also working with Dell Technologies to integrate advanced technologies into maritime operations and solutions.³¹

Interestingly, ADP has now diversified from not being just a recipient of technology; it is now joining port projects overseas. For instance, it is now a partner 'for an online port community system India has been developing into a single-window logistics experience'.³²

The Port of Colombo

Unlike Singapore and ADP, the Colombo Port's plan to turn into a Smart port is just beginning. In 2019, the Sri Lankan government announced that steps have been taken to introduce automated functions in the port, and transform it into a Smart Port to improve efficiency over the next 12 to 18 months. Further, the government has allocated US\$ 5.18 million for the project which includes 'IT upgrades to streamline terminal management and cargo systems' as also to use satellite-based systems to improve productivity.³³ The Ports and Shipping Minister, Sagala Ratnayaka, is upbeat about the transforming Colombo into a Smart Port which will add to "efficiency and handle a greater volume of activities within a shorter period of time with the use of advanced IT and information systems."³⁴

The Digital Silk Route and Smart Ports

Among many contemporary economic issues concerning the Indian Ocean, connectivity infrastructure, economic corridors, shipping routes, and port

related infrastructure have been high on the agenda. The majority of Indian Ocean littorals do not possess technological expertise and the requisite financial capital and, therefore, need support for the development of maritime infrastructure. This has been a significant catalyst for China to aggressively pursue its political, economic, and strategic agenda through the 21st century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which is a part of the ambitious and overarching Belt Road Initiative (BRI).

The MSR is focused on connectivity infrastructure involving the development of ports, harbours, roads, and rail network as well as energy related infrastructure. China has obtained long term leasing rights to a number of ports and maritime spaces in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea through 'lend and lease' agreements.

In 2019, two major Chinese State-owned maritime enterprises - COSCO and China Merchants - run as many as 42 major ports in 34 countries across the Eurasian and African coastlines.³⁵ Many countries in the region are quite sanguine about Chinese support, notwithstanding the fear of a debt trap (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives, Ethiopia, Kenya and Malaysia) partly due to its ability to deliver quality products.

China also has other Silk Road plans and these cut across domains, including the Arctic Silk Road, the Digital Silk Road, and the Health Silk Road. In 2016, China also announced the Digital Silk Road (DSR) an invisible silk road,³⁶ involving fibre optic cables and satellites network to "improve international communications connectivity" as also "foster the internationalization of China's rapidly growing tech companies".³⁷ The 2015 'Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road' notes that China should

jointly advance the construction of cross-border optical cables and other communications trunk line networks, improve international communications connectivity, and create an Information Silk Road. We should build bilateral cross-border optical cable networks at a quicker pace, plan transcontinental submarine optical cable projects, and improve spatial (satellite) information passageways to expand information exchanges and cooperation.³⁸

Further, in 2017, speaking at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, President Xi Jinping reiterated the critical necessity to

pursue innovation-driven development and intensify cooperation in frontier areas such as digital economy, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and

quantum computing, and advance the development of big data, cloud computing, and smart cities so as to turn them into a digital silk road of the 21st century.³⁹

The DSR comprises of three pillars: first, telecommunication infrastructure, which includes the development of fibre optic cables network, both on land and under the sea, high-speed broadband network including 5G connections, and the safety of industrial data; the second is E-commerce; and, the third pertains to smart city projects under which advanced information and communication technologies - such as the internet of things - would control and drive a number of services, including utility, medical, traffic, and safety.⁴⁰

It is the first pillar of the DSR that has direct relevance to the MSR, and helps China consolidate its position in the Indian Ocean strategic calculus. For instance, Huawei Technologies, a world leader in telephony, particularly the 5G, is also engaged in the undersea cable business. It has planned a 12,000 kilometres Peace Cable project for laying an underwater high-speed internet cable system to link Pakistan (Gwadar), South Africa, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, and France.⁴¹ The USA has asked its treaty allies and close partners, including India, to “refrain from using Huawei in the setting up of their 5G wireless telecommunication systems due to serious security concerns”.⁴²

Another important element of the DSR is the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) comprising 40 satellites which would provide services to the “entire globe by the year 2020”, with “100 times more accuracy.” Currently, BDS provides service to nearly 30 BRI countries, and there are plans to add more satellites into the constellation, and expand services to all 64 BRI countries.⁴³

China has developed a sophisticated Big Data Risk Monitoring Platform (BDRMP) under the ‘Smart Customs’ initiative. The BDRMP has been set up at the Customs office at Nanning, and links cross-border trade across 26 ports in Southeast Asian nations.⁴⁴ It is envisaged that the platform would allow “custom agencies to manage and monitor in real-time complex operational and regulatory risks relating to cross-border customs declarations as well as optimize operations in trade logistics and trade compliance.”⁴⁵ It has been noted that BDRMP is also a way to impose unofficial sanction to “target the goods of nations (or even individuals) that the PRC wishes to influence”, and was used to ‘restricted Philippine banana exports from entering Asian markets between 2016 and 2018 over bilateral tensions related to the South China Sea.’⁴⁶

Indian Ports and 4IR

The Indian Ministry of Shipping has taken a data related initiative in the port sector, both at the organisational and operational levels to enhance the ‘Ease of Doing Business’.⁴⁷ Some of these include: Direct Port Delivery (DPD); Direct Port Entry (DPE); RFID, and the installation of scanners/container scanners which have reduced congestions at the entry gates of the ports. The upgraded Port Community System (PCS 1X version) has been set up in all ports, and “enables seamless data flow between the various stakeholders through common interface” which would result in a “complete paperless regime, E-DO (Electronic Delivery Order) through PCS made mandatory, along with e-invoicing and e-payment.”⁴⁸

As noted earlier, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) ranks 32nd among the top 50 ports in the world, and has been continuously enhancing its efficiency through innovation and reform. It is using digital technologies for the automated management of cargo movements, and vessel-port-vehicle traffic management through data based analytics, GPS, and image-recognition technologies.⁴⁹ Similarly, there is a push towards “AI-led restructuring of the ports-logistics sector”, and a good example is the “Nhava-Shewa and Bhiwandi, e-commerce led logistics” which has transformed warehouse and trucking operations in the sector, adding to efficiency.⁵⁰

The above developments are good examples for many other Indian ports, and these will have to quickly adapt to the ongoing transformation in the port ecosystem that is rapidly absorbing 4IR technologies to enable them to remain competitive at the national and international levels. Likewise, human resources - workers, labour, truckers, and supply chain managers - will have to be part of the port-digital ecosystem.

The Indian government has promoted the idea of ‘digital India’, and Indian ports are pursuing this objective. Over the past few years, the incumbent government has shown interest in adopting new forms of technology. Ports are designing business innovative models not only to lower operational costs but also to add efficiency through real-time tracking and tracing of shipments using 4IR tools and technologies. A number of technological innovations are currently underway at both major and non-major ports in India, and “Blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence” have been introduced, making the entire port-logistic ecosystem function like a seamless entity, and support the national port led development plan under the Sagarmala Project.⁵¹

Concluding Thoughts

The concept of Smart Ports is yet to gather momentum among the Indian Ocean littorals, and only two ports - the Port of Singapore and the Abu Dhabi Ports, UAE - have made significant investments; the Port of Colombo, Sri Lanka has also taken some initiatives. Many other Indian Ocean countries, such as Australia, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and South Africa are considering Smart Ports, and the idea figures prominently in their Blue Economy plans.

At the strategic level, the appetite for new port projects among Indian Ocean littorals as well as China's deep pockets will help many countries, particularly the small island states, to pursue Smart Ports - and these may even take a lead over others, albeit with Chinese support. China's ability to craft cooperation under the Digital Silk Road and augment the connectivity infrastructure of the Indian Ocean states is a potential source for competition. Australia, India, Japan, and the USA are likely to add robustness to the Blue Dot Network, and build robust partnerships to challenge any economic and strategic 'hegemonic order' led by China in the Indian Ocean. This attracts a number of strategic concerns.

Notes :

¹This article does not include the impact of COVID-19 which has disrupted global maritime supply chains, resulting in major shipping companies cancelling voyages, the closure of port operations due to the quarantine of port labour and stevedore service providers, and the shutting down of manufacturing hubs.

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⁸ See, https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/rmt2018_en.pdf, p. 30.

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coastal shipping; c Port-linked Industrialization and the development of Coastal Economic Zones and industrial clusters to reduce the cost of logistics and the time taken by international and domestic seaborne trade; and Coastal Community Development, promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism, etc.

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India-Taiwan Relations: Burgeoning Economic Engagements

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The Tsai Ing-wen led Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government re-launched the New Southbound Policy (NSP) in 2016. The NSP aims at reviving and expanding ties with 18 targeted countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Chairman of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council, James Huang, has said that India is the “jewel” in the NSP. Consequently, the trade between India and Taiwan has increased from US\$ 5.32 billion in 2016 to US\$ 7.05 billion in 2018 with a target of US\$ 10 billion in 2020. Overall, the bilateral trade has grown around 40 percent in two years. There are many complementarities between the NSP and India’s Act East Policy. The trade dispute between the US and China is yet another opportunity for India and Taiwan to enhance their collaboration. With the re-election of Tsai Ing-wen, a continuation of the ties and an additional robust policy to take forward the bilateral relations is expected.

India had diplomatic relations with the ‘Republic of China’ (ROC) after India’s Independence in 1947 for a brief period. Both ROC and India had resident Ambassadors in both capitals (Delhi and Nanking) till 1948/49. Subsequent to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949, India recognised the new regime and simultaneously, de-recognised her relations with the Republic of China (ROC). The KMT government of China fled to Taiwan and established the ROC there, but India desisted from having any formal relations with Taiwan till the early 1990s.

Efforts to improve relations started in early 1990 from both sides. In 1992, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) set up a liaison office in Mumbai and, in 1995, India opened its representative office in Taipei and named it the India-Taipei Association (ITA). Ambassador Vinod Khanna was appointed as the first Director-General of the ITA. The main aim of the opening of ITA was economic engagement. Subsequently, a month

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later, Taiwan opened its office in New Delhi, and called it the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC). Now, the TECC offices are operational in Chennai, Kolkata, and Mumbai.

Though not formal diplomatic missions, they do function as de facto representatives of their respective governments, and carry out activities including servicing trade and economic relations, facilitating people-to-people contacts, and the issuing of visas. Since then, bilateral relations have increased in the sphere of trade and commerce, science and technology, research and development, education, people-to-people contact, and other related fields.

Synergy between Indian ‘Act East Policy’ and Taiwanese ‘New Southbound Policy’

India embarked on a Look East Policy in the 1990s, subsequently named Act East Policy, and made investments in the countries of the region. Taiwan falls in the larger ambit of Indian foreign policy in this region. On the other hand, Taiwan is trying to give greater emphasis on its engagement with India under its New Southbound Policy (NSP). At present, under the NSP, India has become important for Taiwan. James Huang, Chairman of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), said, “India is important to us in terms of trade and investment. We didn’t pay enough attention to India in the past.”

On 16 August 2016, Tsai Ing-wen launched the New Southbound Policy (NSP). Since then, the NSP has become a flagship initiative of the government. NSP is the third phase of the “Go South Policy” - that was launched in 1994 by the then Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), with the second phase launched in January 2002. The NSP is intended to reinvigorating and expanding ties with the Southeast Asian and South Asian countries. It aims to strengthen the comprehensive trade and economic ties between Taiwan and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asia, New Zealand, and Australia. The key goal of the policy is to forge a “sense of economic community”, and develop linkages with ASEAN, South Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia in the field of economics, trade relations, science and technology, culture, resource sharing, talent and markets, and create a new cooperation model that seeks mutual benefits and create a win-win situation.¹ Under the policy, Taiwan has expanded its geographical reach, and has added six more countries: Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India. The countries have been added keeping in mind the changing economic scenario in ASEAN and South Asian countries, especially

India.² The policy does not aim to abandon China, in favour of the new countries. Rather, it aims to take advantage in the growing markets of the region. James Huang, Director of the NSP, noted, “The New Southbound Policy does not run counter to improving trade relations with China, and the two can even be complementary.” There is a possibility of cooperation between Taiwan and China under the policy. China is already involved in many infrastructure projects in the ASEAN region, and Taiwan has strong small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs), quality agriculture, and a service industry. Consequently, both China and Taiwan can work together to boost the development of the ASEAN region in this area.

Evaluating the Progress of Engagements

India-Taiwan relations developed gradually over the years. Official visits are restricted only to the senior officials’ level, and are limited to non-political areas such as science, education, and the economic ministries. Also, since there is no diplomatic relationship between India and Taiwan, the members of Parliament and officials cannot travel to Taiwan on Diplomatic passports.³ However, some important visits from both sides have helped in consolidating the relationship. In 2010, the Minister of Education - Wu Ching-chi and Chair of the Economic Planning and Development Council- Liu Yi-ru - visited India. Yet again, the Deputy Foreign minister and Deputy Defence Minister; Shen Lyu-shun and Hsiung Hsiang-Tai, visited India in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

On 7 March 2011, a group of journalists from Taipei were received by India’s Foreign Secretary, Nirupama Rao. The former President of Taiwan, Ma Ying-jeou, visited India in 2007, and also in 2018 in a stopover visit on his way to Africa. Taiwan’s Vice-president, Wu Den-yih, made a layover at Delhi airport en route to Rome (2014).⁴ In 2012, Tsai Ing-wen also visited India as the leader of the opposition.

Former Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes visited Taiwan in 2003, and former President of India, A. P. J Abdul Kalam, visited in 2010. The establishment of the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum in 2016 was a milestone in the relationship as it provides a formal platform for ‘friendship’. India has taken some significant steps to foster bilateral relations. Subsequently, members of this delegation visited India again on 13 February 2018. China raised objections to the visit; but the Indian government responded by mentioning that there was nothing “new or unusual” about this particular visit, and described the group as “a group of Taiwanese academics and business persons, including a couple of legislators”. India also conveyed that China

should also send such groups for interaction.

On economic collaboration, in the last five years, several agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed that have further consolidated the relations. In 2017, twenty-one MoUs were signed by Taiwan’s Chinese National Federation of Industries and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, followed by MoU on the “Promotion of Industry Collaboration”. Besides Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata, TAITRA opened its fourth office in New Delhi. TAITRA has the third-largest number of offices in India after China (10), and the USA (5). The objective of the office is to explore possible areas of collaboration between the various sectors, including the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). After the inauguration of the office, the first Taiwan Expo 2018, with the title, “Connect Taiwan, Connect the World”, was held in New Delhi on 17-19 May 2018. It was organised jointly by the Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council, and was supported by India Trade Promotion Organisation and co-organised by the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The main components of the exhibitions were from healthcare, business, ICT, agriculture, food, textiles, and other related areas. As an endeavour to push further the economic relations between both sides, on 24 October 2018, the Union Cabinet of India approved the signing of the Bilateral Investment Agreement between ITA and TECC.⁵ It is a landmark development and is meant to encourage investment flows from both sides.

Taiwanese Trade and Investments in India
(in USD Billion)

Period	Imports from Taiwan	Exports to Taiwan	Total	% growth (YoY)
2017	3.3	3.05	6.35	29 (from 2016)
2018	3.79	3.26	7.05	11.02

Source: The India-Taipei Association⁶

The table shows that, in the last two years, the bilateral trade has grown around 40 percent, and has multiplied six-fold since 2001. Under the umbrella of the NSP, it is projected to achieve the target of US\$ 10 billion in 2020.

India’s exports to Taiwan consists of naphtha; minerals; aluminium, not alloyed, unwrought; Ferro-chromium, containing by weight more than 4 percent of carbon, containing by weight 99.99 percent or more of zinc, not alloyed; Ferro-silico-manganese; P-xylene; other fish, minced (surimi), frozen;

other apparatus for communication in a wired or wireless network; non-industrial diamonds, worked, but not mounted or set; and refined copper, cathodes and sections of cathodes, unwrought.⁷ India's imports from Taiwan consist of Poly(vinyl chloride), not mixed with any other substances, in primary forms; Polyamide 6 (nylon 6); Terephthalic acid; Solar cells; Flat-rolled products of other alloy steel, not further worked than cold-rolled (cold-reduced), of a width of 600 mm or more; and other electronic integrated circuits; parts and accessories of the machines of heading 84.71; Machining centres; Digital still image video cameras and digital cameras; and machines for the reception, conversion, and transmission or regeneration of voice, images or other data, including switching and routing apparatus.⁸ Taiwan is India's 18th importer while India is Taiwan's 14th export destination.

Additionally, the Foreign Direct Investment inflow from Taiwan has increased almost 10 times in 2018-2019. From 2000-2019 (September), the cumulative FDI from Taiwan to India was US\$ 329.2 million.⁹ There are around 140 Taiwanese companies that have invested in India. They are exploring investment opportunities in the state of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat.

The Chinese Petroleum Corporation (CPC) is planning to invest US\$ 6.6 billion in a petrochemical project in Paradip in Odisha.¹⁰ The CPC is also planning to set up a naphtha cracker plant in Gujarat.¹¹ A Taiwanese synthetic rubber manufacturer, China Synthetic Rubber Corporation (CSRC), is planning to invest about INR 1,000 crores to set up a manufacturing facility in Gujarat.¹²

Taiwan is interested in manufacturing solar panels in India. This will help India to reduce its dependence on imports of solar panels from China. It will also help the Taiwanese companies to enter the global solar market.¹³ The Tea Industry and the Bamboo industry are also areas of collaboration for both countries.¹⁴ Taiwanese Bubble Tea is becoming popular in India.¹⁵

Many Taiwanese firms are making investments across India. Wistron (Original Equipment Manufacturer OEM) is planning to increase the production capacity of its plant in Narasapura near Bengaluru, with the investment around US\$ 340 million. After much controversy, Foxconn is moving ahead with an investment of US\$ 355 million in a Tamil Nadu plant to assemble Apple iPhone X series, and is expected to create 25000 jobs for Indians. KYMCO, a Taiwanese electric two-wheeler manufacturer, is looking forward to investing in a start-up of a Haryana based company to develop electric scooters in the next three years. Delta Electronics is already present in India, and it further plans to invest US\$ 500 million in the new factory in Krishnagiri, and the

Research and Development centres in Bengaluru. Maxxis Rubber has also opened its manufacturing plant at Sanand in Gujrat. The company has invested around US\$ 320 million initially for its first phase which will have a production capacity of 20, 000 two-wheeler tyres and 40,000 tubes a day.¹⁶

The Hsinchu Science Park and the Central Taiwan Science Park have signed an MoU with the Karnataka government for setting up a science park in Bengaluru. This MoU is expected to increase industrial collaboration in the field of the Industrial Collaboration Mechanism and will deepen the India-Taiwan engagement in the domestic market.¹⁷

Media Tek, a chipset maker, is looking at the Indian market across Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Noida. It is set to bring Helio G9 - chipset series - in India in partnership with Xiaomi.¹⁸ Nan Liu, a fabric manufacturing firm set up in 2017, has committed US\$ 20 million of investment in Gujrat.

Importance of Taiwanese Investment in India

Taiwan is one of the 'Asian Tigers' and a developed country, with an economic growth of 2.37 percent. It has per capita income of US\$ 27,347. About 60 percent of the working-age population participates in the workforce and the share of services to GDP is 62 percent. Taiwan has a high tertiary enrolment rate of 70 percent, the world's second-highest after South Korea. Taiwan has successfully integrated itself with the global value chain (GVC). This is the result of Taiwan's early integration with the GVC through vertical FDI and its dominance in global contract manufacturing.¹⁹ The Taiwanese economy has a very strong trade-investment-service linkage. The investments in the manufacturing sector are backed by the FDI inflows in supporting service industries.²⁰ In the list of Fortune Global 500 Companies 2017, six Taiwanese MNEs were included: Foxconn, Pegatron, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing TSMC, Quanta computer, Cathay Life Insurance, and Compal Electronics.²¹

India desires to be a part of the global production network and high-value manufacturing as well. The Indian government has launched various schemes such as Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, and the Smart Cities Project. Taiwanese companies can become partners in these projects. This will be of interest to the Taiwanese counterparts as well because India is a big market. This will help Taiwan in reducing its dependence on China, which is the stated goal of the NSP. On the other hand, the NSP has not given the expected dividend. Despite the jostling cross-strait relations, according to Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), through the first 11 months of 2017, Cross-

Strait trade was valued at US\$ 125.6 billion - up 17.6 percent from the same period in 2016. Taiwan's exports to the mainland during that period were up even more year-on-year, rising 20.4 percent to US\$ 80.1 billion. More than 100,000 Taiwanese businesses operate in China, and around 40 percent of Taiwan's exports are to China as well. Taiwanese leaders are concerned about this dependence on China as it not only encourages greater economic dependence as a crucial part of its strategy to achieve unification with Taiwan.²²

Taiwan's economy is heavily reliant on China. The US-China trade dispute has given India and Taiwan yet another opportunity to cooperate further. 'Taiwan turns to India to shake off [the] shackles of China dependence', noted a report in the *Financial Times*²³. A report by *Nomura* has stated that Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs pointed out that around 40 Taiwanese companies are looking to shift production back to Taiwan from China.²⁴ As the Taiwanese companies are moving out of China, India can be a good option, although many of these companies have already shifted to Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries.²⁵ In comparison to investments in Southeast Asia, the investments in India will give them long term benefits because of the large size of Indian market. Many of the Taiwanese companies may come to India through the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) route. India's domestic market has a lot of potential, Taiwanese companies can come and invest in India, and they can share the market. They can use India as an export launch pad. If the Taiwanese companies decide to invest in India, they would not face some of the political problems they encounter in China. The checks and balances of India's democracy, and the rule of law ensure that India will never adopt arbitrary trade policies. In fact, in the last two years, there has been a series of Taiwanese investments in India - companies such as Wistron and Foxconn plan to invest INR 7,500 crore in India over a five-year period.²⁶

People-to-People Interactions

Overall, there are 116 MoUs/Agreements between 73 universities/colleges on the Taiwanese side and 96 universities/colleges on the Indian sides. Currently, there are seven Taiwan Education Centres (TEC) set up in various universities in India, with 13 teachers from Taiwan teaching Mandarin Chinese. The TECs in India also provide Chinese courses for senior Indian officials, tourism promoters, and employees working for Taiwan enterprises in India.²⁷ Over the past decade, many Indian students have availed scholarships offered by the Taiwan government. Around 2,300 Indian students are studying in Taiwan.

There is prospect of growth of tourism from both sides. Around 35,000 Indians visited Taiwan in 2017, of which 4500 were for leisure travel and the others for business. The Taiwan Tourist Bureau (TTB) is also effectively marketing Taiwan's tourism in India. They are also organising various road shows in Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune, and Kochi.²⁸ In 2019, the TTB launched a full-fledged OOH campaign in association with Times OOH to attract Indian travellers to Taiwan. They have put the advertisement in important airports, malls, and cinemas as well as offline media in Indian cities. This cross-platform campaign is one of TTB's largest-ever in-market tourism promotions.²⁹

Indian journalists are invited to Taiwan to enhance their understanding about cooperation with India, how to expand business opportunities, and promote Taiwanese culture, art and history with the people of the India. Three Indian journalist, from *The Hindu*, *The Telegraph*, and *Dainik Jagran* were invited by the Foundation for International Exchange and Cultural Development from 6–9 November 2017.³⁰

There have been frequent cultural exchange programmes from both sides. Bollywood movies like *Three Idiots*, *Secret Superstar*, *Dangal*, *Bahubali* are major hits in Taiwan. Taiwan has screened its movies in India (*Life of Pie*) and, since 2018, they described it as a 'film festival'. The film festival was followed by a visit of 25 Youth Ambassadors under Taiwan's International Youth Ambassador Exchange Program.³¹ Yoga is also becoming popular in Taiwan.

Prospects for Further Cooperation

India and Taiwan can also cooperate on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations (UN). Along with other countries, India signed the declaration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising of 17 SDGs. The goals of the policy can be potential areas for cooperation with India. Although not a member of the UN, in 2017 Taiwan came out with the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) at a forum in New York to explain the efforts Taiwan has made towards achieving the SDGs.³²

According to the report published by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), there are three plausible ways of collaboration between India and Taiwan. First, Indian and Taiwanese companies can work on joint ventures, and collaborate to understand each other's markets. Second, the sharing of information between industry

associations and professional bodies of both the sides. Third, the Ministry of Commerce of India should interact with TECC and ITA, and work towards setting up a Joint Working Group for a possible comprehensive agreement.³³

Under the NSP, Taiwan is giving special emphasis to its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In India, the government is also giving impetus to the SMEs by providing incentives such as giving loans up to rupees one crore which are cleared in 59 minutes, relaxed labour laws, and easier compliance with environmental laws.³⁴ Thus, there is complementarity between the two sides in this sector.

India can support Taiwan's position in the World Health Organisation. In 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a bipartisan bill, supporting the status of Taiwan as an "observer" at the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the annual meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA).

Geo-strategically, the location of Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific region is of importance. It is central to the security of the region, and is close to the First Island Chain that stretches from Kamchatka to Sumatra. The USA has factored in the importance of Taiwan in its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy. The former US defence secretary, Ash Carter, had stated that Taiwan is part of the US Indo-Pacific strategy network. The NSP initiated by President Tsai Ing-wen should be seen as Taiwan's attempt to reach out to the Indo-Pacific region. Further, in May 2018, the government established the Indo-Pacific Affairs Section within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In August 2018, Tsai Ing-wen and Foreign Minister, Joseph Wu, participated in the Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue titled "Promoting a Free and Open Indo-Pacific Region. Also, Taiwan is working on three cooperative frameworks: Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific region, the Global Cooperation Training Framework (GCTF), and with the United States Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). India has actively adopted the Indo-Pacific in its foreign policy. Hence, India and Taiwan can cooperate in various aspects of the wider region. India and Taiwan have also participated in the 2018 "Quad-Plus dialogue" held in Tokyo. The Quad-Plus dialogue is the 1.5 initiative of four think tanks from India, Japan, Australia, and the USA. It may be noted that Taiwan's Institute for National Policy Research (INPR) joined the discussion as the Dialogue's Plus-partner.³⁵

An ICRIER-CIER study shows that both sides can collaborate on cloud computing, digital technology-enabled design, and green environment to secure new global business, and cater to development.³⁶ Taiwan has a sophisticated food processing industry notwithstanding a low agriculture base and limited

natural resources. Conversely, India has a broad base and abundant resources but a labour intensive food-processing sector coupled with old technology. There is a possibility that India could import these technologies and customise them further.³⁷ Taiwan has also developed good solutions for smart cities. India has started the smart cities projects in which Taiwan could be a plausible partner. Two Smart Asia Expo have already taken place in India in which the Taiwanese companies have displayed their expertise.³⁸ Taiwanese firms are looking forward to cooperating with India in ‘next-generation technology solutions’, such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and 5G.³⁹

Conclusion

In her second term, Tsai Ing-wen appears to be more confident than ever. In an interview with the BBC, she said that Taiwan need not declare its independence because it’s already an independent country. “We call ourselves the (Republic of China) Taiwan, we have a government, we have a military, and we have elections”. She also spoke about the risk of the prospects of war with China that loom over Taiwan, and mentioned that Taiwan has sufficient capabilities to defend itself. Further, she added “invading Taiwan or trying to invade Taiwan is something [that is] going to be very costly for China.” The last four years have been turbulent for Taiwan as it lost eight of its diplomatic allies:-Kiribati, Solomon Islands, El Salvador, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, Panama, Gambia, and São Tomé and Príncipe. China has used cheque book diplomacy and pressure tactics to squeeze out Taiwan’s diplomatic space. Conversely, the USA has supported Taiwan in terms of its arms and defence support. In June 2018, the USA upgraded the de facto embassy buildings - the American Institute of Taiwan (AIT) - with an investment of US\$ 250 million on the premises. The inauguration of the embassy itself marked “a new chapter in a story that has been decades in the making”, and indicates a change in the US stance towards Taiwan.

Despite the absence of proper diplomatic relations, bilateral visits - albeit informal and at functional levels - continue from both sides. India also needs to take incremental steps to give a more formal content to this relationship. In the evolving geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region, Taiwan is looking forward to being an important player, and India needs to leverage her relations.

In India-Taiwan relations, it is important to decouple the economic logic from the other dimensions of the relationship. The various initiatives started by the Indian government have created a positive environment for Taiwanese

companies to invest in India. To facilitate more investments from Taiwan, the interaction between state governments and the Taiwanese government should be encouraged. There is a need to deepen economic, commercial, and cultural ties with Taiwan to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities. This will require shedding our conventional outlook towards Taiwan, and expanding the relationship pragmatically.

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The Idea of ‘Limited Nuclear War’: As Impractical and Dangerous Now, As It Was Then

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*[T]he most fruitful area for current strategic thought is the
conduct and efficacy of limited nuclear war.*

– Henry Kissinger, 1957¹

Nearly six and a half decades after the above statement was made by Henry Kissinger, it seems to be yesterday once more. Yet again, the nuclear world seems to be standing on the threshold of being seduced by the utility of counterforce capabilities. Nuclear deterrence by denial, or the projection of an ability to fight a limited nuclear war, seems to be back in fashion. Such a school of thought is known to have guided US nuclear strategy between the 1960s and the 1980s. But, the idea of being able to successfully fight and win a nuclear war with another nuclear armed nation was pretty much abandoned by the late 1980s. This transformation in thinking came about as a result of many factors, but was facilitated, to a large extent, by the simultaneous presence of leaders in the USA and USSR who thought more strategically about nuclear issues.

Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev made a historic statement when they acknowledged that a nuclear war cannot be won and, therefore, should not be fought. With that, much of the chatter about nuclear war-fighting subsided. Thereafter, once the Cold War ended and as US-Russia relations improved between 1990 and 2014, it was expected that tactical nuclear weapons, the ostensible instruments of nuclear war fighting, would be eliminated through bilateral arms control. In fact, in 2011 when Pakistan first tested a very short-range ballistic missile, the Nasr, and claimed it as a nuclear weapon for a tactical role, there was much criticism of the move. That was the time when tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) were considered more a problem than an asset in the nuclear arsenal.

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By 2014, however, relations between Washington and Moscow had begun to sour, and the possibility of arms control of TNWs dissipated. In fact, this was about the time that the idea of deterrence by denial was ready to make a comeback in American nuclear discourse. In line with this thinking, the US Nuclear Posture Review of 2018 inclined itself towards a doctrine and capability that would equip the US to fight and win 'limited' nuclear wars, and thereby deny Russia and China any chance of getting away with the use of a low yield nuclear weapon. The NPR was premised on the view that Moscow and Beijing had developed the capability to undertake the limited use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the US felt compelled to reciprocate the same sentiment.

Why is the idea of a limited nuclear war back in the discourse? What is the rationale being put forth by the USA? Will new technologies heighten or reduce the possibility of a limited nuclear war? Can a nuclear war ever be limited? How will the advocacy of the idea of limited nuclear war impact the nuclear behaviour of others? What should India watch out for? Would any changes be necessary in its own nuclear doctrine? These are some of the questions that this essay attempts to answer.

The Concept of a Limited Nuclear War: The Original Rationale of the 1960s

Soon after the end of the Second World War, once the USA and USSR had established the balance of terror, the decade of the 1950s saw both looking at their steadily growing stockpile of nuclear weapons as a deterrent to threaten overwhelming destruction in retaliation to the adversary's crossing of some red lines. With a reciprocal devastating damage capacity, deterrence rested upon the idea of mutual assured destruction (MAD).

Nuclear thinkers of the time, like Bernard Brodie, drew attention to the awesome destruction potential of the weapon. In fact, Brodie identified four reasons on why casualty rates with nuclear weapons would be far greater than non-atomic bombing²: the warning time would be virtually non-existent; the duration of an attack would, literally, be a single instant, not permitting any reaction time; shelters capable of protection would be of no use within the fire-ball radius; and, the radioactivity that would be released instantaneously - and which would linger on - would keep on causing further casualties. He opined that no exchange of nuclear weapons, once begun, could be kept limited. "It was, therefore, impossible to place any kind of limits on nuclear war. Nuclear war was, by definition, unlimited war."³

A decade down the line, however, US analysts had begun to contemplate other strategies of deterrence that did not have to rely only on the threat of massive retaliation. In fact, this thinking emerged as a counter to the doctrine of massive retaliation announced in 1954. Its credibility was doubted by many nuclear strategists who opined that the large-scale use of nuclear weapons against any kind of conventional provocation was unrealistic, and would never be taken seriously by the adversary.⁴

Hence, in order to re-establish nuclear deterrence, the USA felt the need to signal a more effective use of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, proportionate response was recommended along a spectrum of flexible nuclear use. The concept of limited nuclear war then came into vogue. While there is no definition of a limited nuclear war, it may be taken to mean one in which a limited number of nuclear warheads with low yields are employed to attack a limited set of military targets to impact a limited geographical space for limited objectives. The idea would be to restrict the tempo, level of violence, or the breadth of conflict. Such an attack was meant to be illustrative of the destruction potential of a nuclear weapon, rather than unleashing its complete fury. The demonstration was meant to shock and scare the adversary to back off, and agree to the termination of hostilities on one's terms or suffer the full might of the strategic arsenal.

The execution of such an attack was to be enabled by the counterforce capabilities of high precision and accuracy that could allow more flexible strategic options for a 'discriminate' nuclear war. Technological advancements in the miniaturisation of nuclear warheads, the development of more and more accurate delivery systems, and better remote sensing to gain knowledge of enemy nuclear storage sites enabled the concepts of counterforce, city avoidance, escalation dominance, and measured retaliation. Accordingly, the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson replaced massive retaliation with the concepts of flexible and controlled response. These plans were eventually operationalised in the Single Integrated Operational Plan in the late 1970s, and became popular as the Schlesinger doctrine. MAD was replaced by the ideas put forth by the nuclear use theorists, or NUTS.

By the 1980s, these concepts had undergone several iterations, and come to be known as comprising the countervailing strategy. Its basic contours were best outlined by the US Secretary of Defence, Harold Brown, in the Annual Report of the Department of Defence to the Congress in 1981. He said,

large scale counter-value attacks may not be appropriate to deter the full range of potential Soviet threats... instead we could attack in a selective

and measured way, a range of military, industrial, and political control targets, while retaining an assured destruction capacity in reserve.⁵

Challenge of Fighting a Limited Nuclear War

NUTS premised nuclear deterrence on the projection of nuclear war fighting that envisaged operations in a logical and controlled manner. The idea of escalation dominance and cool control while using low-yield, small nuclear weapons on a limited number of military targets was rationally put forth. Improved offensive capabilities for counterforce attacks were their focus, as also active defences for damage limitation. The intent was to signal an ability to undertake a limited, pre-emptive, counterforce attack in order to deter the adversary from initiating or escalating a conventional conflict.

However, the question that soon raised its head was whether it was at all possible to direct nuclear forces to execute a controlled nuclear response. Fred Kaplan calls this the “unresolvable dilemma” since it involves the planning of “a nuclear attack that [is] large enough to terrify the enemy but small enough to be recognized unambiguously as a limited strike, so that, if the enemy retaliated, he’d keep his strike limited too”.⁶

Two challenges were clearly evident. The first of these pertained to the need for hugely sophisticated nuclear forces in sufficient numbers and types as well as an elaborate and delegated command and control capability to plan such an operation. TNWs had to be placed in the battlefield, and equipped with a certain amount of pre-delegation of authority for quick use when necessary. This meant that the field commander had his hand on the nuclear artillery (or its variants depending on the launch platforms), and he could get a country into an escalation spiral. This meant a serious dilution of centralised command and control. Meanwhile, irrespective of the detailed planning involved in use of TNWs, a strategic reserve arsenal had, nevertheless, to be built to a certain level, and maintained in a state of readiness for any eventuality. So, the former capability was not to replace the latter, but impose an additional burden in terms of the cost of build-up, maintenance effort, human resource requirement, and the command and control processes. And yet, despite everything, it still amounted to placing the survival of the nation in the hands of subordinate officers, any of whom could trigger a nuclear war.

Though these were supposed to be small nuclear weapons to fight a limited nuclear war, the second and even more problematic challenge arose from the uncertainty about the adversary’s willingness to play the game of a

limited nuclear war. In his book, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (1981), Lawrence Freedman states, "It takes two to keep a war limited." It could never be taken for granted by the first user that the adversary would read the signal of limited nuclear use correctly, and respond in the same manner. In fact, going by the experience of simulation exercises and the war games conducted during the Cold War, no war that began with the use of tactical nuclear weapons ever ended at that level. Freedman has described such use as resulting into

battles of great confusion; the casualties would be high; troops would be left isolated and leaderless; and morale would be hard to maintain. It would be difficult to ensure uncontaminated supplies of food and water or even of spare parts. The Army found it extremely difficult to work out how to prepare soldiers for this sort of battle and to fight it with confidence.⁷

Soviet thinking on the idea of a limited nuclear war during this period was described by Brodie in one of his writings as being "uniformly hostile and derisive. Especially derided has been the thought that wars might remain limited while being fought with atomic weapons."⁸ Many other American nuclear watchers too found no reference to limited nuclear wars, flexible responses, etc., in Soviet nuclear writings. Rather, according to a Soviet Major General, "the assertion made by supporters of 'limited' nuclear war that it could be kept within pre-planned limits and made 'controllable' is altogether false."⁹ The Soviets, therefore, interpreted US countervailing strategy as a move towards a credible first strike.

Meanwhile, the negative effects generated by such a posture were not insignificant. Firstly, it reduced the perceived risk of nuclear use by touting the idea that the use of a few, small nuclear weapons was a better proposition than the large-scale use of nuclear weapons. But, there was never any guarantee that the numbers in use would remain small. Secondly, by suggesting that use of some nuclear weapons would not be such a bad thing, the idea of limited nuclear war actually increased the temptation for their use. Thirdly, the increased likelihood of their use generated a sense of vulnerability in the country likely to receive such a limited strike. This, then, raised the incentives for pre-emption, thereby making a nuclear exchange more likely.

For NUTS, the risk created by the increased likelihood of use was actually beneficial to strengthen deterrence. That is what they sought to exploit. The limitation in this thinking, however, was the inability to factor in the adversary's capability and plan of operation as well as his rationality/irrationality quotient.

Swayed by such thinking for a while, Washington did liberally spend on offence and defence capabilities to give teeth to its countervailing nuclear strategy. Moscow too played along. By the mid-1980s, the two had accumulated as many as 65,000 nuclear warheads, including several thousand TNWs. Eventually, owing to a number of developments in the two nations, and across the world, a realisation of the dangers emerged, and the idea of limited nuclear war was discarded when Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev reached the understanding that nuclear wars could not be won, and must not be fought.

Re-emergence of the Concept: The New Rationale

The idea of limited nuclear use remained out of mainstream nuclear discourse roughly from the end of the Cold War to about the mid-2010s. A return to the old thinking, however, began in the USA from around 2014. An edited book published around that time made a case for reconsidering the concept in light of the changed US threat environment.

Given its international commitments and the possibility of future regional conflicts with small nuclear armed powers, the United States needs to be prepared for the possibility that it may one day find itself in a limited nuclear war...¹⁰

As said by one of the authors of the book, Jeffrey Larsen,

today we cannot assume that any war will remain conventional, particularly when facing a rogue state for whom the stakes are much higher than they are for the United States.... The fact that the US has thousands of nuclear warheads may not prevent an adversary, even in a small, limited conventional conflict, from crossing the threshold and using one or more of its weapons of mass destruction....¹¹

The book highlighted the concern that small nuclear powers could get the USA involved in regional conflicts. "Such adversaries may believe that only the threat to employ nuclear weapons would dissuade the US from engaging its superior conventional force."¹² In order to deter such eventualities, the US NPR 2018 announced,

Expanding flexible U.S. nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression. It will raise the nuclear threshold and help ensure that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage in limited nuclear escalation, making nuclear employment less likely.¹³

Yet another threat perception that is seen to merit the limited *use* of nuclear weapons is believed to have arisen from advances in the disruptive capabilities of Russia and China. Russia's ambiguity, cultivated or otherwise, on its right to use low yield nuclear weapons in response to aggression with non-nuclear weapons, widely referred to as 'escalate to de-escalate'¹⁴, is cited as the reason for Washington's search for a "range of limited and graduated options, including a variety of delivery systems and explosive yields."¹⁵ The NPR states, "Recent Russian statements on this evolving nuclear weapons doctrine appear to lower the threshold for Moscow's first-use of nuclear weapons ... Correcting this mistaken Russian perception is a strategic imperative."¹⁶ Russia counters that it was compelled to do so to address the threat created by US conventional global prompt strike (CGPS) involving the use of long-range, high precision delivery systems with non-nuclear weapons. Though Washington justifies this capability to handle time-sensitive terrorist targets, Moscow perceives them as a threat to its critical nuclear arsenal or infrastructure.

Meanwhile, from the US perspective, China too has been building advanced capabilities at a rapid pace. Its anti-access, area denial strategy has been particularly mentioned in many American security strategy documents as eroding the effectiveness of its deterrence by punishment. The argument goes that even in the case of small confrontations, the USA would be compelled to rely on its nuclear deterrence. But, this would be ineffective since adversaries would doubt that the USA would use nuclear weapons in such contingencies "in an era of public aversion to casualties..."¹⁷ The USA accuses Russia and China of having

introduced limited war techniques.... For Russia, 'jab and grab' land incursions; for China, the creeping militarization of maritime zones. Both techniques operate below the threshold of deterrence by punishment, and seek to create territorial *faits accompli* that lower the costs of revisionism.¹⁸

In order to address such threats, the US NPR has expanded the role of nuclear weapons to include the deterrence of large-scale conventional threats, cyber-attacks, or those against space assets. This is to be achieved by developing capabilities and options for the execution of 'limited' nuclear strikes. In order to make the threat of limited use look credible, the US NPR plans, in the short term, to "modify a small number of existing SLBM warheads to provide a low-yield option, and in the longer term, pursue a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile."¹⁹ This capability has been described as necessary to have diversity in platforms, range, and survivability, besides being a hedge against future nuclear breakout scenarios and to bridge the

perceived “credibility gap”, especially in “low yield weapons”, to defeat Russia’s nuclear strategy.²⁰

In keeping with this vision, in January 2020, the US Navy reportedly deployed a low yield warhead, the W76-2, on its SLBM aboard the *USS Tennessee*. With a yield of 5-6 kilotons, it is deemed to provide a prompt and assured delivery capability against targets that require a quick response. The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced that the “W76-2 will allow for tailored deterrence in the face of evolving threats”, and give the USA “an assured ability to respond in kind to a low-yield nuclear attack.”²¹ In the long term, the NPR has tasked the DoD to develop a nuclear-armed SLCM to “provide a needed non-strategic regional presence, an assured response capability.”

In US perception, all these capabilities will provide a diverse set of characteristics enhancing our ability to tailor deterrence and assurance; expand the range of credible U.S. options for responding to nuclear or non-nuclear strategic attack; and, enhance deterrence by signalling to potential adversaries that their limited nuclear escalation offers no exploitable advantage...²²

Russia, obviously, describes these developments as destabilising for lowering the nuclear threshold by indicating a willingness to wage a limited nuclear war. Its own focus on hypersonic delivery vehicles, autonomous drones - air and sub-sea - for nuclear delivery, etc. are all meant to deny the US political and military objectives, and shore up its own deterrence. China is following along similar lines. In the process, however, the idea of limited nuclear war is beginning to take root in the two countries and attracting the attention of other nuclear armed states, especially those like North Korea and Pakistan, that believe in brinkmanship as a strategy of deterrence.

Challenges Redux

As a consequence of these developments, the perception that appears to be gaining ground is that a limited nuclear war with low yield weapons is a credible and feasible military strategy.²³ But is it really? The political and military challenges of such a strategy stand clear from the period of 1960-80; but they will perhaps have to be refreshed in public memory. The belief that one could successfully conduct a ‘limited’ nuclear exchange, keep it limited, and somehow come back to business as usual is not only bizarre but also has serious implications for military build-up. It presages a renewed focus on building more and more accurate counterforce weapons for precision targeting.

Showcasing the feasibility of limited nuclear use will lead to a greater focus on the war-fighting aspects of nuclear weapons, and drive up tendencies for building arsenals with low-yield weapons and necessary counterforce delivery systems. Vertical nuclear proliferation may, therefore, exacerbate the chances of deterrence breakdown due to miscalculation and misunderstanding. These challenges will only be compounded by the fact that the number of nuclear armed states today are nine, and many nuclear dyads elongate into nuclear chains.

Even more importantly, the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons will be seriously damaged. The conduct of a nuclear exchange and the *successful* ability of the parties involved to keep nuclear war limited could set a precedent that others could be tempted to follow. The idea that two countries can survive a limited nuclear exchange, and resume 'near normal' relations could tempt others to acquire small arsenals to settle scores with adversaries. Nuclear proliferation could then be on the rise as the salience of nuclear weapons goes up. Another related danger would be a heightened possibility of nuclear terrorism by non-state actors. The availability of nuclear weapons, related material, and infrastructure in more states not only raises the risks of nuclear security but also raise the chances of terrorists also feeling liberated from the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons. If states can find limited use of nuclear weapons useful, so can non state actors. Therefore, a limited nuclear exchange is likely to bring about a sense of complacency in nuclear use that will be most harmful for international security.

Analysing India's Choices

India has a nuclear strategy based on deterrence by punishment. It does not believe in war-fighting with nuclear weapons, and considers limited nuclear war an oxymoron. Its nuclear doctrine categorically establishes that retaliation in the case of *any* use of nuclear weapons would be designed to cause unacceptable damage. The same thought was reiterated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he announced the first deterrent patrol of *INS Arihant* in October 2018.

As other nuclear-armed states once again explore old ideas of limited nuclear war, India must stay the course on the wisdom enshrined in its nuclear doctrine. India's understanding of the futility of war-fighting with nuclear weapons stems from insights into some basics. Not only should India not forget them, but also make every effort to get other nuclear armed states to revisit them. Two of these are briefly highlighted in the following paragraphs.

The first of these is that nuclear weapons are distinct from conventional weapons. The instantaneous release of large amounts of energy in the form of a blast and thermal heat, ionizing radiation, in addition to the long-term radiation from a nuclear fallout make nuclear detonations very different from others. Even low yield warheads will not be devoid of the deleterious effects of nuclear explosions. A report prepared by the Federation of American Scientists in 2001 had concluded that even a ground burst of a nuclear yield as small as 1 percent of the Hiroshima weapon, would “simply blow out a massive crater of radioactive dirt, which rains down on the local region with especially intense and deadly fallout.”²² Since these weapons are so markedly different from conventional weapons, even a “tactical” use would have grave strategic impacts and cause a humanitarian disaster.

Secondly, the probability of being able to undertake limited nuclear attacks with no, or only limited, blowback on own self amounts to wishful thinking when the adversary has a secure second-strike capability. Analytical studies on how to conduct limited nuclear wars can only make educated guesses on matters of critical planning. For instance, such a planner may be able to reasonably determine the physical effects of nuclear explosions based on the yield of weapons, the height at which they would burst, the amount of warning time the adversary may have, the time of the attack, etc. But, whether such calculations can completely factor in more complicated issues - such as the overall impact of the attack on the whole national complex, or other immeasurable imponderables such as “popular panic and administrative disorganisation”²⁴ - can never be ascertained. That a planned limited nuclear use will remain within those parameters is virtually impossible to determine, and it would be foolish to base one’s use of nuclear weapons on such an unknown.

A recognition of these basics has enabled New Delhi to eschew nuclear counterforce capabilities or nuclear war-fighting strategies. Deterrence based on the ability to cause unacceptable damage is the primary purpose of the nuclear weapon. And, India seeks to deter all use of nuclear weapons, irrespective of whether the adversary propagates them as limited or otherwise, with its own ability to cause unacceptable damage. Those who argue in favour of proportionate response as sounding more credible, need to answer the following questions: how does one determine what is proportionate in the case of nuclear weapons - the use of the same number of weapons? the use of the same yield of weapons? the use on the same number and type of targets? Or, the sameness of the number of people killed in the immediate fireball, and then later due to ambient surviving radioactivity?

It is best if the genie of the use of nuclear weapons is not allowed to escape the bottle. The nuclear weapon is a weapon of mass destruction, and is best suited for deterrence. The credibility of this deterrence rests in signalling the availability of capability and the resolve to use it, irrespective of the nature of the use. The pursuit of nuclear war fighting capabilities (ostensibly for the purpose of deterrence) through the greater accuracy of nuclear-tipped missiles, elaborate intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance infrastructure, and damage limitation defences is not only a financially exhausting exercise but may also prove to be dangerous by actually bringing about deterrence breakdown. On the other hand, deterrence by punishment requirements for counter value attacks can be relatively easy from the technological point of view, and fewer in numbers - thus being financially less demanding. By following the latter approach, India helps rationalise its deterrence requirements and avoid a wasteful, dangerous competition in counterforce capabilities.

Conclusion

The idea of limited nuclear use or a small nuclear war threatens to disrupt the organising principle of nuclear deterrence that kept the possibility of nuclear war at bay over the last few decades since war-fighting with nuclear weapons was seen as self-defeating. Of course, counterforce targeting is today far more possible than it ever was, and it tempts nations into believing that limited, small nuclear wars can be custom made to suit situations. Such thinking, however, is akin to tilting at windmills. While the first use of the weapon might be carefully calibrated to cause minimum collateral damage, there can be no guarantee that the recipient of such an attack would not follow a quid pro quo plus strategy, which would not lead to a similar next attack, and so on. It is best that the nuclear weapon is not allowed to be used at all - small or big. The focus of the nations must be on preventing any first use of the weapon because retaliation could prove to be unpredictable. The more nations move towards the idea of being able to contain a small nuclear war, the further we are moving along the road towards conventionalising their use. And, when a small nuclear war turns into a big one, or a war conceived as limited turns into a less limited, would be anybody's guess. Limited nuclear wars remains as unreasonable and dangerous now as it was when the idea was first toyed with and discarded in favour of better sense that nuclear weapons are not for warfighting. Hopefully, the same good sense would dawn once again on the nuclear powers before a humanitarian disaster is created.

Notes :

- ¹ Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, New York: WW Norton, 1969; orig. published 1957.
- ² Bernard Brodie, "Implications of Nuclear Weapons in Total War", *Rand Research Memorandum*, RM-1842, July 8, 1957, p. 13.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 15
- ⁴ See, for instance, the writings of Robert McNamara on flexible response; James Schlesinger on selective targeting; and Harold Brown on countervailing strategy.
- ⁵ As cited in Louis Rene Beres, "Tilting towards Thanatos: America's 'Countervailing' Nuclear Strategy" in Klaus Knorr (ed.), *Power, Strategy and Security*, New Delhi: Asian Books, 1987, p. 83.
- ⁶ Fred Kaplan, *The Bomb: Presidents, Generals and the Secret History of Nuclear War*, Simon and Schuster, 2020, p. 120
- ⁷ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Third edition, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 104
- ⁸ Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959, p. 322.
- ⁹ As cited in Klaus Knorr, n. 5, p. 85.
- ¹⁰ Jeffrey A Larsen, "Limited War and the Advent of Nuclear Weapons", in Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry M. Kartchner (eds.), *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century*, Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ Office of the Secretary of Defence, *Nuclear Posture Review*, February 2018, at <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEARPOSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>, pp. 17–18
- ¹⁴ There is much confusion about whether Russia has ever claimed this as its nuclear strategy. For an insight into this debate, see Olga Oliker and Andrey Baklitskiy, "The Nuclear Posture Review and Russia De-escalation: A Dangerous Solution to a Non-existent Problem", *War on the Rocks*, 20 February 2018, at <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/nuclear-posture-review-russian-de-escalation-dangerous-solution-nonexistent-problem/>
- ¹⁵ NPR, n. 13, pp. 30–31
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ A. Wess Mitchell, "The Case for Deterrence by Denial", *The American Interest*, 12 August 2015, at <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/08/12/the-case-for-deterrence-by-denial/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ NPR, n. 13, “Executive Summary”, p. xii

²⁰ Ibid., p. 18

²¹ William M. Arkin and Hans Kristensen, “US deploys New Low-Yield Nuclear Submarine Warhead”, Federation of American Scientists, 29 January 2020.

²² NPR, n. 13, p. 19

²³ For more on arguments in favour of this strategy, see Matthew Kroenig, “The Case for US Tactical Nukes”, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 January 2018, at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-case-for-tactical-u-s-nukes-1516836395>

²⁴ Brodie, n. 2, p. 21.



BOOK REVIEW

Jagannath P. Panda (Ed), *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Corridors, Connectivity and Contours*, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2019), Price: ₹ 1280.00, Pages: 364.

The book titled *Scaling India-Japan Cooperation in Indo-Pacific and Beyond 2025: Corridors, Connectivity and Contours*, edited by Jagannath P. Panda, is a timely compendium giving a detailed analysis of India-Japan relations which is the “most promising bilateral relationship of the 21st century”. The Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s ‘Confluence of Two Seas’ speech in the Indian Parliament in 2007, recognised the geopolitical realities in the emergence of the Indo-Pacific, and the converging interests of India and Japan in the region. In the first chapter titled *India-Japan Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: A Primer*, Panda highlights that the Indo-Pacific region is set to become the ‘nerve centre’ of the emerging international order as it offers both opportunities for cooperation as well as possibilities of competition. The chapter highlights the shared view of both the countries on the Indo-Pacific, and their focus on building ‘connectivity and quality infrastructure in an inclusive and transparent manner’. China’s increasing assertiveness, especially its unilateral and autarchic infrastructural initiative of BRI, is a common concern for India and Japan. The book reiterates the significance of India’s Northeast region in cementing India-Japan relations, bolstered by the multiple project investments by Japan in the region.

The book is divided into four thematic parts to analyse the different aspects of India-Japan relations. Part one of the book is dedicated to exploring the relationship in the context of inter-continental connectivity, focusing on prospects of cooperation in Central Asia and Africa. It emphasises the India-Japan relationship as being the “balancer to peace and prosperity” in the Indo-Pacific. The fundamentals of this relationship - which include the complementary approach to maritime disputes, a free and fair trading environment, the promotion of a transparent regional trading environment, and trans-regional connectivity - have ‘caused discomfort’ to China’s approach in the region. However, there is need to pursue the relationship beyond the Indo-Pacific. A ‘Eurasia’ framework of cooperation, which is currently missing, can become the most important strategic fulcrum of India-Japan global ties.

Historically, Japan was one of the first countries to apply the Silk Road concept in its engagement with the Central Asia and the Caucasus region. Nevertheless, it was never to view the region through the lens of imperialism. That historical connect needs to be revisited. On the other hand, India's relationship with Central Asia, based mainly on goodwill and welcomed by the countries in the region as a 'soft balancer', has got a push with India's membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). India through its 'Connect Central Asia policy', and Japan by revisiting its 'Eurasian Diplomacy' of the 1990s should enhance their outreach in the region. The author emphasises that the China factor would play an important role in furthering India-Japan ties in Central Asia, by pursuing various infrastructural and developmental projects in the region. A trilateral framework of India-Japan-EU could possibly be extended to Central Asia. Another region which needs to be focused on to further the Indo-Japan relationship is Africa. Health and agriculture particularly and, of course, the connectivity infrastructure under the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) are the sectors where the expertise of India and Japan and the needs of African countries can synergise.

Part Two of the book focuses on analysing the relationship under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with particular focus on infrastructure connectivity and corridors as well as the role of technology in furthering bilateral ties. The 'institutionalisation' of bilateral relations in the form of Annual Summit meetings since 2006 has resulted in consistent engagement at the Prime Ministerial level between the two countries. Academic and research institutions are also playing an important role at the Track II level to strengthen cooperation between the two countries. Japan's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in India has been crucial in areas like power, transportation, communication, irrigation, environment, and those sectors connected with human needs. A crucial role has been played by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). K. V. Kesavan in his chapter titled *Infrastructure Connectivity and Corridors in Prime Minister Modi's Japan Policy*, highlights the significant role of Japan's economic diplomacy under Shinzo Abe - often referred to as 'Abenomics' - and the efforts of the current government in New Delhi by highlighting the flagship projects initiated since Prime Minister Modi has come to power, including the Delhi-Mumbai Freight Corridor, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the initiatives in the Northeast region, the High-speed rail project, and the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) announced in 2016. India's growing economy - with a number of

schemes like Make in India and Digital India - has provided more space for financial and technological collaborations with Japan. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIPS) and India's Act East Policy have played a crucial role in bringing the two countries closer than ever. However, the chapter also highlights that while FOIPS is intent upon promoting infrastructure and connectivity, it has not been able to make much progress in concrete terms. It is important to identify specific projects, and also to coordinate actions with various regional platforms - like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), to name a few. FOIPS also needs to look for partners apart from India, Australia, and the USA, to cooperate with ASEAN members. There is also a need to have a consensus on the approach to China.

A. D. Gnanagurunathan's chapter titled *Technology and Resource Imperatives in India-Japan Relations*, argues that instead of a dominant narrative of 'security', the focus in the India-Japan relationship should be on 'technology' - particularly emerging technologies like cloud technology, the Internet of Things (IoT), and advanced energy storage, all of which should be focus areas. India and Japan have immense potential for joint exploration in space, both by collaboration of government space research agencies as well as the private sector.

The third part of the book is dedicated to analysing the economic aspects of bilateral ties. It argues that the rise of China in the region as a 'centripetal force' in economic and strategic terms has played a crucial role in determining strategic equations in the region, including pushing for closer trade, defence, and security relations between India and Japan. In an interesting analysis, Raviprasad Narayanan in his chapter titled *The Asian Context: Chinese Economy and India-Japan Ties*, argues that China's One Belt and Road (OBOR) initiative (launched in 2013) was, in a way, a counter to the US 'pivot' announced in 2012. While US led regionalism has focused on economic liberalisation and deregulation, China has focused on development. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB), China is using its economic power and foreign policy to reshape the regional order which challenges western models and institutions. The USA's disengagement from regional multilateralism has created a vacuum, allowing China to expand its influence in the region. The decision to walk out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Trump Administration's preference for bilateralism rather than multilateralism has further given a step up to China in the Indo-

Pacific. Given the current scenario, the democratic and strategically autonomous India has the potential to re-orient the strategic and economic centre of gravity away from China.

In her chapter titled *Infrastructure Financing and Institutional Statecraft: Japan's Role in India's Modernisation*, Titli Basu argues that infrastructure plays an important role in enabling regional value chains and economic engagement through connectivity. Japan needs to leverage its leading position in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to pursue its partnership for quality infrastructure in the region. For Japan, the partnership for infrastructure allows the reinvigoration of its economy as well as the consolidation of its strategic partnerships with like-minded countries. The Indo-Pacific Vision 2025 is one of the top priorities of the India-Japan partnership. Development cooperation is an important element in determining Japan's foreign policy approach. It is in Japan's interest to support an economically strong India in the region. India is the largest development partner of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Collaborating with ADB and JICA will help realise the objective of constructing infrastructure in India which will integrate the country better in the regional value chains and the industrial networks of emerging economies of South and Southeast Asia. There is an 'infrastructure imbalance' in Asia which creates an environment for competition. China and Japan are the only two players who have the ability to fill the demand and supply gap in the region. The dynamic equations among Asian players (mainly China, Japan, and India) define Asia's infrastructure geopolitics.

The last part of the book explores and analyses the convergence of interests between India and Japan in the maritime realm. Abhay Kumar Singh in his chapter, on *India-Japan Strategic Partnership: Imperatives for Ensuring 'Good Order at Sea' in the Indo-Pacific*, highlights that the idea of the 'confluence of the two seas' is essentially rediscovering historical strategic homogeneity in Maritime Asia, when a crucial role was played by the monsoon winds connecting the two Oceans in the past. Presently, given their vital strategic and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region, both India and Japan have a shared interest in maintaining 'Good order at Sea' as also a shared strategic approach in the region.

Focusing on the western Indo-Pacific region, Kenta Aoki in his chapter on *Chabahar: The Fault-line in India-Japan Infrastructure Cooperation*, argues that Chabahar is a fault-line in India-Japan infrastructure cooperation. He argues that, Chabahar is, in a way, a counter to China's BRI and the China-Pakistan axis. At the same time, it plays a crucial role in India's 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is a crucial region for energy and also provides a

vast market. The angle of Afghanistan is also crucial as Chabahar will reduce Afghanistan's reliance on Pakistan. However, Japan is concerned about China's assertiveness in the East and South China Sea but is less committed to Chabahar than India which, to a certain extent, is due to its relations with the USA. As Iran looks to push for developing the port in addition to India, it may consider China as an important source of assistance, which may allow the latter to expand its influence in the western part of the Indo-Pacific.

India and Japan share a certain degree of concern towards China's growing naval capability and its impact on the Bay of Bengal region. On the other hand, the USA would be willing to encourage India and Japan to step up their engagement in the region. China is expanding its naval capabilities beyond its immediate shores, with the idea of 'open/far seas' protection mentioned in its Defence White Paper 2015. The book focuses on evaluating China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and its geopolitical implications in the larger Indian Ocean region, with particular focus on the Bay of Bengal. The blue water naval capability of the PLA Navy with support facilities in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, and Djibouti has made for China's significant presence in the region. The possibility of nuclear armed vessels of the major players operating in this maritime space in the near future indicates the possibility of the deterioration of the security scenario in the region. Takuya Shimodaria's chapter titled *China's Maritime Policy in the Bay of Bengal: How does it Affect India's and Japan's Maritime Interests?*, argues for pushing connectivity through BIMSTEC and the EU. He also argues for exploring the prospects of Quad-Sino cooperation.

As global politics enters into an era where competition over resources will dominate international relations, global attention has shifted to the maritime sphere, bringing the significance of the Indian Ocean to the fore. India's Act East Policy and Japan's FOIPS converges in the Bay of Bengal sub-region. Given the rapidly increasing militarisation of the Indian Ocean, a peaceful, and stable maritime domain in the Bay of Bengal is difficult to have. As India seeks to collaborate with like-minded countries in the region, and seeks to upgrade maritime and inland infrastructure, Japan will be an important partner. Also, with a technological edge, Japan can be a significant partner in enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief/ Search and Rescue (HADR/SAR) capabilities, to enhance maritime security.

Overall, the book under review is an analytical description of the various facets of India-Japan relations in the changing geo-political and geo-economic

scenarios of the Indo-Pacific. It also engages in a macro analysis of progress in bilateral relations under the Abe administration in Japan and the Modi government in New Delhi. It is comprehensive and reader friendly. The compendium flows lucidly in scaling recent developments, and analysing future prospects of bilateral cooperation, focusing especially on infrastructure and connectivity which have been key focus areas in recent years in the context of the Indo-Pacific. In a nutshell, the book is a meticulous compilation of well researched papers, and provides a valuable addition to existing literature on India-Japan relations.

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Krishnan Srinivasan, James Mayall, Sanjay Pulipaka (Eds.), *Values in Foreign Policy: Investigating Ideals and Interests* (London, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019), Pages: xxii + 293, Price: Rs. 833.00

In a country's foreign policy, what comes first? Values or national interest? The answer is obvious: national interest will always triumph. Yet, a deeper examination reveals that most countries feel the need to wrap their foreign policy in terms of values, some universal ones like those contained in the UN Charter, and some very specific and unique to their respective cultures and historical experiences. Equally, values are sacrificed when national interests are considered supreme. Values often hide power play. This is particularly true of the more powerful countries.

Culture is a compelling determinant of an individual's behaviour. This is true of the leaders also. Different countries have different value systems which define their outlook. In the USA, American exceptionalism is considered self-evident. The EU prides itself on values of enlightenment - that is, secularism, democracy, and the rule of law. China is pursuing its "China Dream", which is ostensibly based on the ancient value of "harmony" arising out of Confucian thought. Russia describes itself as the historic

saviour of the European civilisation, and is increasingly embracing the values of orthodox Christianity. Islamic countries expound values rooted in the Quran and the Hadith. India regards itself as a proponent of the value system enshrined in ideals of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is a family), non-violence, peace, and cooperation. Japan is beginning to talk about ‘Asian values’ which respect hierarchy and places community over the individual. The question that arises is: where there are multiple value systems prevalent in the world, is it possible to arrive at a minimal consensus on a certain universal value system which would guide each country’s foreign policy?

The editors of the book *Values in Foreign Policy* have done an excellent job of putting together a number of thoughtful essays which investigate the link between values and foreign policy and its practice in different countries. Their main motivation for writing the book is to examine “whether, despite differences between cultures, there is any reasonable prospect of arriving at a consensus on a universal set of values to which all countries can subscribe” (p. 3). The book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on how culture impacts the foreign policy of countries.

The introductory scene-setting chapter provides the analytical framework for the chapters that follow. The chapter goes into such issues as values and rights; the theory and tradition of values in western and eastern cultures; and the role of values like secularism and modernity in the formulation and practice of foreign policy. The subsequent essays deal with the values and foreign policies of the USA, Germany, Russia, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, China, South Korea, and Japan. Based on the case study of Turkey and Iran, the book has a chapter on Islamic values in foreign policy. The debate on Western vs. Asian values has been covered very well in the last chapter of the book.

The book helps the reader to reflect on how values will shape the emerging world order. The world is becoming multipolar. Globalisation has reinforced identities. Diversity is the norm. Liberal values are under attack. Globalisation’s limits have been severely exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging powers, no longer content with the dominance of western values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, accept them with a lot of conditionalities and caveats. Instead, they highlight the value systems rooted in their own cultures and belief systems. Particular attention needs to be paid to the Chinese, Indian, Japanese and the Islamic countries’ value systems, and how they relate to Western institutions and values.

Several essays in the book enter into controversial and less frequented territories. The onslaught of terrorism and radicalisation has led to the debate on the role of religion in foreign policies. Community rights vs. individual rights is also a deeply contested area. Samuel Huntington had warned of the impending clash between civilisations, which in reality means a clash of cultures. Globalization has, paradoxically, fragmented the world into numerous identities, each crying for its place. Nation-states are also under pressure from their constituents. How identities shape the future world order remains to be seen. The debate on “values” becomes important in this context.

Western values - on which the current world order is based - are under challenge. The western world is losing its moral high ground. Western countries are finding it difficult to defend the liberal values rooted in the Enlightenment. Secularism is under attack. In his chapter, James Mayall notes that, “religious toleration is again under threat as a result of the combined pressures of immigration and a rise in religious extremism” (p. 32).

Postmodernism has triggered a crisis of values in Europe. Fredrik Erixon argues that, in Europe, the concept of power has been modified “in a political and institutional atmosphere of postmodernism” (p. 32). European foreign policy is located somewhere between the old concept of modernism and a vision of pan European political personality (p. 44). In Europe, Germany is an interesting case. It has been content to play second fiddle in the post-war years. Having become the most powerful economy in Europe, it remains to be seen whether its post-war values of ‘modesty’, the ‘western identity’, ‘civil power’, and ‘multilateralism’ will remain intact as Europe reshapes itself after Brexit, the refugee crisis, and the corona virus onslaught. Amit Das Gupta, in his chapter, notes that these values are likely to stay even as Europe begins to change (p. 60). One cannot be too sure.

A big rethink on values is underway in the USA after Donald Trump became President. William Antholish, reflecting on Trump’s “America First” policy, notes that he has reopened the question of whether the USA should pursue universal values from which it has gained in the past, or, whether it should become an inward-looking country, abandoning global responsibilities and engagements. The USA seems to be retreating from global commitments. This has already impacted a wide range of global issues. Further, for Trumpian policies to become durable, Trump will have to challenge “the pro-democracy ethos” shaped over generations in the United States. (p.78). Trump has reopened the isolationism debate in US foreign policy that goes back to the foundation days of the republic.

In his chapter on values in western foreign policy, Bruno Macaes ponders whether one can speak of values in foreign policy in a world driven by power considerations. Contrasting the Fukuyama model of eventual convergence of all values to western values, with that of Samuel Huntington's model of the impending clash between different civilisations, Macaes proposes a third way to modern society. He writes, "there are numerous paths, naturally, different visions of what a modern society looks like" (p. 88). This realistic vision of modern society resembles the Upanishadic dictum, "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti", which literally means "Truth is one, the wise perceive it differently".

Hari Vasudevan and Tatiana Shaumian tell us how Vladimir Putin has been busy revising Russian foreign policy, imparting fresh meanings to western notions of sovereignty, democracy, and market economics (p. 93). Foundations like Russki Mir, and the revived Russian Historical Society have been tasked to write a new official history. The state is openly engaging with religion, particularly the Russian Orthodox Church, as also Islam and Buddhism as practiced in Russia (p. 104-105).

Mehmet Ozkan and Kingshuk Chatterjee examine the foreign policies of Turkey and Iran to understand the importance of Islamic values in foreign policy. Turkey is a secular country following Islamic values, while Iran is an Islamic country where foreign policy is dictated by geopolitics. They point out that,

Today, unlike in the past, religious diplomacy has acquired a much more sophisticated and comprehensive form ... In the coming years, it is extremely likely that the use of Islam and the political language of Islam in diplomatic activities of both Iran and Turkey will continue to expand in scope as both a source of inspiration for policy formulation and the language of legitimacy (p. 129).

Examining the evolution of values in Indian foreign policy since the time of Mahatama Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to the present day, Krishnan Srinivasan points out that, "it is hard to separate Indian civilisation, philosophy and rationality. All contributed to the evolution of foreign policy, as did Hinduism ..." (p. 136). Hinduism, at its core, has "*dharma* or righteous conduct that rights follow the performance of duties and obligations discharged" (p. 136). This is a very important observation that might need to be discussed in the context of today's turbulent world. Krishnan, however, feels that the ethical, idealistic foreign policy of the early years, based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, universal disarmament et cetera are being discarded (p.

144-145). In his view, today's foreign policy has shifted rightwards: "A new assertiveness is reflected in symbols of patriotism and respect for the military. In foreign affairs, there is no reference to philosophical values other than 'Hindutva'" (p. 148).

Krishnan notes that there is a certain exceptionalism to India's policies (p. 150). He is right. The concept of India being a *Vishwaguru*, or the teacher of the world, is strong in the Indian psyche. This is because of a strong Indian heritage in philosophy, thought, culture, science, and technology. Krishnan observes that Indian core values are "grounded in India's soft power - the power of ideas, spirituality, literature, music, cinema, arts, pluralist democracy, the power of culture and civilisation along with the firm conviction that the world can learn from India moral leadership" (p. 150).

It is not that India is not pragmatic. In Krishnan's view, "India will engage in strategic and transactional partnerships where its political and economic gains are evident; but the nature of the aspirations remains potentially averse to its greater integration with the global system ... These two aspects will remain the dominant values in Indian foreign policy, irrespective of the party which is elected to form the government in New Delhi" (p. 150).

Krishnan is right in pointing out that India's foreign policy is becoming transactional. Yet, it is not divorced from values. Modi, deeply rooted in ancient Indian civilisation and culture, has repeatedly talked about India's cultural heritage as a source of ideas for Indian policies. The declaration of 21 June as International Day of Yoga by the UN has given a great boost to India's soft power.

Krishnan feels that the ideology of "Hindutva" is increasingly defining India's foreign policy. However, he does not define Hindutva. The fact is that Hindutva has not been mentioned in any official statement. There is no common understanding of what constitutes the Hindutva ideology. Hindutva cannot be equated with Hinduism, which is a much broader term. Most Indians easily relate to the epics, Vedanta, and the universalism of Vedic and Upanishadic teachings as they do with the Constitution, and the values of secularism, understood as respect for all religions. Indians need not be defensive about their philosophical and cultural heritage which has relevant messages for the contemporary conflict-ridden world. Swami Vivekananda's understanding of Hinduism resonates well with the concept of a plural society. He does not discard tradition, spirituality, and morality; and he yet exhorts his countrymen to embrace modernity without uprooting themselves from the Hindu religion.

In her essay, Dewi Fortuna Anwar says that values play an important role in Indonesia's foreign policy. Indonesia accepts democracy and human rights as universal values; but the "application of these values has been more selective" (p. 189). Non-interference in each other's internal affairs remains critical to maintaining regional harmony which "still weighs more than any principled stance on universal values within Indonesia ..." (p. 189). Apart from universal values, Indonesia practices peaceful coexistence, harmony, and mediation to resolve conflicts, takes part in international peacekeeping operations, and believes in interfaith dialogue and moderate Islam.

China's *realpolitik* is heavily clothed in Confucian values, which the Chinese Communist Party and the government are now promoting avidly. In his chapter, Zhang Lihua posits, "Once one can understand the values of traditional Chinese culture, one can truly understand Chinese diplomacy" (p. 193). The core values, according to him, are "harmony between humans and nature, harmony between humans and society, harmony between persons." The Chinese government's security concept features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation (p. 197). The value of harmony is derived from Tai Chi philosophy and yin-yang dialectics (p. 199). The author says that Chinese diplomacy is informed by the concept of benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, faithfulness, and harmony. The essay uncritically puts forward the official position of the Chinese government. The author overlooks the fact that China's actual conduct appears to be far different from the values it professes to practice. This is apparent in China's conduct in the South China Sea.

According to Lee Seong Hyon, South Korea's foreign policy is less governed by values or philosophy, and more by "its orientation towards the dominant power in the region" (p. 209). South Korea has shifted from value orientation to a value-neutral position in an uncertain world. China has been and will remain a big factor in South Korea's foreign policy because historically Korea has lived in a Sino-centric world order for centuries. As China rises, South Korea may be "inching closer towards China in its new geopolitical strategic calculus, gradually decoupling its relations with Washington" (p. 216). The author notes that it was in 2012 that South Korea's Foreign Ministry announced the so-called core values of the country's foreign policy: namely, "putting the national interest first, serving the public, contributing to humanity, and aiming for the best" (p. 221). President Moon wants to play a balancing role between the regional powers. In a departure from Korea's traditional behaviour, South Korea is aiming to become a middle power. The author

says, “today, South Korea’s foreign policy is experimenting with a new identity with a new set of guiding values” (p. 222).

Due to its unique circumstances, Japan has always been engaged in balancing Western values with Japanese traditions. In a thoughtful essay, Tadashi Anno says that values are essentially diplomatic rhetoric. A stronger state can project its own values and standards overseas, but ‘smaller and secondary states’ articulate their values essentially to position themselves within an already given international order (p. 227). In Japan’s case, sovereignty, nonaggression, the Western values of human rights, and post-modern values such as environmental protection have played an important role in defining its foreign policy (p. 229). The military defeat turned Japan into a pacifist country. Japan’s pacifism contributed to international peace and security (p. 232). Japan adopted Western values to integrate with the Western alliance system.

The author points out that appeal to universal values has, however, not diminished the importance of older, indigenous values and ideas (p. 234). Japanese culture is, however, underplayed in Japanese formulations. When Japan talks about culture, it refers to the mainstream of western culture, and not the distinctiveness of Japanese traditions (p. 234). However, as Japan grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, its foreign policy rhetoric began to emphasise that Japan was a distinct civilisation, with its own unique culture. But, in the post-Cold War era, Japan’s foreign policy rhetoric began to de-emphasise the uniqueness of Japanese culture, and started putting more emphasis on the universality of values such as liberty, democracy, and human rights. This helped Japan to align with the USA during the times of international tensions. Like other Asian states, Japan also has the desire to assert its own indigenous values; but it has been less forthcoming in defining the core elements of its culture. “Underneath the rhetoric of universal values and proactive pacifism, it is easy to see the stirrings of more traditional national identity. This is visible in the continuing debate within the country over history issues, immigration, demographic crisis, and so on” (p. 245). The author observes that, “It is not impossible that more openly nationalistic undercurrents may come to the fore in Japan’s foreign policy rhetoric” (p. 245). But, “in the foreseeable future, it is likely that Japan will continue to take its stand on the defence of a liberal international order with its universal values, tempered by a modest plea for cultural pluralism” (p. 245).

Many Asian leaders in the past, ranging from Nehru, Tagore Lee Kuan Yew to Mahathir, have talked about Asian values. In the concluding chapter

of the book, Ravi Velloor investigates whether there is anything like Asian values. He says, “beyond deep stress on family values, education, a strong work ethic, and stress on frugality and saving - values that may be changing in some parts of Asia lately- it is not easy to identify what could be called Asian values” (p. 266). He says, “Asia, and East Asian states particularly, continues to be ... wary of Europe’s tendency to stress democracy, human rights, climate change, migration, and other bleeding heart issues” (p. 266). That is where the talk of Asian values becomes audible.

There are several interesting takeaways from the book. First, values are important in foreign policy even though the actual conduct of states is driven by power politics and pragmatism. Second, values change with time. Third, Western values were considered universal; but these were devices to establish a hegemonic world order based on Western ideas. This is now changing. Fourth, the quest for universal values for a new world is on, but inconclusive. Fifth, the Asian values debate will gather momentum in the coming years.

The book is a collection of diverse, unrelated viewpoints of individual authors. Although the editors have tried to provide a connecting link between the different essays, no common view on values and foreign policies emerges. Furthermore, the book also does not discuss such existential issues as the threat of climate change, the growing inequality in society, the unacceptably high level of violence in the world, and the mounting curbs on human rights due to terrorism, radicalisation, and even global pandemics such as COVID-19. Environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity will have a tremendous impact on mankind. Can values be useful in resolving these issues? This question becomes irrelevant when we talk about values and foreign policy. The world is facing multiple crises. The role of religion in foreign policy will increase in the future. In a time of adversity, people tend to become religious.

The foreign policy concerns are not just state-centric. Foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. Domestic policy is, in turn, driven by the people. People matter because behaviour is impacted by their values and belief systems. The leading International Relations (IR) theories are silent on the question of values, although the constructivism theory does talk about identities and ideas. Morality, ethics, and spirituality - which otherwise have a deep impact on individuals - are no-go areas for IR theories. That is why the discourse on values is incomplete, as the chasm between individual’s values and the state’s values has not been bridged. Foreign policy cannot be value-neutral. Culture has a visible impact on the behaviour of nations. The book

could have discussed these issues at some length. Despite this shortcoming, the book makes a useful contribution to the debate on values, culture, and foreign policy.

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Pooja Bhatt, *Nine Dash Line: Deciphering the South China Sea Conundrum*, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2020), Pages: 288 pages (HB), Price: Rs. 980.00

The South China Sea and the maritime disputes of the littoral countries with China have held the attention of the world for the last few decades, and more so in the recent past. The South China Sea (SCS) has been the springboard for China's global maritime ambitions which have captured the attention of the world. The Nine Dash Line (NDL) signifies these Chinese ambitions, and the eponymous book is a timely collation of the variegated issues which surround this vexatious problem. The author has set out to answer some difficult questions on the importance of the NDL in China's geopolitical ambitions, and the likely trajectory of its actions in support of its claims.

A glance at the contents of the book indicates its ambitious scope which encompasses several aspects of the SCS dispute. While one may disagree as to whether the NDL is 'special', there is no argument with the fact that it is different. The dashes of the line, as the author points out, are not uniform in their dispersion; nor has Beijing provided the exact geographical coordinates. The etching out of the tenuous legalities (or illegalities) of China's claims against the background of relevant international maritime law provides the required context for an adequate understanding of this aspect of the SCS dispute by a maritime scholar. China's 'rise to power', and the ambiguity of the NDL maintained by Beijing in this process, has been sketched out well, although it is arguable whether the NDL is a 'means to realise the Chinese Dream'. The book has also attempted to provide a comprehensive and succinct

understanding of the claims of the other littorals in the dispute and their relations with China, especially in the light of China's enormous economic heft in the region. China's employment of its maritime might through the PLA Navy (PLAN), its Coast Guard, and the maritime militia, has been illustrated in a separate chapter. The book has also comprehensively examined the economic aspects that have led to the increasing importance of the SCS, not just to the littorals, but to other stakeholders. The book ends with a look at environmental issues, which China has been accused of violating by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in its award of July 2016.

The brief history of Chinese maritime activities in the SCS, outlined in the first chapter, makes for interesting reading. A closer look at the Chinese 'withdrawal' from the sea, and the subsequent continental focus after the 16th century would have provided a more nuanced understanding of China's current obsession with the maritime dimension. The historiography of the NDL, especially its origins, and the development of the Chinese position, post UNCLOS, provides the relevant context for understanding the current situation. China's ambiguity, possibly intended, comes through when its current position is examined against a background of the existent international legal regime and its domestic laws. While the author's position on the 'ambiguity' of artificially reclaimed islands/rocks is tenuous, China's ability to exploit ambiguities in the international regime has bred a new dimension to warfare - 'lawfare'. China's ability to explore such loopholes, and shape its response through the building up of internal capabilities in its maritime law enforcement organisations is explained in some detail. The relevance of the PCA verdict has been elucidated in detail, and the author's recommendation of a "supranational entity" for such issues while valid, may not be a viable proposition, considering the onus of adherence placed on the disputing parties in the current international arbitration system.

The book has dwelt on China's growing presence on the global stage as a rising power while elaborating its ambitions. Highlighting China's recalcitrant attitude as witnessed in the SCS, would have added balance to the discussion on China's evolving global role. The importance of the 'China Dream' as evidenced in President Xi's speeches, and echoed in the Defence White Papers of 2013 and 2019, clearly bring out China's aspiration "to emerge as a global maritime power". An appreciation of the significance of the NDL, both as a political symbol and as an operational axiom in China's strategic military calculus, can bring a better understanding to China's need for the NDL. China's leveraging of its economic might to gain advantage, or at the very least, ensure cooperation on disputed issues with most of the littorals is evident in

some of the cited examples. The consensus reached by China with Brunei - after it joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - that the dispute was “not an issue for ASEAN”, illustrates China’s economic heft. The ongoing negotiations for the Code of Conduct signify this trend, with none of the countries willing to publicly express their differences with China’s position. China’s penchant for utilising its military might to assert its claims in the SCS has been illustrated by the examples of the various incidents in the Paracels, Scarborough Shoal, and the Johnson Reef. A detailed analysis of these incidents, along with the actions undertaken by the claimants, provide a deeper insight into the issues that make this dispute so intractable. A short study of the PLAN, the PLAN Air Force, the China Coast Guard and the maritime Militia provides the reader with a reasonable understanding of the capabilities that China can bring to bear in this dispute. The ‘gray zone’ operations of the Chinese maritime forces, especially the maritime militia, in assertion of Chinese maritime claims, exemplify the challenges that the littoral countries and other stakeholders, like the USA, have to face in the region. The author surmises correctly that the Chinese will continue to retain these “critical tools” in the pursuit of their maritime interests.

The chapter on the economic importance of the SCS explains the criticality of trade flows through the region upon which China is “most reliant”. While the tentative nature of the data is mentioned by the author, the importance of this trade to China and the littorals cannot be understated. The reference to various studies, like those undertaken by the CIIS and the US EIA, on the oil and gas reserves in the SCS, underlines the continued importance of these waters well into the future. Notwithstanding the challenges of deep water mining, developments in technology, and China’s efforts at undertaking joint ventures could see the exploitation of these resources in the future. Chinese interest in exploiting reserves in the periphery of the NDL is seen as another cause for their presence in this region as also China’s recent collaboration with other countries. The book also examines the SCS dispute through the environmental perspective, and highlights the damage wrought by China’s activities like dredging, overfishing, and poaching. The inherent duality of China’s stand while examining its domestic environmental laws and its international stance, especially its reticence on the monitoring of ‘nationally appropriate action’, is evident.

The author’s conclusion about the resoluteness of China’s claims to the NDL and the waters therein, notwithstanding the ambiguity and the recent absence of reference to the NDL, signifies China’s approach to this issue well into the future. While China may want a stable neighbourhood, it is also clear

that it wants a periphery of “like-minded leaderships” in these countries. While China may repeatedly quote a ‘shared future for humanity’, it cannot be mistaken for one based on equality.

All in all, the book is a comprehensive compilation of the various dimensions of the SCS dispute. The author has made a commendable effort to draw all these strands together, and provide a sound understanding of China’s approach and its ambitions. While the inscrutability of Chinese ambitions is a constant, some of the opacity surrounding its motives has been explained in this book. This book also adds to the Indian scholarly works on the subject and, at the same time, outlines further avenues for study. The book is a must-read for all those concerned about the developments in the SCS. The easy style and absence of jargon will also appeal to the lay reader. It makes a worthy contribution to the Indian corpus on ‘China-knowledge’.

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