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Debate

India-Sri Lanka Relations: New Issues and Perspectives
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DEBATE

INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS: NEW ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Subsequent to the elections of 2015, a National Unity Government was formed in Sri Lanka, under the leadership of President Maithripala Sirisena of the SLFP and Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe of the UNP. The formation of the bipartisan government was a positive development, as it brought together two main Sinhala political parties on a single platform. This was expected to create better conditions towards the realisation of peace, reconciliation, economic development, and a new Sri Lankan foreign policy orientation. With the establishment of the new unity government, Sri Lanka-India relations were also expected to improve. The visible 'pro-China tilt', seen under the previous regime, was also expected to be substantially corrected. The new Sri Lankan Government did correct some of the 'tilt' and, with frequent high level visits from both sides, the Indo-Sri Lankan cooperative relations grew.

Meanwhile, growing differences between President Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe led to a major politico-constitutional crisis in 2018. In October of that year, Sirisena dismissed Wickramasinghe and, in his place, appointed former President Rajapaksa. This had to be soon reversed due to massive popular protests and subsequent legal interventions from the Sri Lankan Supreme Court. These developments were certainly received with apprehensions in India, which always strives for a stable and prosperous neighbourhood. India-Sri Lanka relations did take some beating as a result of this domestic upheaval. The re-appointment of Wickramasinghe as Prime Minister did bring the relations back to some semblance of normalcy; but the continued distrust and differences between the President and the Prime Minister are indeed affecting India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations.

Sri Lanka is due to undergo Presidential elections shortly. Parliamentary elections are due next year.

Ethnic reconciliation, promised soon after the termination of the conflict in 2009, did not take-off as expected. Previous Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who orchestrated the defeat and decimation of the LTTE, did not seriously advance the ethnic reconciliation process, despite pressures from the international community. When the regime changed in 2015, the new President, Maithripala Sirisena, did attempt a long-term political solution to the ethnic issue; but it hit many road-blocks due to lack of essential political

will amongst all the stake holders and the necessary socio-political consensus.

The influence of China in Sri Lanka has increased in a major way in the past decade or so. This has implications for India's security. The deadly terror attacks in April 2019 during the Easter celebrations have created a new complication. The involvement of radical groups based in West Asia as well as the probable involvement of the ISI and militant groups like Laskar-e-Taiba, impacts on India's security and interests in the region.

India has contributed immensely to Sri Lanka's economic development, especially after the ethnic war. The two-decade-old Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries has helped in making India the largest trading partner of Sri Lanka. India continues to be the largest source of tourists.

In the light of new issues that have emerged due to the October 2018 upheaval and the impending elections - both to the Presidency and to the Parliament - it may now be an opportune moment to look at and explore new perspectives on the state of India-Sri Lanka relations.

Where do these relations - important to both sides - stand? What is the state of various bilateral linkages in the economic, trade, cultural, ethnic, security, and other spheres? What steps need to be taken by both sides to repair, nurture, and improve these relations? What are the challenges? Do these require an entirely new perspective on the new and emerging issues?

These are some of the questions that were posed to some experts/strategic analysts. The views of nine such analysts, who responded to our invitation, are published, as such, as the 'Debate' section in this edition of the Journal.

The first seven analysts look at the subject generally. The eighth analyst looks at the issue from a Sri Lankan point of view - and express their opinion on the way forward.

(The views expressed by the authors are their own, and do not reflect the views of the Indian Foreign Affairs Journal, or that of the Association of Indian Diplomats)

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(In the past also, the Journal has carried 2 debates on this theme: in 2012 and in 2015).

Vol. 7, No. 2: Mar-Jun 2012: "India-Sri Lanka Ties: 3 Years after the Elimination of the LTTE", available at: http://associationdiplomats.org/Publications/ifaj/Vol7/7.2/7.2%20-%20DEBATE.pdf

Vol. 10, No. 1: Jan-Mar 2015: "Changing Political Dynamics in Sri Lanka: Implications for India-Sri Lanka Relations", available at: http://www.associationdiplomats.org/Publications/ifaj/Vol10/10.1/10.1-DEBATE_P-SL.pdf

India-Sri Lanka Relations: New Challenges

R Hariharan*

Foreign relations have occupied an important place in Narendra Modi's vision for India during his just concluded first term as Prime Minister. In fact, 'Neighbourhood First' was the central theme when he started off as Prime Minister, inviting the Heads of State of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries for his inaugural function in 2015. However, Pakistan's continued refusal to give up the use of extremist jihadi outfits operating from its soil to bleed India has prevented SAARC from evolving into a full-fledged effective regional grouping. So, India's relations with its neighbours have, perforce, been bilateral rather than multilateral.

However, after his resounding victory in the May 2019 general elections, Prime Minister Modi invited the heads of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation) countries - Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan - for his swearing in ceremony on 30 May 2019. This probably indicates Prime Minister Modi's shift of focus from 'Neighbourhood First' to 'Act East' involving the BIMSTEC nations. In fact, Prime Minister Modi is slated to visit the Maldives to address the Majlis (parliament), followed by a visit to Sri Lanka within the first ten days of assuming office for the second term. This seems to indicate that India's foreign policy priority will now be to build strong relations with its IOR neighbours, particularly Sri Lanka and Maldives.

This will also be in keeping with Prime Minister Modi's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All), launched in 2015, for developing the blue economy of Indian Ocean Rim Countries. The maritime initiative seeks to create a climate of trust and transparency, respect for international maritime rules and increase in maritime cooperation with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Bangladesh. Though SAGAR has had moderate success, its importance is increasing more than ever before. The growing strategic power play between China and the USA and its allies in the Indo-Pacific is affecting the strategic

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(This opinion piece was contributed by the author on June 1, 2019)

interests of India and the BIMSTEC countries.

India-Sri Lanka relations are moving away from traditional concerns and collaborations due to the dynamic changes in the strategic environment in South Asia and the IOR. Sri Lanka has emerged as an important partner of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -its strategic economic infrastructure project. The BRI includes the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which aims at strengthening maritime infrastructure between China and Asia, Africa and Europe.

China took the risk of making huge investments in economically unviable projects in Sri Lanka at the end of two and half decade long war between Sri Lankan government and Tamil separatists represented by LTTE. Sri Lanka now owes China US$ 8 billion and finds it difficult to service the debt. After the US$ 1.6 billion Hambantota port proved a burden, Sri Lanka signed an agreement with the state-owned China Merchants Ports Holdings Company (CMPort) which agreed to pay US$ 1.12 billion for 85 percent share of Hambantota port for 99 years. India has been watching with concern China gaining control of Hambantota port as it legitimises its strategic presence within India's sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. The Colombo Port City project (originally conceived as part of Western Region Megapolis) was started in 2014. However, the project - to be built by Chinese contractors at a cost of US$ 1.5 billion on 112 hectares of reclaimed land in Colombo's Galle Face promenade - courted a lot of controversy. It went through a series of conceptual changes, and has now been rechristened as Colombo International Financial Centre, a self contained smart city project. It is expected to be completed in October 2019. However, to be profitable, all these projects would need Indian participation. The Chinese are aware of this requirement, and will always factor in this aspect while negotiating with Indian counterparts.

Using Sri Lanka as a take off point, China is now gaining not only a military advantage but also a commercial edge in South Asia. When the China-Sri Lanka free trade agreement (FTA) comes through, Chinese business is capable of using India's FTA with Sri Lanka to gain backdoor entry into Indian markets.

In this complex environment, two main issues emerge: managing China's strategic power play in Sri Lanka, and managing the Jihadi terrorist threat in Sri Lanka.

The first issue is Sri Lanka emerging as a pivot in the IOR as a result of China's growing strategic assertion in the IOR, and the flexing of its naval

power in the Indo-Pacific. China's show of force to assert its sovereignty over the whole of South China Sea has become a source of international concern not only for India but also for the USA and its East Asian and European allies. India has maintained its strategic autonomy in dealing with this issue, while trying to strengthen its maritime and naval cooperation with the USA, Japan, and France to protect its national interests in the Indo-Pacific. In this environment, how should India build a win-win relationship with Sri Lanka?

China's maritime assets created in the IOR, including Hambantota, extend now from Djibouti in the west to the South China Sea in the east. This is a challenge to not only to India's strategic construct but also that of the USA, Japan, and its Pacific allies. They are coming together to build their collective strength to face the challenge posed by an increasingly assertive China. With these moves, the centre of gravity of global strategic power is shifting slowly to the IOR.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe enjoy a close rapport in shaping India-Japan strategic relationship. "Towards a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific" - the title of the joint statement issued during PM Shinzo Abe's visit to India on 14 September 2017 - eloquently underlines the strategic focus of the relationship between the two countries. The recent example of Sri Lanka, Japan, and India signing an agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port is a very good example of Indo-Japan collaboration taking on China's economic challenge in Sri Lanka. The project is estimated to cost US$ 500 to 700 million. Unlike Hambantota, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) retains 100 percent ownership of the ECT.

From the Indian point of view, the more sinister issue will be China trying to influence elections in Sri Lanka as it is said to have done in support of Mahinda Rajapaksa during the 2015 presidential election through Chinese companies. An investigative article on the controversial Hambantota port project in the *New York Times* (25 June 2018) gave details on such Chinese assistance. The article "How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough up a Port" by Maria Habi-Abib explained how China dictated terms on utilising Sri Lanka's need for financing the Hambantota port not only to benefit Chinese state owned companies, but also to further China's strategic interests. Mahinda Rajapaksa played an important role in furthering Chinese strategy in Sri Lanka.

The report gives details of how China corrupted the electoral process to ensure President Rajapaksa's election in the 2015 election (of course, it failed).

Internal investigation reports give the details of China Harbor's bank account, which "dispensed" at least US$ 7.6 million to the affiliates of Rajapaksa. The report says that, ten days before the polls, US$ 3.7 million was distributed in cheques to buy gifts (including saris) for supporters, print campaign promotional material, and the paying of US$ 38000 to a "popular Buddhist monk" and to volunteers. The report said that most of the payments were made from China Harbor's sub account named "HPDP Phase 2" - an acronym for the Hambantota Port Development Project.

The second issue pertains to the terrorist jehadi threat. Nine members of a local Muslim radical outfit - the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) - carried out all nine blasts in three churches and three luxury hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Day (21 April 2019), killing 253 people and injuring over 500. A week later, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack. Although India had passed on information 12 days in advance to Sri Lanka regarding the planned attack (including the names of persons involved) both President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe said they had no knowledge of the information. Evidently, the schism between the two leaders, which started in October 2018 after the President made a vain bid to sack Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, seems to be affecting government functioning in matters of national security. A further probe has revealed that Zaharan Hashim, the leader of the NTJ, probably had links with IS suspects in Kerala and Karnataka. Buddhist fringe elements took the opportunity to carry out massive anti-Muslim riots in North-western province, even as the police watched.

Intelligence and security personnel from India, the USA, and the UK have reached Sri Lanka to help the investigation into the IS inspired terrorist strike. According to a *Daily Mirror* columnist, China - perhaps unnerved by the US and UK security agents landing in Sri Lanka in the wake of the blasts - sent "a message" for President Sirisena from Chinese President Xi Jinping. He has said that President Sirisena should come to Beijing, and President Sirisena has confirmed he would. In what is a very significant development, when he arrived in Beijing, President Xi chaired a joint Sri Lanka-China bilateral meeting on security co-operation with Colombo. One of the key decisions taken was on "strengthening co-operation in the defence sector and sharing intelligence between Sri Lanka and China" - an aspect that has been incorporated into the new defence agreement. President Sirisena briefed the meeting on the Easter Sunday massacres carried out by pro-IS Muslim extremist groups.

According to the article, before he left Colombo, President Sirisena explained that Sri Lanka did not have the technological expertise and equipment "to trace persons who were promoting terrorism and spreading false

information. President Xi agreed to provide both expertise and equipment. He will also send a technical team to Sri Lanka to train personnel." President Sirisena also agreed to a government-to-government deal for the hi-tech surveillance of Colombo City on the lines of "smart cities." The article said this would also cover the Hambantota Port and the Colombo Port City, both constructed with heavy Chinese funding.

Under these circumstances, India will have to work hard to improve cooperation and coordination of counter terrorism strategies at the operational level. This would include networked real time exchange of information, exchange of data and details, and the tracing of the movement of people and money using electronic surveillance. Some of the specific areas to be addressed include the following:

- Developing a counter narrative against Jihadi terrorists using social media. It has been noticed that the IS uses social media to carry out decentralised control of various affiliates in countries across the continents from Syria to Central Africa to South Asia to the Philippines. Blocking social media is a near impossible method except for short periods. So India and Sri Lanka, along with other like-minded countries, can develop a technology hub to study and train personnel to establish and operate such hubs for real time intelligence collection, identify grey and black propaganda, and block fake news.
- Prevent money laundering, the smuggling of arms, drugs and people.
- Exchange identity details to identify suspects transiting between countries on a real time basis using digital technology.
- Specific training for handling terrorist situations, and standardized drills for fast response.
- Form joint teams where necessary to carry out follow up action seamlessly across the borders. Carry out periodic reviews and assess developing situations to provide better understanding.

Indo-Sri Lanka relations are heading for an eventful period because Sri Lanka is undergoing a period of political instability due to rival power centres headed by Mahinda Rajapaksa, President Sirisena, and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe who are all eyeing the next presidential poll, to be announced towards the end of the year. The draft Constitution - which was to usher in *yahapalana* (good governance), is still in incubation - like many other ideas. The vexed issues of ethnic reconciliation and the free and fair investigation into the allegations of war crimes against the Sri Lankan army towards the

end of the Eelam War 2009 (as required by the UN Human Rights Council) are still hanging fire. The economy is in shambles, with mounting debt restricting the government's freedom of action. Under these circumstances, Sri Lanka will require a lot of understanding and handholding from India, which is "family," while China is a "friend" - as former President Rajapaksa once remarked.

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India's Changing Relations with Sri Lanka

P. Sahadevan*

This essay underlines the importance of India and Sri Lanka to each other's national security and stability, and highlights the former's changing approach to the core issue of peace and reconciliation in the island.

India and Sri Lanka are important to each other in view of their strategic location and proximity, the protracted Sinhalese-Sri Lankan Tamil conflict in the island, and the expanding bilateral economic opportunities and demands. Sri Lanka is one of India's closest maritime neighbours located in the central Indian Ocean, separated only by a narrow stretch of waters of the Palk Strait. If Colombo is the country's international transhipment centre, Trincomalee with the finest natural harbour - the fifth largest in the world - is its strategic hub. At the height of the Cold War in the 1980s, when the pro-West J.R. Jayewardene government (1977–89) made huge strategic overtures to the USA, India was deeply concerned over any possible military use of the harbour by external powers seeking a foothold in South Asia. Unlike India's northern-western frontiers facing perennial threats from Pakistan and China, its entire southern plank is likely to become vulnerable if the Maldives and Sri Lanka allow an inimical power to exercise control or wield undue influence over them. The potential fear is that India's key security and scientific installations, such as nuclear power plants, space research organisations and naval bases located in southern states, could become easy targets of such inimical powers.

Equally for Sri Lanka, its geographical proximity to India, in a historical sense, has been a source of fear and vulnerability. These largely stem from Sri Lanka's sense of power asymmetry vis-à-vis India, coupled with its physical proximity to Tamil Nadu, an Indian state that shares not only a maritime border with the island nation but also maintains strong ethnic ties with its minority communities - the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Indian Tamils. If India has become a dominant factor in Sri Lanka's foreign and security policy, it was perhaps because Tamil Nadu was seen as a direct challenge or threat to the island's national security and territorial integrity. In view of Tamil Nadu's cross-border role and interest in Sri Lanka, and New Delhi's

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(*This opinion piece was contributed by the author on June 19, 2019*)

inability or unwillingness to counter the State's pressure due to political exigencies, a large section of the Sinhalese community has tended to perceive India as a major source of concern, or a negative factor in their national life. In the recent period, the aggravation of Sri Lanka's insecurity and vulnerability has been a consequence of the proactive role Tamil Nadu/India played in the ethnic conflict.

Sri Lanka has often sought to overcome India's adverse impact on its national power and security by using its strategic locational advantages. Its main objective is to gain maximum leverage in foreign and security policy vis-à-vis India even while accepting asymmetrical power relations between the two countries as an unalterable reality. In this context, Sri Lanka's geopolitical experience reveals that its strategic location has not always been a source of leverage. Instead, it has worked to increase both the strategic manoeuvrability *and* vulnerability of the country, enabling successive governments in Colombo to pursue an assertive foreign and security policy and, at times, constraining their autonomy in decision-making. At one level, as a small littoral state, Sri Lanka is deeply vulnerable to power politics in the Indian Ocean, including its militarisation in any form. Its diplomatic campaign, conducted under the auspices of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) in the early 1970s, to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace was borne out of its security concerns as well as its desire to gain external recognition. At another level, Sri Lanka sees a balancing role for itself in the great power politics in the Indian Ocean. Its leaders are now aware that the rival powers interested in the Indian Ocean recognise the island's importance not only in protecting the vital sea lines of communication but also in offsetting each other's power and influence in the region. India and China have greatly factored Sri Lanka in their maritime strategy, showing their competing interest in wooing the small island state to their respective side through economic and political enticements. Thus, the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in world politics has increased Sri Lanka's strategic significance as a maritime state.

Further, Sri Lanka's chronic political instability stemming from the protracted ethnic conflict, which took a bitter civil war dimension for 26 years (1983–2009), has drawn a great deal of international attention and some responses. If instability threatened Sri Lanka's security and sovereignty, it also caused India's heightened security concerns. Both countries developed mutual threat perceptions in the mid-1980s, which waned quickly in India's case by the end of the same decade but remained high in Sri Lanka throughout the civil war. India has maintained deep interest in the issues of war and peace, and played varied roles in the conflict that has caused huge spill over

effects on the Indian polity. It has been a major political issue in Tamil Nadu at least since 1983, and India has sought to give as much importance to the maintenance of internal political stability as promoting its interests in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it could not afford to ignore Tamil Nadu's pressure altogether or remain insensitive to ethnic emotions expressed in support of the Sri Lankan Tamil cause. But, India's response has invariably evoked sharp negative reactions by Sri Lankan political leaders, who have always wanted to end the entrenched 'India factor' in their polity. Thus, each country has become a source of the other's political anxiety and instability, albeit at a varied level: it is much greater in Sri Lanka than in India.

Finally, Sri Lanka's economic importance needs to be understood in a different sense. Though a small and dependent economy, the trade and investment opportunities the island offers to India is far greater because of proximity and relative commodity costs than what other counties are able to enjoy. It is cheaper for Sri Lanka to import a large number of basic commodities from India than anywhere else; and equally profitable for Indian exporters to sell their products in a neighbourhood market. The Sri Lankan market is small; but India dominates it to rank as the island nation's largest trading partner. At the same time, Sri Lanka has also been able to enhance its access to the Indian market over the decades under the 1998 free trade agreement (FTA). That both countries enjoy greater mutual economic gains through their engagement is an undeniable fact.

This paper underscores the point that howsoever strong may be India's impulses to concentrate on its great Asian power goal, it cannot afford to ignore its interests in Sri Lanka, or sidestep the issues between the two countries. This is particularly so when South Asia is possibly poised for a structural change in the wake of China deepening its strategic foothold in the region, which incidentally threatens to marginalise India in its strategic backyard. The shifting power balance instructs India to recalibrate and reorient its regional policy to make it more purposive, effective, and responsive to the strategic reality, and remain actively engaged in South Asia even while pursuing an ambitious outward looking Asia policy. Escaping from the region, or leaving it behind, or bypassing it, does not help. India faces huge foreign policy challenges in the region, and overcoming them in the pursuit of its national interest is going to be the hard task of diplomacy.

India-Sri Lanka relations in the post-civil war period (since 2009) are marked by two contrasting trends. During 2010-14, when President Mahinda Rajapaksa's strong and illiberal regime was in power in Sri Lanka, the Manmohan Singh government found it difficult to deal with Colombo. While

seeking India's support in easing Western pressure on the issue of war crimes and accountability, the Sri Lankan leaders sought to use the 'China card' to undermine India's regional primacy, and chose to ignore its plea for a serious peace and reconciliation process to redress the grievances of the Sri Lankan Tamil minority. However, since January 2015, the national unity government under President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe has reset Sri Lanka's relations with India by promising to end its policy tilt towards China, and find a political solution to the ethnic conflict. As the leaders have developed a good personal equation and mutual understanding, India has significantly altered its stand on one of the main issues of concern to its policy, viz. peace and reconciliation.

India's core political interest lies in building peace in Sri Lanka. Since 1983, it has sought to advance this goal by playing different roles: mediation (1983–87); direct participation in the ethnic conflict (1987–90); support to the peace process (1994–95; 2002–2006); peace persuasion and indirect military support (2006–09); and building peace (since 2009). Each role has enabled India to have varying degrees of influence on the conflict; but it has not led to a permanent peace. There was greater consistency in its position on the framework of a political solution to the conflict in the island. This is based on the principle of 'devolution of powers,' framed in 1987 as a sequel to the India-Sri Lanka accord and made a part of a domestic legislation called the 13th Amendment that the J.R. Jayewardene regime enacted. The amendment entailed a political exercise, as part of conflict resolution, in providing limited autonomy to the Sri Lankan Tamils at the provincial level. The provincial council (PC) system introduced throughout the island in 1987 represented the limited state reform process, and also marked the first such move to 'change the political orthodoxy characterizing the Sri Lankan state'. Nevertheless, it has neither satisfied the Sri Lankan Tamils nor the Sinhalese political class. The moderate Sri Lankan Tamil leaders have demanded greater autonomy, with powers over land and police for the PCs (which are included in the 13th Amendment, but successive governments have not implemented them); and the Sinhalese nationalists are critical of the amendment on the ground that under Indian pressure the Jayewardene regime has conceded too much to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Following the introduction of the PC system and the devolution of powers under the 13th Amendment, India has been reluctant to take part directly or indirectly in any peace-making process. Nor has it proposed or prescribed any new framework of solution. It has, however, always encouraged and supported the Sri Lanka government's efforts to find a solution that would go

beyond the present power-sharing framework. But, at the same time, it has often showed its disquiet and displeasure when proposals were made to undermine the existing PC system that it was instrumental in establishing in 1987. After the failure of the Norwegian-facilitated peace process, India favoured a 'home-grown solution', reached through political negotiations with all stakeholders based on the principles of 'openness, transparency and inclusiveness'. The crux of the Indian stand has been that the 13th Amendment does not spell the last word on the framework of devolution, which could be strengthened by more progressive measures. Till then, the PC system should not be weakened or made impotent.

The issue of a political solution was placed on the Singh government's diplomatic agenda, particularly after the civil war ended. This was a pressing issue to which India wanted the Rajapaksa government to pay serious attention. But the latter's negative response raised doubts about India's leverage vis-à-vis Sri Lanka. In the absence of serious efforts to find a political solution, India periodically urged Sri Lanka to evolve a new structure of devolution by 'building upon the 13th Amendment'. In this context, New Delhi endorsed Colombo's position on a 'home-grown solution', one in which there was no direct role for itself or others. The Singh government was neither interested in offering a road map for peace and reconciliation nor exercising its influence over the stakeholders. While refraining from putting pressure on the Rajapaksa regime, it used every diplomatic opportunity to 'remind and persuade' the Colombo leadership of the need for an acceptable political solution. In this regard, India recognised the Tamil National Alliance's (TNA) role, and encouraged its leaders to be serious in negotiating a peace deal. The Rajapaksa regime was evasive at best to India's plea till 2010, but showed its deceit and defiance afterwards. The Sri Lankan President backtracked on his promises, but the weak Singh government had faced constraints in taking an assertive position vis-à-vis the strong regime in Colombo. This developed a sense of frustration in New Delhi, one in which the Chinese influence in the island seemed to have played a role. In fact, President Rajapaksa gained strength from his country's close friendship with China to ignore India's demands. In the process, China emerged as an external source of systemic *status quo ante* that the Sri Lankan leader sought to maintain at any cost.

The Narendra Modi government has continued with predecessor's peace building agenda in Sri Lanka, but initially sought to deal with the issue firmly. In his first meeting with President Rajapaksa in New Delhi in May 2014, Prime Minister Modi expressed his strong desire for an early and full implementation of the 13th Amendment and also a peace process to work out

a devolution package by building on the present power-sharing arrangement. As the strong Sri Lankan President heard the equally strong Indian Prime Minister on such a pressing issue, the former's discomfort and displeasure became quite acute. Fortunately, the regime change in Colombo in January 2015 has altered the bilateral equation, and India does not have to deal any longer with a tough and sulky Sri Lankan President like Rajapaksa.

After President Sirisena's election, India has apparently changed its approach. While maintaining its interest in finding a permanent solution, the Modi government has sought to deal with the issue carefully and slowly. First, it does not want to be seen putting pressure on the fragile coalition government and its leadership to move forward quickly on the issue, lest the Sinhalese hardliners and the opposition led by the former President raise the bogey of Indian intervention. Rather, India has been interested in stabilising the Sirisena-Wickremasinghe government and strengthening bilateral relations before making a huge forward momentum on a political solution. Second, India has reposed huge trust in the liberal Sri Lankan leadership, and is pleased with the measures it has taken to build bridges with the Sri Lankan Tamil community settled in the war-torn north. This explains why India did not raise the issue when the Sri Lankan President visited Delhi in February 2015, and the Indian Prime Minister, in his speech to Sri Lanka's Parliament on 13 March 2015, merely expressed India's desire for a political solution going beyond the 13th Amendment. Though this has remained consistently India's demand for over a decade now, it has never tried to spell out details of such a solution. Instead, it has left the entire the task to the Sri Lankan leaders from across the ethnic divide.

Linked to peace is the core issue of reconciliation, considered as a major pathway and a necessary condition for 'just peace' in Sri Lanka. However, reconciliation has not been made a serious post-civil war state policy in accordance with the global standard and best practices, and the demands of the war victims and the international community. The Rajapaksa regime was only interested in brushing aside the issue by defining the idea and goal of reconciliation in its own convenient terms. Accordingly, it considered economic reconstruction and infrastructure development as reconciliation measures, and refused to recognise the need for demilitarising the war-torn north; releasing political prisoners; rehabilitating internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their own land; establishing accountability for human rights violations, making reparations to civil war victims; and rendering retributive and restorative justice to them.

This long list of measures is practically difficult to expect from any government in a short time; but steps towards these are not commensurate even with the minimum expectations of the victims. At the heart of the reconciliation process is the question of accountability for the massive civilian killings and human rights violations during the final phase of the war. The West has raised the issue and sought to make an intervention via the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR), which passed three resolutions (in 2012, 2013, and 2014) against Sri Lanka, seeking an international probe into rights abuses. Under President Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka had rejected all of them, and thus defied international opinion. However, the Sirisena-Wickremasinghe government has earned the support of the West by accepting the fourth resolution (2015), which has protected Sri Lanka's interest by allowing an internal investigation. The fifth consensus resolution (2019) has given Colombo time till 2021 to fully implement the commitments it made four years ago.

The issue has caused a policy predicament in India, which is interested in achieving simultaneously three main goals: securing justice for the Sri Lankan Tamils; promoting its bilateral interest with Sri Lanka; and preserving its policy of not voting on country-specific resolutions. India's vote twice (2012 and 2013) for the resolutions against Sri Lanka, mainly under internal political pressure, was aimed at promoting the first goal at the cost of other two. Its abstention in 2014 did not fully satisfy any of the goals. The Sri Lankan Tamils were unhappy, and the Sri Lankan government was neither satisfied nor dismayed. It did not strengthen India's stated policy on country-specific resolutions either. While the government has understood the limitations of using international forums to put pressure on Colombo on the issue of reconciliation, it has also been equally aware of the limited extent to which it could use its bilateral diplomacy. Therefore, while expressing its strong interest in a credible reconciliation process as a pathway to post-civil war order in Sri Lanka, India has not done anything beyond stating its strong desire. In defending its abstention at the UNHCR vote, the Singh government considered the 2013 elections to the Northern Provincial Council (NPC), claimed to have been held under Indian pressure, as a 'significant step forward' in the task of promoting reconciliation. This interpretation and acknowledgement apart, it was reluctant to take up with the Sri Lankan government the specific problems facing the Sri Lankan Tamils and, instead, was inclined to treat them as internal matters of Sri Lanka. The Modi government's approach is not much different from its predecessor. Prime Minister Modi touched on the issue of reconciliation indirectly or made a passing reference to it in his speech to the Sri Lankan parliamentarians in March 2014. By not making a direct plea, if

not a demand, the present government, like its predecessor, has chosen to tread carefully on the issue so as not to weaken the regime and India-Sri Lanka relations. Initially, New Delhi was convinced that the present leadership in Colombo, which acknowledged the failure of the Rajapaksa regime in creating durable peace and meaningful reconciliation, was committed to promote them. In this context, India was inclined to support Sri Lanka's stand on establishing internal mechanisms for investigating war crime allegations.

Though the issue of peace and reconciliation does not appear to occupy a significant place in the bilateral diplomatic agenda, the *Annual Report* (2017–18) of the Ministry of External Affairs states that the "need for national reconciliation through a political settlement of the ethnic issue was reiterated by India at the highest level". There is no doubt that the issue is important to India's interests and, therefore, New Delhi cannot afford to ignore it. As a country that has invested a lot in political and military terms for Sri Lanka's peace and sovereignty in the 1980s, India's deep interest in promoting a political solution and reconciliation is unquestionable. However, it must show utmost prudence in its diplomacy, and purposively engage the stakeholders for developing a bipartisan approach to the crucial issue. As in the past, the moderate Sri Lankan Tamil leaders need India's constant political support which would strengthen their position and demand for peace and reconciliation - a significant goal India seeks to advance in post-civil war Sri Lanka.

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Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Possible Implications

Samatha Mallempati*

The formation of the National Unity Government in 2015 by the two main Sinhala political parties, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP), with the support of Tamil minority parties was a welcome development in a country that has faced three decades of ethnic war. The new government promised to take the country on a path of reconciliation as well as inclusive economic and social development, and promised to follow a new orientation in foreign policy. However, instances such as the sacking of Prime Minister (PM) Ranil Wickramasinghe by the President of Sri Lanka in October 2018 and the attacks on churches by local radical Islamists groups on 12th April 2019 demonstrate that Sri Lanka is far from attaining political stability, even years after the ethnic war ended in 2009.

President Maithripala Sirisena was chosen as a leader by the SLFP, the UNP, and minority parties to defeat Mahinda Rajapaksa, whose government was marred by corruption, human rights violations, and an imbalanced foreign policy. The relative stability that was achieved due to the unity presented in policy implementation during the initial years did not last long, as Sri Lanka grappled with issues, such as low economic growth, corruption, lack of consensus on post-war reconciliation, and the required constitutional amendments on power sharing. The difference in approach towards addressing some of these issues between majority and minority political parties, between the President and the Prime Minister and the active opposition led by former President Rajapaksa ensures that Sri Lanka is, once again, debating the same issues which were responsible for the emergence of ethnic conflict after Independence.

Soon after coming to power, the government introduced the 19th amendment to the constitution that curtailed some of the powers of the Presidency and set up various independent commissions. The drafting process for the Constitution was initiated and, for the first time, general public views were taken into account while drafting the Constitution, along with other stakeholders. The Public Representation Committee (PRC) and the Steering Committee (SC) submitted the reports to the Parliament (Constituent

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Assembly). The whole exercise tried to obtain the views on important matters pertaining to the nature of the state, the devolution of powers, the electoral system, and so on.

Minority Tamil political parties, led by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), played an important role in the formation of the government as it expected that the government would implement the UNHRC resolution 30/1 of 2015. The Sri Lankan Government took a few positive steps in implementing the resolution that called for the political solution of the conflict and recommended various measures that can help to find a solution. The government appointed a Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms (SCRM), and a Constitutional Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms (CTFRM) also submitted its report in January 2017, after public consultations. Consultations were conducted on four transitional justice mechanisms as mentioned in the UNHRC resolution. These included: Office of Reparations; Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence Commission; Office on Missing Persons; and Judicial Mechanism. Accordingly, the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) was established as well as the Office for Reparations.

The current government also tried to act upon the issue of demilitarisation in the Northern and Eastern Province. After series of announcements by the President (since 2015) about the release of land to rightful owners, by early 2019 the government said, "71,178 acres of land, out of 84, 675 acres which was with the security forces, was released to civilians".[1]

Some of these initiatives taken by the government were important as they helped to regain the confidence of international actors in post-war Sri Lanka. Since 2015, the UN has extended the deadline to implement the UN resolution on Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability, and Human Rights twice to Sri Lanka - that is in 2017 and in 2019, as it engaged actively with various regional and multilateral forums with improved confidence.

Amidst the renewed effort by the government for international recognition and legitimacy of its actions, deep fault lines based on ethnicity, religion, and class surfaced within Sri Lankan government structures and in its polity and society. The Joint Opposition led by Rajapaksa tried to exploit the differences between the Prime Minister and the President. The feelings of alienation and fear of the majority population regarding the devolution of powers to the provinces has kept the support base of Rajapaksa almost intact since 2015. In the local authority elections held in February 2018, the Sinhala dominated areas voted in favour of Rajapaksa's party, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). With the hope of toppling the government,

Rajapaksa initiated a no confidence motion against the Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe but failed to remove him as the Prime Minister in April 2018 due to the support extended by the UNP and the minority Tamil and Muslim parties to Ranil Wickramasinghe. The Central Bank Bond Scam, involving the former Governor of Central Bank, Mr. Arjuna Mahendran who was appointed by the Prime Minister became a bone of contention between the President and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

In the reconciliation arena, President Sirisena gradually moved towards Rajapaksa's standpoint on the issue. The Joint Opposition led by Rajapaksa opposed the Sri Lankan government's decision to co-sponsor the resolution at the UNHRC in 2015, as it asked for foreign involvement in transitional justice mechanisms. The implementation of the resolution has been portrayed as a threat to the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, and a betrayal against the sacrifices made by the armed forces of the country. Rajapaksa also described the OMP "as a tribunal in all but name". The incorporation of the Prevention of Enforced Disappearance Act No: 5 and the amendments made to the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters in 2018 are opposed by him on the grounds that they will allow for the prosecution of persons suspected of war crimes by foreign governments.[2] President Sirisena was not in favour of Sri Lanka co-sponsoring the UNHRC resolution at the 40th Session in March 2019 in Geneva as the USA itself has withdrawn from UNHRC membership. In the past, the USA took the lead in sponsoring a resolution against Sri Lanka. The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka favoured co-sponsoring the resolution as it would prevent war crimes allegations by internal actors, and can help in getting economic dividends, such as EU GSP + concessions. The UNHRC gave Sri Lanka until 2021 to fulfil its commitments, and pointed out that the 'lack of accountability to past actions from the political leadership is a hurdle in achieving genuine reconciliation in Sri Lanka'.[3]

The sacking of Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe in October 2018 by President Sirisena and the appointment of Rajapaksa as Prime Minister in complete violation of the Constitution led to a political crisis. Once again, the UNP and minority parties played an important role in reinstating Ranil Wickramasinghe as Prime Minister through constitutional means. Once again, this development brought to the surface differences in the Sinhala political leadership based on class and caste. These developments also indicate that the introduction of a new Constitution acceptable to all sections of society and political parties is not going to take place in the near future. In January 2019, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka tabled an expert committee proposals/report in the Parliament to draft a new

Constitution. The Steering Committee report outlined differences of opinion on important aspects of the Constitution, such as regarding the nature of the state, and the devolution of powers between the majority Sinhala and the minority Tamil population. For the Sri Lankan majority, the idea of a Unitary State is non-negotiable. Though the TNA accepted the continuation of a Unitary State, it has been advocating the specific devolution of powers that can guarantee more powers to the provinces in the re-merged Northern and Eastern Provinces. It also repeatedly supported the idea of a political solution in undivided Sri Lanka. The TNA leadership position, led by Sumanthiran, has alienated other Tamil political parties, such as the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) as well as the former first time Chief Minister of the Northern Province, Mr. Wigneshwaran. The place given to Buddhism in the Constitution is also an issue. The Sri Lankan Muslim parties are opposed to the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

On the other hand, Rajapaksa has been active in advocating that the draft new Constitution will enhance the powers of the provinces which, in turn, weaken the Unitary State structure. Under these circumstances, there is a remote possibility that the draft Constitution will be passed with two-thirds majority in parliament and, thereafter, in the national referendum.

The lack of communication between the President and the Prime Minister, and between various departments under their purview, resulted in the Easter Sunday attacks on churches and hotels on 21 April 2019 that killed 250 persons. The attacks have put Sri Lanka at the cross roads regarding its internal security. The end of the war in 2009 did provide a breather from violent attacks on civilians; but the suicide bombings carried out by the little-known local outfit, National Thowheeth Jama'ath, having alleged links to the Islamic State, have once again opened up old wounds, and had put the whole reconciliation process in jeopardy. This is evident from various statements made post the incident, and the actions of the government and the hard-line Sinhala elements who handled the crisis.

The President of Sri Lanka blamed the country's security and intelligence agencies for their failure to stop the attack despite the information known prior to the incident. The Prime Minister faulted the President for not involving him and his ministers in National Security Council meetings, which kept the Prime Minister unaware of any intelligence information in this regard. The suspended Inspector-General Pujith Jayasundara as well as another intelligence official, Sisira Mendis, blamed the President for not taking the matter seriously. The government of Sri Lanka appointed a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the Easter Sunday attacks.

The incident seems to have given rise to majoritarian Sinhala political discourse led by hard-line Buddhists elements, which led to attacks on the minority Muslim community in some parts of the country in May 2019. Much to the disappointment of minority leaders, the President also pardoned the hard-line Buddhist monk, Gnanasara Thero, in May this year. The release of the Monk after the attacks on churches was not appreciated by the minority leaders. His organisation, Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), was responsible for hate speeches that led to the attacks on the Muslim community in 2017 and in 2018. The TNA strongly opposed the pardoning of the monk by the President.

The Prime Minister acknowledged the help extended by the Muslim community in bringing about suggestions, such as the Madrasa Education Bill that does not allow Sharia universities, and ensuring that name boards are made only in three national languages. The All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama also said that the burqa was not compulsory. In general, the Muslim minority community is under scrutiny about possible links to the attack, including its political leadership. For instance, on 3rd June, nine Ministers and the Governors of the Eastern and Western Provinces belonging to the Muslim community have resigned from their portfolios. The Buddhist Monk Athuraliye Rathana Thera's fast unto death demanding the resignation of the two governors led to resignations. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Government at the UN maintained that:

> Easter Sunday attacks were carried out by Islamic fundamentalists, having been influenced and inspired by ISIS, and were not a result of any local conditions. These attacks, mainly against Christians at prayer, form part of global trends of radicalization and extremism.[4]

Since the attack, the emergency provisions are in place, and the differences in approach about the issues mentioned above manifest a great deal about where Sri Lanka is headed in terms of achieving internal political stability in a post war scenario.

Possible Implications

Since the formation of bipartisan government in Sri Lanka at the centre in 2015, India and Sri Lanka relations witnessed a productive bilateral engagement. High level visits and the assistance provided by India to rebuild the conflict affected North and East of Sri Lanka as well as the assistance extended to the Central and Southern parts of Sri Lanka to build houses and in providing health care facilities, have helped in gaining the confidence of the people about India's constructive role in post war Sri Lanka. India has emerged as a

top country for tourist arrivals in 2018, signifying increasing people to people contact for Sri Lankans. The bilateral Free Trade Agreement, the Trilateral Maritime Security Agreement, and the protection to EEZs are some of the examples of continued cooperation.

There seem to be a convergence in outlook about how to deal with issues pertaining to reconciliation within Sri Lanka as well as post-war rebuilding between India and Sri Lanka. India supported the resolution on Sri Lanka since 2015 and provided the required support at UNHRC for Sri Lanka to extend the time to implement the resolution and, possibly, find an amicable political solution internally. At the UN, India advocated the need for the full implementation of 13th Amendment to the constitution of Sri Lanka that can meet the aspirations of the Tamil community. Given the present political circumstances, the full implementation of the Amendment may not be possible. This is mainly due to the reason that some sections of the Sinhala community still consider this as an imposition from India. Also, there is a lack of a common position amongst the various Sri Lankan Tamil parties on the quantum of devolution or even the nature of state.

For India, the internal stability in Sri Lanka is a foremost priority, and it expects Sri Lanka to preserve its "character as a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society that accommodates the aspirations of all sections of society, including the Sri Lankan Tamil Community, for a life of equality, justice, peace, and dignity in a united Sri Lanka".[5] Therefore, India will continue to watch constitutional developments carefully by providing the required assistance if needed or asked by Sri Lanka, but may not impose a solution on Sri Lanka as expected by Tamil political parties. More than one lakh Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are staying in India, and the repatriation of those willing to go back to Sri Lanka is an issue that continues to linger at the bilateral level. Political parties in Tamil Nadu are taking up the issue on a number of occasions but are not in a position to influence India's policy towards Sri Lanka, unlike in the past.

The Easter Sunday attacks on churches in Sri Lanka, influenced by Islamic State ideology, have emerged as a new challenge in the neighbourhood for India that necessitates greater cooperation in counter terrorism efforts at the bilateral as well as regional levels in combating terrorism. According to news reports, Indian intelligence agencies shared the information with Sri Lankan counterparts about the possible attack. However, the challenge lies in cooperation at the regional level through platforms such as SAARC and BIMSTEC. Sri Lanka expects India to engage with all the member countries in counter terrorism efforts, due to cross border linkages.

The Presidential Elections in Sri Lanka are proposed to take place on 7th December 2019. National security is going to be the main issue at the elections and the economic performance of the government. Reconciliation may go down on the agenda as well as constitutional reforms, despite the necessity to have political and economic stability in multi ethnic Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's total outstanding external debt increased to US dollars 52,310 million by the end 2018 from US dollars 51,604 million by the end 2017. Therefore, Sri Lanka is seeking foreign investments to develop the economy, and emerge as a hub in the Indian Ocean. India is keen to establish itself as an important investment partner, and not just a development partner. A recent example in this regard is the development of the Colombo Port Deep Sea Terminal being constructed jointly by India, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Therefore, India will continue to engage with Sri Lanka at the governmental level to secure its strategic and security interests in the Indian Ocean, while taking a thoughtful and watchful position on internal political developments, as there is no guarantee that India will not be dragged into the domestic politics of Sri Lanka.

Notes :

[1] Official Website of President of Sri Lanka, "Presidential Task Force on development of North and East Provinces meets", 5 April 2019, at http://www.president.gov.lk/presidential-task-force-on-development-of-north-and-east-provinces-meets-2/. Accessed on June 1 2019.

[2] Sri Lanka Brief, "Rajapaksa Wants GOSL to withdraw from Cosponsoring Geneva Resolution @HRC40", 18 March 2019, at http://srilankabrief.org/2019/03/rajapaksa-wants-gosl-to-withdraw-from-cosponsoring-geneva-resolution-at-hrc40/. Accessed on May 30, 2019

[3] Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Council, 40th Session, 25 February–22 March 2019, at https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/029/25/PDF/G1902925.pdf?OpenElement. Accessed on June 2, 2019.

[4] Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka's Response to the Joint Statement Issued by the UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect, 24th May 2019, at https://www.mfa.gov.lk/sri-lankas-response-to-the-joint-statement-issued-by-the-un-special-advisor-on-the-prevention-of-genocide-and-the-special-advisor-on-the-responsibility-to-protect/. Accessed on June 1, 2019.

[5] Statement by India at the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council (25 February–22 March 2019) under Agenda Item 2:Interactive Dialogue with the OHCHR report on Sri Lanka, delivered by Ambassador Rajiv K. Chander, Permanent Representative of India, 20 March 2019, Geneva, at https://www.pmindiaun.gov.in/pages.php?id=1909. Accessed on May 28, 2019.

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India and Sri Lanka need to do 'Much More'

Nitin A. Gokhale*

On April 21, 2019, Sri Lanka was rocked by extremely well-coordinated suicide bombings across three luxury hotels and three prominent Catholic Churches by a group of radicalised Muslims, killing over 258 people. Terrorism, albeit in a different form, returned to the island nation with a vengeance, almost exactly after a decade. Fear was back once again.

Can Sri Lanka, currently in the throes of a full-fledged political crisis, recover from this deadly blow? What would it take to bring the country back to the peaceful times it has enjoyed between 2009 and 2019? Why is it that Sri Lanka, having won the war against the Tamil Tigers, been unable to secure durable peace?

It is important to look back at the post-war decade to arrive at any definitive roadmap for the country that has a crucial geographical location in the Indian Ocean and is, therefore, one of the playgrounds for the on-going India-China contestations in South Asia.

The perpetrators of the April 21 bombings have brought to the fore fault lines that had been papered over for long. The Buddhist majority nation of two crore people has largely lived peacefully with its Christian and Muslim minorities (Muslims are nine and Christians are seven percent of the population), although occasionally, tension between Buddhists and Muslims has erupted in parts of Sri Lanka in the past decade. Between 1983 and 2009, the insurgency of ethnic Tamils (largely driven by the Tamil Tigers or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) had kept the country on the edge. The military decimation of the LTTE after a three-year long intense Eelam War IV in 2009, led to a period of peace - except for riots between hard line Buddhists and Muslims in Eastern Sri Lanka in 2013-14.

Yet, no one in Sri Lanka was prepared for the well-coordinated and clinical terrorist attacks carried out by the group of radicalised youth who appear to have come under the influence of the Islamic State (IS) ideology. It was harder to believe that members of a well-to-do business family would be motivated enough to target innocent Christians - apparently to avenge the

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killings of Muslims in a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. That the activities of the Ceylon Thowheed Jamath and its affiliate National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ), went unnoticed is something that will always rankle the Sri Lankan security establishment. The NTJ, the Jammiyathul Milathu Ibrahim (JMI), and the Willayath As Seylani have been banned under the emergency law. The suicide bombings have highlighted the laxity that has crept in the law and order, and intelligence mechanism in Sri Lanka, following the conclusion of the Eelam War IV. This has also coincided with, in the last one year, the political slugfest between President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickrmesinghe which has cast a long shadow over the administration, and led to deep divisions within the bureaucracy.

Despite specific intelligence inputs from India about the impending attack, the police failed to prevent it, leading to recriminations, accusations, and counter-accusations between the President and the Prime Minister. On the day of the attack, Prime Minister Ranil and his supporters said they were not aware of the intelligence warnings since Mr Wickramasinghe is not part of the national Security Council, implying thereby that it was the responsibility of the President and his staff to look after law and order, and the processing of intelligence. After initially blaming each other, the President and the Prime Minister have now sought to make scapegoats out of the officials.

Speaking to the media in New Delhi, President Sirisena said: "Had the defence chiefs informed me, I would not have left the country (he was touring Singapore when the attacks happened) and I would've taken steps to prevent it."[1] Blaming the defence chiefs for the security lapse, the Sri Lankan President said, "disciplinary action will be taken against those responsible for the lapses."

He also confirmed that his country's security chiefs had received a "clear report from Indian intelligence agencies"[2] regarding the possibility of the Easter Sunday terror attacks. He said that while his country's Defence Secretary and the Inspector General of Police had exchanged correspondence on this matter, he was not informed about the threat.

Asked if differences between him and the Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe had contributed to the intelligence information provided by India slipping through the authorities' fingers, President Sirisena said: "Not at all. They (the defence chiefs) have been negligent in their duty, that's all."[3] In a way, President Sirisena's 'passing the buck' act symbolises all that has gone wrong in Sri Lanka over the past couple of years.

It was not like this in January 2015, when Sri Lankans elected President Sirisena, ousting Mahinda Rajapaksa who, having freed the country from the

LTTE brand of terrorism, was turning increasingly autocratic. Unexpected as the election result was, it brought renewed hope for a more inclusive and democratic Sri Lanka. Alas, within a couple of years, all the euphoria that was generated with the election result, evaporated, essentially because the coalition was based on a negative agenda of just unseating Rajapaksa.

The consequences of an 'unnatural' alliance between President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickramasinghe were soon apparent. In absence of clear directives - and sometimes contradictory orders - officials were happy to maintain status quo. The administrative machinery began to come apart. The gaps in intelligence gathering and processing was just one of the more serious fallouts. In fact, Prime Minister Wickramasinghe had specifically mentioned, in August last year, that relations between 'different communities had improved.' Clearly, he and the intelligence machinery were not aware of the undercurrents of tension between the Christians and the Muslims although they may have got a handle on relations between the majority Sinhalas and the Tamils. The bombings were also a clear warning to the neighbourhood too, and particularly to India, of the clear and present danger of the growing presence of ISIS in the region. As Prime M. Heblikar wrote in a commentary on vifindia.org:

> The bombing incident sent harsh warning signals to India and countries in its neighbourhood, and especially the ASEAN, about the present and clear dangers of lowering guard against the ISIS. More importantly, there is a message on the need to create a broader regional coalition including exchange of intelligence, experience and expertise to detect, deter and destroy violence in any form or shape. Naturally, this transnational cooperation has to be done discretely and away from public gaze to avoid political backlash and attacks in civil society and social media.[4]

The lack of cohesive policies has been evident in Sri Lanka's external relations also. The government has been drifting. Caught between the contradictory policies and outlooks of the President and Prime Minister, Sri Lanka's foreign policy has been under strain. However, both President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickramasinghe have been firm on keeping Sri Lanka's ties with India on an even keel. They may have oscillated wildly in dealing with China; but with India, both have tried to improve relations with New Delhi.

In an interview to this author last September, Prime Minister Wickramasinghe said India was getting involved in more projects, and Sri Lanka saw this as natural progression. He mentioned India and Japan were

doing a joint project on liquefied natural gas (LNG) in Sri Lanka, among others. As this author also wrote in January 2019,

> The United States and Japan, quietly backed by India, are working on modernising and developing the key port of Trincomalee on Sri Lanka's eastern sea board as an economic hub to counter the growing Chinese footprint in the island nation strategically located in the Indian Ocean.[5]

At the moment, the plan is limited to creating a world-class economic zone around Trincomalee, considered to be one of the best natural harbours in the world. Referring to recent reports that the USA has been eyeing the port to build a military base. The US-Japan push to upgrade Trincomalee comes on the back of China acquiring controlling rights to the Hambantota port in southern Sri Lanka by managing to get a 99-year lease as well as buying a substantial stake in the Colombo Ports project. Alarmed by China's push in taking controlling stakes in key ports across the Indian Ocean region, Japan is keen not to be left out of the race to have a significant footprint in crucial locations. It has decided to work in close partnership with the USA and India to overcome the handicap.

In August 2018, Itsunori Onodera, Japan's Defence Minister, during his maiden visit to Sri Lanka, toured all the three major ports: Colombo, Trincomalee, and Hambantota. He offered Japanese help to boost Sri Lanka's maritime capabilities by granting two offshore patrol boats. The USA too has pledged to grant 40 million dollars to Sri Lanka under its new security assistance initiative to help countries in the Indo-Pacific, announced last August. Interestingly, Onodera had stopped over in India before going to Sri Lanka, and held talks with India's Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman. The USA, India, and Japan already hold a trilateral Naval exercise - Malabar - every year. Close on the heels of the Japanese Defence Minister's visit, a US amphibious task force also visited Sri Lanka and docked at Trincomalee. However, despite an apparent anti-China intent, officials and leaders take great care to describe the coordination as a stand-alone step. For instance, US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, said late last year, while unveiling additional financial help for the Indo-Pacific region:

> We're convinced that American engagement in the Indo-Pacific benefits all the nations in that region. We want it to be free; we want it to be open. We're not looking for dominance. We're looking for partnerships. Others choose to behave differently. We want these to be commercially available projects led by the American private sector in a way that benefits the entire region and the world.[6]

India, of course, wants Sri Lanka to prosper and be free of any kind of violence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, after taking over for a second consecutive term, made it a point to stop over in Colombo in the first week of June 2019 on his way back from the Maldives to express solidarity with the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks, and also to extend support to the Sri Lankan government's efforts to probe the attacks. "I am confident Sri Lanka will rise again. Cowardly acts of terror cannot defeat the spirit of Sri Lanka. India stands in solidarity with the people of Sri Lanka,"[7] the Indian Prime Minister tweeted as he arrived in Sri Lanka.

He became the first foreign leader to visit Sri Lanka after the ghastly attacks. India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) is actively assisting Sri Lanka in probing the suicide bombings and, the remnants of the module, if any, that carried out the deadly strikes. Internally, however, the newly visible divisions between Christians and Muslims and the old cleavage between Buddhists and Muslims will be hard to bridge in the short run. Already a political crisis has erupted again in the government, with all the Muslim ministers resigning under pressure from a protesting Buddhist monk. Thus, even as Sri Lanka's politicians struggle to restore normalcy in a country that has had many ethnic clashes, India will have to tread cautiously in not taking sides.

Going beyond the immediate crisis, Indian development assistance, on the rise since the end of Eelam War IV in 2009, has been a major contributing factor in cementing traditionally erratic India-Sri Lanka relations. In June 2010, India made a commitment to construct 50,000 housing units, to undertake the rehabilitation of the Northern Railway lines, wreck-removal, and the rehabilitation of the KKS Harbour, among other minor projects. The Housing Project, with an overall commitment of over INR 1372 crore in grants, is the flagship project of the Government of India's assistance to Sri Lanka. The first stage of construction of 1,000 houses in the Northern Province was completed in July 2012. The second phase of constructing or repairing 45000 houses in the Northern and Eastern Provinces is under implementation. Till now, around 45,500 houses have been completed. The third phase, to construct 4,000 houses in the Central and Uva Provinces through an innovative community-driven approach, was launched in April 2016.

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, Sri Lanka is one of the major recipients of development credit given by the Government of India, with a total commitment of around US$ 2.63 billion, including US$ 458 million as grants. Under a line of credit of $167.4 million, the tsunami-damaged Colombo-Matara rail link has been repaired and upgraded. Another line of

credit of US$ 800 million for track laying and the supply of rolling stock to support construction railway lines in Northern Sri Lanka is already operational. In October 2014, the Pallai-Jaffna reconstructed railway track and signal system was inaugurated, thereby reconnecting Jaffna to Colombo by rail.

India and Sri Lanka will, however, need to do much more than bank on assistance and grants to improve relations. There are some lingering issues between India and Sri Lanka, like the frequent arrest of Indian fishermen in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka, and China's looming and continuing presence in key infrastructure projects. Although the Sri Lankan military continues to send a large number of its officers and men for training in India, and intelligence cooperation is likely to increase in the wake of the recent attacks, perhaps a new President in Sri Lanka in January 2020 will reboot ties in the coming years.

Notes :

[1] https://sniwire.com/neighbours/sirisena-bimstec-and-saarc-are-important-both-need-strengthening/ accessed on June 10, 2019

[2] Ibid

[3] Ibid

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Democracy's Dilemma: The Ethnic Question and India-Sri Lanka Relations

N. Manoharan*

A decade has passed since the end of 'Eelam War IV', but the ethnic question lingers in Sri Lanka in the form of the absence of a long-term political settlement, and haphazard ethnic reconciliation. This has impacted bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka due to historical and political reasons.

Political Settlement of the Ethnic Question

Finding a lasting political settlement by taking into account the root causes and grievances of the aggrieved communities are vital for establishing sustainable peace. However, in the Sri Lankan case, efforts in finding a long-term political settlement of the ethnic issue have been lethargic. The previous Rajapaksa government had talked of finding a "home grown solution" to the ethnic issue. In this regard, President Mahinda Rajapaksa did indeed appoint an All Party Representative Committee (APRC) in 2006 to "fashion creative options that satisfy minimum expectations as well as provide a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the national question". However, instead of exploring "creative options", the APRC, in its interim report submitted in January 2008, advised the President to implement the 13th amendment to the Constitution. Even after several decades, the ideas for seeking a solution to the ethnic question were back to square one. When the APRC submitted its final report in August 2009, the President chose not to make it public, and thereafter trashed it.

At a later date, President Rajapaksa outlined his thoughts on devolution succinctly: "We are keen on a sustainable political settlement. But it must have wide acceptance, especially in the context of the post-conflict situation." With this pronouncement, the writing on the wall was clear: Colombo would deal with the ethnic issue from the position of strength. The defeat of the LTTE led to a triumphalist confidence in the Sri Lankan government that could now afford to ignore minority sentiments. As a result, President

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Rajapaksa, who initially committed to go "beyond 13th Amendment", changed track later by saying that "there is no ethnic issue, but only a development issue."

A Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) was appointed in June 2013 to review the whole 13th Amendment arrangement. However, it remained a non-starter because of non-participation of the Opposition parties like the United National Party (UNP) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and even coalition partners like the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC). Hard line parties, like the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the National Freedom Front (NFF), and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) opposed the Provincial Council system as a "divisive mechanism" and "does not suit" a country like Sri Lanka. The system, to them, was not indigenous, but was "forced on Sri Lanka" by external forces like India, and hence the 13th Amendment should go. On the other hand, a dominant section of the UPFA (United People's Freedom Alliance) government, including President Mahinda Rajapaksa, supported the dilution of the Provincial Council System, termed as the "13th Amendment Minus" framework. The argument was that since whatever limited police and land powers that were vested with the provinces were not practically implemented, it was necessary to devolve only the implementable portions.

However, a change in government in January 2015 brought some hope. The Sirisena government presented a plan for a new Constitution aimed at devolving power in January 2016. As per the plan, the government promised to strengthen democratic rights, promote national reconciliation, guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms that assure human dignity, promote responsible and accountable government, and respect the rule of law.

Consequently, a Constituent Assembly was established in March 2016 to draft a new Constitution. The Steering Committee of the Constituent Assembly, headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, submitted an interim report in November 2017. The report touched on several aspects like the principles of devolution, state land, provincial subjects, second chamber, the electoral system, and public security. Although the interim report talks of "aekiya raajyaya" and "orumiththa nadu" (respectively Sinhala and Tamil terms for an undivided and indivisible country), opposition to the draft has emerged from Buddhist clergy, and Sinhala hardliners. It is going to be a daunting task. But, through sheer political will and pressure from the international community it is doable.

Ethnic Reconciliation

Reconciliation is another important aspect of the ethnic question. To pre-empt the United Nations' move to appoint an experts panel on "war crimes" during the last stages of the war, Sri Lanka appointed an eight-member Commission on 'Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation' (LLRC) in May 2010. LLRC was a good step; but its mandate was very limited. Ethnic reconciliation in the real sense was not looked into seriously. Although, it is claimed that the LLRC was based on the model of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, there was no mechanism for reconciliation in the real sense.

When the LLRC submitted its report in December 2011, things became clearer. Although it was not 100 percent objective, it was not disappointing either. It tried to do a balancing act containing both positive and negative aspects. On the positives, it talked about the need for demilitarisation and the investigation of disappearances, apart from acknowledging existence of ethnic grievances. Surprisingly, it also supported the devolution of powers to the minorities, although did not spell them out. At the same time, it did not fix the accountability for human rights abuses during the Eelam War IV. For the collateral damage, the Report reasoned out that it was as a result of LTTE action and military reaction. Most importantly, the LLRC did not give any action plan on the way forward, either on reconciliation or devolution. Yet, the major concern was that the Report was not taken seriously and acted upon by the Rajapaksa government.

It was with this concern that a US-sponsored resolution was passed in UNHRC in March 2012 and once again in March 2013. India voted in favour of the resolution. The objective behind the move was not to condemn Sri Lanka, but to "sow the seeds of lasting peace." It was pointed out that the "real reconciliation must be based on accountability, not impunity." The Court of Inquiry appointed by the Army was considered "too late and too little". Since it was not independent, its findings might not have been impartial. However, to Colombo, any UN action "would only lead to derailing the reconciliation process that has been put in place by the government." Some in the regime argued that "If we submit to this resolution, Tiger terrorists will raise their head again."

Instead of getting sensitive, Sri Lanka should seriously implement all the recommendations of the LLRC. Thanks to international pressure, there is some progress in the implementation within the framework of the 'National

Plan of Action'. In the resolution (titled 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka') passed in March 2014, India abstained as it was felt that the "resolution was extremely intrusive".

However, things are looking positive under the Sirisena government. Some of the initiatives by the new government include:

- The introduction of the Right to Information Act;
- The passage of the 19th Amendment;
- Establishment of 'The Conflict Resolution Commission';
- The setting up of a National Centre for women-headed families;
- The commencement of a process of drawing up a new Constitution;
- The setting up of an Office of Missing Persons, and an Office of Reparations; etc.

The challenge, however, is to take the reconciliation process forward so that grievances of all communities are addressed in a just and equitable manner.

Ethnic Question and India-Sri Lanka Relations

India-Sri Lanka relations with specific reference to Sri Lankan ethnic question have to be looked at in this context. India has, indeed, been the most important external actor in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue. This was determined by India's geo-strategic interests, internal political factors and, as a responsible regional power, sincerity to help find a permanent settlement to the ethnic conflict in its neighbourhood. India was caught in the 'dilemma' of finding a solution that met the sentiments and rights of the aggrieved Tamil community *without* affecting the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

After the end of 'Eelam War IV', India watched with concern Sri Lanka trying to duck from various commitments, both on ethnic reconciliation and a long-term political settlement. India felt strongly that, unless Colombo makes a substantial progress on these two fronts, it would be difficult to claim that the ethnic conflict has come to an end. The decimation of the LTTE only marked the termination of a violent manifestation of the ethnic question.

On the settlement of the ethnic issue, India has consistently maintained that it stands in favour of "a politically negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and the respect for human rights." For India, the full implementation of the 13th Amendment provisions

as an interim arrangement, and going beyond it for a permanent settlement, is imperative. India has also reached out to the Sri Lankan Tamil parties to bring them to the negotiating table, starting from the Thimpu talks of 1985. In addition, New Delhi did not hesitate to give a go head to Norwegian facilitation in the peace talks in 2000s. More recently, India has kept sustained pressure on Sri Lanka to bring about an acceptable solution to the ethnic issue.

India-Sri Lanka relations took an unpleasant turn following the constitutional crisis that unfolded in Colombo in September 2018. Significantly, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sacked within a week of his official visit to India. New Delhi reacted to the constitutional crisis with a hope "that democratic values and the constitutional process will be respected." The National Unity Government formed by confluence of traditionally rival political parties - the UNP and the SLFP - gave immense hope to the people of Sri Lanka in terms of good governance and cordial foreign relations with all countries. However, things started falling apart within a year due to the sheer political interests of the leaders at the helm. It reached a stage where the current President joined hands with the previous President to oust the Prime Minister, resulting in about a two-month-long politico-constitutional crisis. With judicial intervention, the crisis has gotten over, but not permanently. Given the differing interests, it is likely to recur, leading to policy paralysis. As a result, the country got downgraded on its economic performance; Sri Lanka's image in the international arena went down; protests increased; and people's confidence dwindled. This is not good for a small island country that has emerged from a long ethnic war just a decade ago. India has been watching these developments with concern.

After the 'Eelam War IV', India also has been pushing for ethnic reconciliation in post-conflict Sri Lanka, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. New Delhi firmly believes that, without ethnic reconciliation, it is difficult to find a lasting political solution. When the issue reached the UN Human Rights Council, India's stand was forward-looking and positive: to push the reconciliation process seriously so that the war-affected Sri Lankan society could rebuild itself in a sustainable manner. In this regard, India took keen interest in the relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement of the conflict displaced persons. India considered these '3-Rs' an important prerequisite for a successful reconciliation.

When President Rajapaksa appointed Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in May 2010, India welcomed it as a serious move. New Delhi believed that the "report of the LLRC and its findings and recommendations provide a window of opportunity to forge a consensual

way forward towards a lasting political settlement through genuine national reconciliation and the full enjoyment of human rights by all its citizens." However, in due course, India found indifference on the part of Colombo to the very recommendations made by a Commission appointed by the President himself. India, therefore, did not have many options left except to join the international community to support a resolution in the UNHRC in March 2012 calling on the Sri Lankan government to "implement the constructive recommendations made in the report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission" (LLRC), and to "initiate credible and independent actions to ensure justice, equity, accountability, and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans."

These prompted the West to introduce another resolution at the 22nd Session of the UNHRC in March 2013: "to follow through on its [Sri Lanka's] own commitments to its people, including implementing the constructive recommendations from the report by Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission." On its part, India did not wish to support an 'intrusive' resolution against Colombo. At the same time, it wants Sri Lanka to take reconciliation and devolution seriously. Therefore, New Delhi tried to balance out by diluting the otherwise hard resolution. The move was not to upset Colombo, but with good intentions to move the process of reconciliation forward. India is convinced that a successful reconciliation is the first step in arriving at a meaningful long-term solution to the ethnic issue. The coalition government in New Delhi earlier had to face intense pressures from Tamil Nadu to persuade Sri Lanka to deliver, especially to the Sri Lankan Tamil minority community. Unfortunately, these Indian intentions and constraints were not acknowledged, leave alone appreciated, by Sri Lanka.

India's take on reconciliation seemed to have turned true when Sri Lanka witnessed serial bombing attacks by radical Islamic groups of the island. The main cause was the absence of reconciliation between the majority and minority communities. The Indian intelligence agencies warned Sri Lanka in advance of such imminent attacks; but they were ignored by Colombo. The point to note is that, unless ethnic reconciliation is complete, such resentments from minority communities may erupt from time to time.

Conclusion

In resolving the Sri Lanka's ethnic issue, India's benign role cannot be underestimated. A meaningful solution has to go beyond the present 13th Amendment framework. The ongoing constitutional reforms could take into consideration mechanisms such as a representative parliament reflecting the

voices of all the communities; an independent judiciary; the separation of powers with checks and balances; justice; freedom; equality as well as rights and responsibilities. Most importantly, a suitable reconciliation method could be adopted to construct bridges among all the communities of the island. A broad and inclusive approach is required to transform conflict to coexistence, and to establish sustainable peace.

Currently, the polity looks polarised. The fruits of development will be lost if the two main parties - the UNP and the SLFP - continue to play 'plebiscitary politics'. It is important that the Sri Lankan government counts-in the Opposition's contribution in nation-building. At this juncture, without bi-partisan consensus, socio-economic development or any political settlement to the ethnic question would be unsustainable. The political history of Sri Lanka since Independence is a witness to this. In the present context, India has to work patiently for a broad consensus, both at societal and political levels, on the ethnic issue. Without an island-wide consensus, any settlement of the ethnic issue is doomed to failure. India has been doing its best to help Sri Lanka's socio-economic development for several years. There is neither a profit motive nor any strategic angle to India's assistance to its neighbours.

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India and Sri Lanka: Two Countries, Four Verticals

D. Suba Chandran*

The relationship between India and Sri Lanka during the last decade has been witnessing ups and downs. With the LTTE neutralised in May 2009, there was an expectation that it would result in increased cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. However, the relationship became complex, with multiple vectors playing new roles. Again in 2015, when Maithripala Sirisena became the President of Sri Lanka and brought an end to Rajapaksa's rule, there was another round of expectations that it would lead to a new era in Colombo-Delhi interactions. Ranil Wickremesinghe became the Prime Minister in January 2015. Both Sirisena and Wickremesinghe were considered closer to New Delhi, unlike Rajapaksa who was reaching out to Beijing and undermining India's interests. While the relationship did not deteriorate during the last four years (2015–19), it did not reach new heights either.

What are the contemporary issues which are preventing the two countries from gaining momentum and reaching new heights in bilateral relations? What can be done to infuse new synergy between India and Sri Lanka?

Four Distinct Characteristics of the Relationship - Multiple Actors

Structurally, the India-Sri Lanka relationship is not defined by a simple framework. One can observe four distinct characteristics of the relationship, and multiple actors within those four, exerting pressure on the bilateral relationship. These verticals include Colombo-Jaffna, Colombo-Beijing, UNP-SLFP and New Delhi-Chennai linkages.

Besides the above four verticals, there are new fault lines within Sri Lanka that are likely to put pressure on the bilateral relationship between Colombo and New Delhi. For example, growing Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, and the fallout of the Easter terror attacks in Colombo are likely to create new fault lines within Sri Lanka, with an implication for India-Sri Lanka relations.

The Colombo-Jaffna Vertical: One Country, Two Expectations

One of the biggest challenges for New Delhi during the last decade has been to balance the differing expectations from Colombo and Jaffna.

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(*This opinion piece was contributed by the author on June 13, 2019*)

The Sri Lankan Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka have been looking for Indian support during the last three decades of ethnic conflict. While India intervened directly during the 1980s, since the 1990s India's role has been more measured; it has avoided getting directly dragged into the internal situation in Sri Lanka. Operation Poomalai in 1986 witnessed the airdropping of essentials as a sign of India's support to the Sri Lankan Tamils. The subsequent signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord in July 1987 by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, followed by the sending of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka was a part of the direct intervention by New Delhi. India also played a substantial role in the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka.

Post the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), India's support to the Sri Lankan Tamils became more nuanced. While it supported the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils, it did not accept the LTTE as the spokesman of the latter. The rise of China at the global level, and Beijing's interest in Sri Lanka has made New Delhi's position further nuanced in dealing with Colombo and Jaffna. While India has to look after the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils, it has also had to ensure that Colombo does not fall into the Chinese sphere of influence. New Delhi has had to pursue a delicate balance between Colombo and Jaffna ever since. Moreover, this continues even after the decimation of LTTE and the end of Eelam War IV. While India is keen to support the rehabilitation process in the North (of Sri Lanka) to address the concerns of the Tamils, it also has to ensure that Colombo does not feel overlooked.

Colombo-Jaffna relations have worsened during the last five years, despite an elected government both the places. The Sinhalese political leadership in Colombo and the Sri Lankan Tamil political leadership in Jaffna could not reach a consensus on various issues, thus politicising the post-war rehabilitation process. This is not a problem specific to India alone; many other countries and agencies that wanted to work with rehabilitation in the North and East of Sri Lanka, have faced the same problem.

With no elected government in Jaffna now, the Colombo-Jaffna Vertical is likely to fester, and impinge further on India's approach towards Sri Lanka.

The Colombo-Beijing Vertical: Balancing Geography with Politics

The biggest challenge for India has been Sri Lanka's strategy emerging from Colombo-Beijing relations which have grown in during recent years.

While, geographically, economically and historically, Sri Lanka is closer to India, Mahinda Rajapaksa made a bold attempt to change all the above by aligning Sri Lanka closer with China. Since 2005, when Rajapaksa became the President, the relationship between the two steadily progressed.

It all started with China providing substantial defence supplies to Sri Lanka, enabling Rajapaksa to fight the LTTE. According to reports, China had provided Sri Lanka with military supplies worth more than US$ 35 million. It included regular ammunition, jet fighters, and anti-aircraft guns. With India and the USA reluctant to support anti-LTTE war preparations of Rajapaksa, he used it as an excuse to get aligned with China. Thus, Rajapaksa was instrumental in opening Sri Lanka to China. Financial investments and infrastructural projects poured into Sri Lanka. The South Container Terminal, the Colombo Port City Project, the International Airport in Mattala, etc. are some of the big infrastructure projects that were signed during Rajapaksa's rule.

However, one of the biggest infrastructure projects was the agreement between Colombo and Beijing to construct the Hambantota port in the southern part of Sri Lanka. It became worse for India when Colombo (whether under pressure from Beijing or otherwise) leased the Hambantota port to China, along with 15,000 acres of land around it, for 99 years. Outside the lease, when a Chinese submarine docked in Sri Lanka for the first time, it enhanced the fears in New Delhi about Sri Lanka's intentions.

For Beijing, Rajapaksa was an opportunity, and a willing partner which was ready to invite China into Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka under Rajapaksa became a crucial hog in China's Indian Ocean approach in two critical ways.

First, Colombo became the most prominent Indian Ocean pillar for Beijing's Maritime Silk Route (MSR) idea, which was a precursor to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Both Sri Lanka and the Maldives occupy important geographic and strategic positions in the Indian Ocean. Neither Myanmar nor Pakistan (in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, respectively) can provide the strategic location that Sri Lanka and the Maldives provide.

Second, Colombo also became the investment and infrastructure hub for China in the Indian Ocean, overlooking the international shipping lanes and even the Malacca Strait.

When Mahinda Rajapaksa lost the Presidential elections to Maithripala Sirisena in 2015, it was expected that the new government, led by Ranil

Wickremesinghe, would return to the pre-Rajapaksa days in balancing relations between Beijing and New Delhi.

Though there have been signs of a balanced approach towards India by Sri Lanka as is evident in the many measures that have been put into place during Rajapaksa's period. However, it has not been easy for Sri Lanka to return to the pre-2007 period. A case in point is the Colombo Port City project. The commitments and agreements between Sri Lanka and China are substantial, and it is not easy for any government to completely overturn.

The Sirisena-Wickremesinghe Vertical: Your enemy is my enemy; but you are not my friend

When Maithripala Sirisena was elected as the President of Sri Lanka in 2015, along with Wickremesinghe as the Prime Minister, there was an expectation that both would work together in addressing the immediate political, societal, and economic issues facing Sri Lanka. The biggest threat to the post-Rajapaksa political process came from within. Both - President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe could not reach a consensus, leading to a cold war between the two. Despite the local elections in 2018 showing signs of a Rajapaksa wave, the two refused to come together. In October 2018, the Maithripala-Ranil vector became ugly. President Sirisena removed Prime Minister Wickremesinghe, and what was worse, appointed Mahinda Rajapaksa as the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

The course of events described above highlight not just the difference between the two individuals, but also the distance between two constitutional institutions in Sri Lanka: the posts of the President and the Prime Minister. Sirisena was elected as the President, thanks to the support of the UNP. Had Ranil and the UNP not agreed to Sirisena being the joint candidate, the latter could not have won the Presidential election in 2015. At that time, Sirisena was not a popular leader, even within his party.

The fallout between the two individuals and the two parties has also meant a paralysis in governance. Both had earlier promised accountability, development, and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The divide between the two also impacted the Colombo-Jaffna Vertical, and is likely to change New Delhi-Colombo Vertical further.

The New Delhi-Chennai Vertical: One Country, Two Perceptions

An essential factor in the New Delhi-Chennai Vertical is the interaction between New Delhi and Chennai regarding Sri Lanka.

There is an inherent structural problem in India's external relations vis-à-vis the neighbourhood. It looks at the neighbours primarily from the point of view of capital, New Delhi, with little or no inputs from the immediate region that shares political and ethnic borders with the neighbours. India-Sri Lanka relations suffer from the same framework which has to be seen outside the political context, and more in terms of how the MEA looks at the region.

Besides the above framework led by the South Block (MEA), there is a bigger political problem between New Delhi and Chennai. Led by Dravidian political parties, State politics in Tamil Nadu have a limited presence and influence in New Delhi, and their influence depends on whom they support in the Parliament. The two leading national parties - the Congress and the BJP - could never have sufficient political presence in Tamil Nadu to understand and reflect the perceptions of the Tamil community towards Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Tamil issue is an emotional issue for Chennai. Sri Lanka is a security issue for New Delhi. While Chennai looks at Jaffna, it criticises New Delhi for failing to do so adequately. Worse, Chennai complains that New Delhi looks at Colombo at the cost of Sri Lankan Tamils.

The Colombo-Beijing Vertical is non-existent in Chennai. The same, however, tops the list of priorities for New Delhi. In the 1980s, there was a similar pattern between New Delhi and Chennai in Sri Lanka. The idea of a Voice of America (VoA) station in Sri Lanka rang alarm bells in New Delhi, forcing India to take Sri Lanka seriously. However, the VoA in Sri Lanka during that time was not the Sri Lanka debate in Tamil Nadu; instead, it was ethnic conflict and the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees that formed the core of Chennai's Sri Lanka outlook.

Despite coalition politics, with one of the Dravidian political parties supporting the Congress and the other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the distance between New Delhi and Chennai has not become shorter vis-à-vis Jaffna and Colombo. At the civil society level within Tamil Nadu, the rise of narrow politics has further complicated desirable unbiased political approach to Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan Tamils.

The Future: Will it get better, or worse?

The recent elections in India and the forthcoming elections in Sri Lanka (both Parliamentary and Presidential) are likely to play a crucial role in taking India-Sri Lanka relations forward. The BJP has won the elections in 2019 with a thumping majority, and the country has witnessed the return of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister.

However, although the BJP has made impressive inroads in North and North-east India, its performance in the just concluded elections in South India is poor. It could not win a single seat out of the 39 Parliamentary seats in Tamil Nadu. The DMK- the BJP's (and that of the AIADMK) primary opponent - has won substantially. The expectation is that when there is an election for the State Legislative Assembly in Tamil Nadu, the DMK is likely to return to power.

Whether the DMK will return to power in the near future or otherwise, with no seats in Tamil Nadu, the BJP is likely to look at Sri Lanka more from New Delhi's prism, caring less for Chennai. One is expected to witness the New Delhi-Chennai vector facing a rough time.

Outside India, in Sri Lanka, there is a general perception that the 2020 elections would witness the return of Mahinda Rajapaksa. While the recent terror attacks on Easter Sunday have created a phobia amongst the majority community, it is believed that it would benefit Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The return of Rajapaksa would mean the deterioration of the Colombo-Jaffna vector. The issue is not just the Rajapaksa factor in Colombo-Jaffna vector. During the last few years, after the demolition of the LTTE, the Sinhalese position at the civil society level towards a settlement of the Tamil issue has become hardened. The rise of Sinhala nationalism, coupled with Buddhist radicalisation led by the Bodu Sena (BBS), a section within the Sri Lankan majority, is against giving any concessions to the Sri Lankan Tamils. The perception is that what the minorities have lost in the war cannot be conceded through political negotiation. Rajapaksa is making use of this narrow nationalism, and fanning it further. This complicates the position of the UNP and Ranil Wickremesinghe in pursuing any genuine reconciliation efforts.

Equally divided is the Sri Lankan Tamil community itself. The demise of the LTTE has not necessarily brought the Sri Lankan Tamil political leadership together.

Externally for Sri Lanka, the return of Rajapaksa would strengthen Colombo-Beijing vector, impinging on the Colombo-New Delhi vector. This

could have been prevented last time, had Colombo and New Delhi worked together to take the bilateral relations to a level different from 2015. This failure would come back to haunt both, post-2020 elections in Sri Lanka.

This may not happen if firstly, a miracle happens within Sri Lanka, resulting in Rajapaksa not returning to power; or, the two major communities (Sinhala and Tamil) coming together to chart a new future. Secondly, New Delhi understands the complexities in all four vectors and takes proactive steps, prioritises and balances the interactions between the two countries.

While the first one may not be in India's hands, the second one is.

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India-Sri Lanka Relations: New Issues, Novel Perspective

Gulbin Sultana*

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government commenced its second term in May 2019. The foreign policy of the NDA-II administration is expected to be a continuation of the policies of the previous administration. One of the major policy emphases of the NDA-I administration was the 'neighbourhood first' policy. This policy brought immense hopes in the improvement of India's bilateral relations with its neighbours. The policy announcements of the National Unity Government (NUG) in Sri Lanka that came into power in 2015 - within less than a year of NDAI taking office - also intensified engagement and activities between the governments of India and Sri Lanka to address concerns, and strengthen and improve bilateral relations.

This has resulted in a significant improvement in the mutual understanding between the two governments. Several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed to enhance ties in the areas of economics, science and technology, agriculture, education, nuclear, connectivity, and culture. However, most of these MoUs, particularly the one related to trade and investment, did not yield the desired results. Despite the initial enthusiasm of both the governments, the real concerns in the bilateral relations, including the fate of Indian development projects, excessive Chinese presence in the Island, the resolution of fishermen's issue, and the repatriation of the Sri Lankan refugees, are yet to be resolved.

Domestic political and economic factors in Sri Lanka stood as a stumbling block in resolving these issues. Bomb blasts in several places in Sri Lanka on the day of Easter (21 April 2019), allegedly by the local group called National Tawheed Jamaat, influenced by the Islamic States (IS), added to the existing concerns in the bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka.

Domestic Political Hindrance:

During its first tenure, particularly after the NUG came into power, the Modi administration made sincere efforts to address the concerns of Sri Lankans through personal engagement, and by changing its approach towards

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(*This opinion piece was contributed by the author on June 7, 2019*)

the issues of devolution, the diversification of India's developmental assistance throughout the country instead of concentrating only on the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka, and introducing deep sea fishing policy in India to stop poaching by the Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters. Humanitarian services are being extended to the people of Sri Lanka by the Indian financial grants. Despite these efforts, the anti-India constituency remains strong in Sri Lanka and continues to object to the strengthening of economic ties with India. Since even the deep-sea fishing policy could not stop poaching by Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters, demands are being made to deny the release of captured Indian boats and refuse the Presidential pardon to captive Indian fishermen. Instead, demands have been made to take stringent actions against Indian fishermen entering Sri Lankan waters. It is being alleged by anti-India constituencies in Sri Lanka that India is aiming to economically invade their country. Several protest demonstrations were made against the signing of the proposed Economic and Technological Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) and Indian investment in developmental projects in Sri Lanka. However, Prime Minister (PM) Wickremesinghe tried to convince the protestors by ensuring that no harmful agreements will be signed, and went ahead to sign the MoU with India 'for cooperation in Economic Projects'. These include Indian investment in the development of ports and oil tank farms in Trincomalee; the setting up of a LNG power plant and terminal, helping with piped gas supply in Colombo; and highway and railway projects in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Nonetheless, the projects mentioned in the MoU could not make further progress due to differences between Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and President Maithripala Sirisena as well as the determination of the Opposition led by Mahinda Rajapaksa to not let the government function.

Even though the Prime Minister and the President, who belong to the different political parties (United National Party-UNP and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party-SLFP, respectively), expressed their commitment to work together at the time of the formation of the NUG, the two leaders are at loggerheads in taking policy decisions on many domestic, foreign policy, and economic issues. The differences between the two came to light within a few months of the formation of the NUG, but reached their nadir when Sirisena removed Wickremesinghe and appointed Rajapaksa as the Prime Minister in October 2018 by issuing a gazette. However, the President had to reappoint Wickremesinghe as the Prime Minister in December 2018 as Rajapaksa failed to prove his majority in Parliament. For two months, the

political chaos completely paralysed the country as there was a complete government shutdown.

The SLFP and the UNP have always followed a partisan approach on the issue of foreign policy and economy. Nevertheless, President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe agreed to follow a common foreign and economic policy. While the President agreed and cooperated with the Prime Minister to improve relations with all countries, including India, America and the EU, he had a major disagreement with Wickremesinghe administration's approach to liberalising and opening up the Sri Lankan economy by signing free trade agreements with other countries. Even though Sirisena reiterated his intention to strengthen ties with India during all the bilateral exchanges, he expressed his opposition to Wickremesinghe's insistence on signing the proposed ETCA, and moving ahead with the implementation of the MoUs for 'cooperation in economic projects' that he had signed with India during his visit to New Delhi in 2017. The opposition led by Mahinda Rajapaksa also protested against each and every deal that the Wickremesinghe Government had decided to sign with India, including the development of the Matalla international airport

Ironically, while Indian development projects are getting delayed, Chinese investments in the island are going up despite President Sirisena's opposition towards some of them. Economic compulsion is used as a justification for the growing Chinese footprint in Sri Lanka under the NUG. Even though the Wickremesinghe administration has committed to India that China will not be allowed to use any of its territory to affect India's interests, the growth in Chinese presence - despite popular protests and President Sirisena's opposition - irritates India.

There has also been complete disagreement between the Prime Minister and the President on the reconciliation of Tamil issues. On the issue of United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) resolution, there is no agreement between the two leaders. While the Prime Minister is committed to cooperating with the United Nations (UN) to implement the UNHRC resolution, the President refuses to cooperate with the UN. Since during its first tenure, the Modi administration chose to be non-prescriptive on the issue of devolution and on the methodology of the reconciliation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, differences between the Prime Minister and the President on the UNHRC resolution have not impacted India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations. But differences between the two have impacted the resolution of the Tamil problems and, thus, a conducive atmosphere has not yet been

created for the Sri Lankan refugees in India to go back to their country. Additionally, non-commencement of the ferry service between the two countries has also discouraged the Sri Lankan refugees from going back to Sri Lanka. Thus, the repatriation of the Sri Lankan refugees is still a continuing issue in bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka.

Great Power Competition in Sri Lanka:

Even though old issues are yet to be resolved, new issues have cropped up in bilateral relations. The Easter Sunday bomb blasts by a local organisation influenced by the IS (debates are going on in Sri Lanka whether IS chose Sri Lanka or the local groups reached out to the IS to express their grievances) have ushered in a new situation. On the one hand, it may increase cooperation in terms of intelligence sharing and capacity building in countering terrorism and extremism; but it may also reduce Indian influence and affect India's security interests, if Sri Lanka allows US and Chinese presence in the country in the realm of security. Reportedly, Sri Lankan authorities were informed by Indian intelligence about a possible attack on the island prior to the tragedy. However, due to lack of seriousness and indecisiveness, the authorities failed to prevent the attacks. After the attack, Sri Lanka sought assistance from several countries, including India, China, USA, and so on. All these countries have provided security assistance to Sri Lanka. India has provided assistance in terms of intelligence, technological and forensic expertise. India's National Investigation Agency has extended its cooperation to the Sri Lankan authorities in its probe into the attack.

China and the USA have been quite forthcoming in providing security assistance to Sri Lanka. A defence cooperation agreement was signed between China and Sri Lanka. China has committed to grant Sri Lankan Rupees 2.6 billion to the Sri Lankan security forces, along with 100 jeeps for the Sri Lankan police. Given Chinese investments in the country, it is in China's interests to assist Sri Lanka to counter terrorism and prevent large scale terrorist attacks in the country. At the same time, it is quite possible that the Defence Cooperation Agreement was the response to the revision of the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) between Sri Lanka and the USA in August 2017, and Sri Lanka's ongoing negotiation on the proposed Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the USA.

ACSA was originally signed in 2007 for 10 years. The renewed agreement signed in 2017 removed the provision of periodical renewal, thus making it a

sort of permanent agreement, though either party can opt out from the agreement by giving prior notice of 180 days. The ACSA provides for joint military cooperation, including logistics support, supplies and services, and the use of airports and ports during unforeseen circumstances. Reportedly, if implemented, the SOFA agreement would grant US military personnel, military contractors, and military suppliers the same privileges and perks granted to the technical and administrative officers of the US Embassy. Also, if implemented, the agreement would take away Sri Lanka's right to inspect any US vessels that enters Sri Lanka. Talks are also going on about the possibility of Sri Lanka joining the US-led coalition to defeat ISIS, even though Sri Lanka has not given any affirmation. The FBI team is already in Sri Lanka to assist with the investigation of the Easter attacks.

Following Sri Lankan support to China's maritime silk route initiative, America has been trying to balance China in collaboration with India and Japan. Both the countries have been trying to have their influence on Sri Lanka. The USA and China have quickly grabbed the opportunity provided by the Easter Sunday attacks to increase their cooperation and security presence in the island. The attack has provided the American military the opportunity to practically apply the provisions of the ACSA. Media reports suggest that Sri Lanka has even sought a mass online surveillance system from China.

Even though India sided with the USA along with Japan to curb Chinese presence in the country following Sri Lanka's support to China's maritime silk route initiative, India needs a relook at the US-China competition, and Sri Lanka's growing security cooperation with the USA and China from a new perspective in the post-Easter Sunday attacks period, as also in terms of the revision of the ACSA, the ongoing negotiations on the proposed SOFA between the USA and Sri Lanka, and the China-Sri Lanka defence Cooperation agreement. Since India has followed the policy of 'no boots on the ground' in the Island, the IS influence in the Easter Sunday attacks might be used as justification for the presence of American and Chinese security personnel for longer periods on Sri Lankan ground, which would not be in India's interest. Given the proximity and India's capacity, India will always be relevant to Sri Lanka despite the island's growing security cooperation with the USA and China. Yet, Sri Lanka's approach and attitude towards its security deals with the extra-regional powers may act as an irritant in the bilateral relations with India in the coming days.

Challenges

Domestic politics and the presence of extra regional power have always impacted India-Sri Lanka bilateral relations. Within India, the Tamil Nadu factor has played a major role in the bilateral relations. However, during the period 2015-2019, the Tamil Nadu factor took a back seat. Political issues within Sri Lanka mostly impacted Indo-Lanka bilateral relations during this period. Due to size asymmetry and past memories, the India-Sri Lanka relations have certain intrinsic disadvantages which will always affect bilateral relations. It is extremely important to keep in mind those realities while analysing India-Sri Lanka relations. Anti-India constituencies will always be present in the island, and they will be used by opportunist leaders for their narrow political and economic interests in Sri Lanka.

Given the differences in size and domestic concerns, India and Sri Lanka have different strategic goals. While India wants to prevent any overbearing presence of external powers in the region, the presence of extra-regional powers suits Sri Lankan interests sometimes. As a small country with ethnic-minority connections, Sri Lanka has security concerns about India's overbearing presence in the neighbourhood. Over the years, the Sri Lankan leadership has adopted two different means to address its security concerns: countering India by getting closer with extra-regional powers; or, engaging India while having closer relations with extra-regional powers at the same time. In either circumstance, Sri Lanka's engagements with extra-regional powers are the preferred constant features of its regional policy.

Hence, despite positive and development-oriented initiatives by India in Sri Lanka, political developments within Sri Lanka and the political and economic ideology of the leaders in power determine the real course of India-Sri Lanka relations.

The Way forward

India's aim should be to protect its interests despite the presence of other countries in Sri Lanka. It should gradually work towards mitigating the concerns emanating from the anti-India constituencies by addressing some of the genuine grievances the Sri Lankans have against India.

India must be mindful of the sensitivities of Sri Lanka as a small state. India must see how Sri Lanka's fears and suspicion can be minimised. Prime Minister

Modi did adopt a different approach on the Tamil issue compared to his predecessors; but many of the genuine grievances regarding the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) - such as the lack of the mutual recognition of standards, non-tariff barriers, and inefficient testing procedures for which Sri Lanka could not accrue actual benefit of the ISFTA - remain unaddressed. India must address those grievances as practically and swiftly as possible. The bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka is challenged both by some politically motivated activities based on irrational and unsubstantiated argument as well as by some genuine reasons. The two governments must address the genuine reasons so that the relationship can be improved. The two countries must enhance interdependency so that, despite political opposition, the governments of both the countries find ways to nurture and improve the relations.

A proper assessment should be made regarding the feasibility and sustainability of a policy to address the concerns. While the deep-sea fishing policy initiated by the government of India is considered a sound policy to resolve the fishermen issue between the two countries, not much thought has been given to whether the policy would be motivating enough for the Rameswaram fishermen to stop fishing in Sri Lankan waters, and instead go for deep-sea fishing.

While it is important to shed the image of a country having bias towards a particular community in a multi-ethnic country, India also needs to ensure that it does not lose the importance and influence it has on the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. Given the changed approach of Modi on the issue of Tamils, Sri Lankan Tamil leaders are apparently approaching the Americans and other EU countries for assistance to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government to take suitable political measures agreeable to all the Sri Lankans. While it is important to be unbiased, it is equally important to maintain the leverage that India enjoyed once in Sri Lanka.

While India should be mindful of the activities of the extra-regional powers in the island, it should not rush to sign a deal without calculating the pros and cons vis-à-vis its interests. India must ensure that it does not venture into a loss making entity just to be present near Chinese projects in the island. It is crucial for both the governments to look for sustainability and feasibility when they agree to sign any deal.

Conclusion

Given the strategic importance of Sri Lanka, all the big powers remain interested

in the country. There is nothing new in this. Sri Lanka can use its strategic importance as an opportunity to get assistance from all the big powers, provided it follows a balanced policy without giving the impression that it is using one country to counter another. It essentially depends upon the leader in power in Sri Lanka - on how he/she uses the country's strategic importance. In the past, it was observed that some leaders used extra-regional powers to counter India; others followed the policy of engagement with India while also maintaining friendly relations with extra-regional powers. How India-Sri Lanka relations pan out in the next five years depends on the outcome of the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

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India-Sri Lanka Relations: A View from Sri Lanka Need for More Confidence Building Measures

Jayanath Colombage*

The year 2015 will be written in the history of Sri Lanka as a watershed year. The January 2015 presidential election witnessed the downfall of President Mahinda Rajapaksa who, in fact, won the nearly three-decade long separatist conflict, and the election of hitherto obscure Maithripala Sirisena as the new President. There was euphoria and a sense of renewed hope among the populace as the Rajapaksa administration was accused of abuse of power, violation of human rights, large scale corruption, nepotism, and close alignment with China.

The United National Party (UNP) led government came to power at the August 2015 general election, which established what is known as a "*Yahapalana* Government", a bipartisan administration of good governance. This was the first time that the two main political parties in the island, the UNP led United National Front (UNF) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), joined together to form a 'national unity government', initially for two years. This arrangement was expected to transform the conflict-ridden political landscape into a peaceful environment, with special focus on development, reconciliation, and accountability. There was enthusiasm about fast tracking the economy and balanced foreign relations. Sri Lanka-India relations were expected to rise to a level higher than before. There were also hopes for increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from both the West and India to boost the economy, and keep China at bay.

The new government wasted no time in suspending practically all construction projects undertaken by the Chinese State Owned Enterprises (SOE) - that is, the Colombo Port City, the Lotus Communication Tower, the Hambantota Port, the Mattala International Airport, and several highway projects.

Soon after the inauguration of the new government, the 19th Amendment of the Constitution was enacted by the Sri Lanka Parliament, with 215 out of 225 members voting in favour. This amendment envisaged the dilution of

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powers of the Executive Presidency, which had been in unfettered force since 1978. The Constitutional Council was empowered for drafting a new Constitution, which commenced under the leadership of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. The stated objectives of the proposed new Constitution were the devolution of executive powers, participatory democracy, good governance, and the restoration of people's sovereignty. India-Sri Lanka diplomatic and military ties improved with the establishment of the national government. The frequency of high level political, diplomatic, and military visits to and from India as well as joint military exercises, meetings and discussions increased, while China became a bystander.

However, the much expected FDIs from the West and India failed to materialise and, nearly 18 months after, the national government was compelled to turn back to China, in a position of weakness. China had been deeply hurt about Sri Lanka deciding to suspend all Chinese projects, resulting in losses, and now introduced new conditions to re-commence the projects. Sri Lanka was in no position to disagree as, by that time, the economy had begun to slow alarmingly, as was evidenced in the reduction of the GDP growth rate from 5 percent in 2014 to 3.4 percent by 2017.

There is a strong belief in Sri Lanka that India was responsible for the 2015 regime change in Sri Lanka, with the support of the USA in the guise of promoting democracy. By the end of its term, the Rajapaksa administration had quite unintentionally heightened India's strategic concerns by its close alignment with China. The two visits made by conventional submarines of the People's Liberation Army/Navy in 2014, had become a source of concern to India.

With the slowing down of the economy and the lack of fulfilment of election promises, the national government was seen by the public as an inefficient administration. The government was accused of surrendering the sovereignty of the country by fulfilling pledges made to the West. The government failed to consider national security as a priority, and retired and serving senior military personnel were subjected to criminal investigation and harassment. The military intelligence was removed from internal security duties, and the police was entrusted with the task. The threat posed by Islamic radicalised elements was not taken seriously and the Easter bombings on April 21, which killed more than 250 persons in attacks against three major churches and hotels, were seen as a result of the government's lax attitude toward national security.

With the economic situation deteriorating and foreign investors losing confidence, the Sri Lankan rupee depreciated rapidly against the US Dollar. And even as the government increased taxes, it was the national government that was blamed by the people. The former President Rajapaksa became a popular leadership figure once again, evidenced by the local government elections held in February 2018. Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), the less than one-year old political party established under the patronage of the former President Rajapaksa, convincingly won the election. This was the largest election in the history of Sri Lanka, with 15.7 million Sri Lankans eligible to vote. This was also the first election under the national unity government, and was a litmus test for them. In a surprise result, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) - functioning on behalf of former President Rajapaksa - scored first by wining 40 percent of the votes, whilst the governing party UNP gathered only 29 percent. SLFP, the party led by President Sirisena, ended up being the distant third, with 12 percent of the votes.

This election result gave rise to a blame game between the President and the Prime Minister, each blaming the other for the poor state of the economy and surrendering Sri Lankan sovereignty to other countries. The infamous "Bond Scam" - in which a private company headed by the son-in-law of the former Governor of the Central Bank, making unprecedented profits at an auction of treasury bills - resulted in the President appointing a Commission of Inquiry. The 'Bond Scam' raised a huge controversy including raising questions as regards the competence of the government, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka as also allegations of insider dealings. The government leadership was seen as directly involved in the scam, and they did their best cover up the issue. The Presidential Commission of Inquiry findings were not made fully public; but the finger was pointed at the Prime Minister and several senior cabinet ministers for directly conniving with the perpetrators of the scam. The 'Bond Scam' and the 2018 February local government elections drove a wedge between the President and the Prime Minister. President Sirisena's decision to contest the next presidential election, despite his pledge that he would not contest for a second term, added fuel to the fire, which eventually led to the constitutional crisis of October 2018, which resulted in the sacking of the Prime Minister and installing President Sirisena's arch rival former, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, as Prime Minister. However, several months later, the Supreme Court ruled that the move was unconstitutional, and the situation was reversed. India judiciously stayed away from the controversy whilst the USA, UK, Canada, and some other western countries were seen directly interested in resolving the crisis.

India was once again dragged into controversy when President Sirisena accused the Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) for being behind an assassination plot against him. A Deputy Inspector General of Police, who was in charge of Terrorist Investigation Division (TID), was remanded over the allegation, and the inquiry is still going on. An Indian national was also arrested, and later released. At the same time, Indian efforts in taking over a stake in the East Container Terminal in the port of Colombo, taking control of the Mattala International Airport as well as a Liquefied Natural Gas power generation project, failed to succeed due to the rift between the President and the Prime Minister. Consequently, the Sri Lankan government's efforts in strategic balancing through key infrastructure projects in favour of India failed to materialise.

In the meantime, the USA developed a number of military oriented initiatives with Sri Lanka as a part of its Indo-Pacific Strategy. Among these activities were: the decision to donate the ex-US Coast Guard Cutter *Sherman* to the Sri Lankan Navy, undertaking a number of Pacific sea-lift and air-lift exercises, inviting the Sri Lanka Navy to participate in the 'Rim of Pacific' (RIMPAC) exercises, the setting up of Sri Lanka Marine Corps, establishing a temporary Air Logistic Hub, carrying out joint exercises with the Sri Lankan military, and undertaking a number of high level visits. All these demonstrated increased US military interest in Sri Lanka. Negotiations are also going on for signing a 'Status of Forces Agreement' (SOFA) with the USA. Concerns have been raised locally as to the possible negative consequences by allying so closely with the USA, forcing the President to rule that he would not authorise SOFA with the USA. These developments must be worrying policy makers and the strategic community in New Delhi, just as much as the security related agreements signed during President Sirisena's visit to China in May 2019.

Speaking of China, it is not a secret that India is wary of Chinese inroads into the Indian Ocean and its engagement as a major maritime power in the Indian Ocean Region. The economic strengths, military powers, and interests of the two countries are increasing steadily, and they are increasingly coming into contact with each other in the Indian Ocean, and not across the eastern and northern borders of India. The USA is undoubtedly the number one military and economic power in the world today. However, the power and influence of the USA is on a relative decline, and therefore the USA, together with Japan and Australia, are trying to engage India in their Indo-Pacific strategy. It was seen that India was losing its influence in Sri Lanka while the USA was gaining a foothold in the island nation. Furthermore, Chinese presence and influence in the island has continued to increase, albeit the short hiatus since

the government of national unity took over the administration in 2015. These should be worrying developments for New Delhi, as Sri Lanka is pretty much within the maritime and air security umbrella of India.

Against this backdrop, came the April 21 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka. It is believed that National Tawaheed Jama'ath (NTJ), the group accused of carrying out the attacks, is an associated arm of Tamil Nadu Jawaheed Jamad, founded in 2005. Some radical preachers from India have been visiting Sri Lanka to propagate radical Islam. It is also believed that the alleged mastermind of the Easter bombings, and several other members of NTJ, had spent some time in Kerala and possibly elsewhere in South India. Hence, there were allegations that India had some connection to the bombings. These allegations, and some media reporting in India, gave rise to a conspiracy theory that Indian Intelligence agencies not only alerted their counterparts in Sri Lanka but also took part in the plot, and carried out a false-flag operation. Not giving due recognition to the specific intelligence warning about the impending attacks on Easter Sunday, and the failure to take prompt follow up action could be explained by the lack of capacity to take critical policy decisions, political intrigue, as well as suspicion about the role of India's intelligence agencies. This could also be attributed to the rift between the President and Prime Minister.

There are many questions that remain unanswered regarding the motives of the Easter Sunday bombings. Why did Sri Lanka become the target? This is the most prominent question. Where did the funds come from for the perpetrators to put together a team to carry out the suicide attacks, procure the most lethal bomb making material, and acquire the technology?

The Muslim community in Sri Lanka is around 10 percent of the total population, and they have lived together with other communities for over a millennium. There have been several incidents of communal violence in the past targeting Muslims; but the governments in charge have taken immediate action to defuse such situations and compensated the damages. The ISIS leader, who was in hiding for nearly five years, came out and made it known that the attackers were part of the 'Revenge for the brothers of Bagouz', and expressed his satisfaction that there were Americans and Europeans among the dead. However, it is known that the Hotel Taj Samudra and the Indian High Commission were among the targets and, in fact, one of the suicide bombers tried to explode a bomb inside Hotel Taj Samudra, but failed.

There is considerable opposition among Sri Lankans to the proposed Indo-Sri Lanka Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA),

although there is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between them. Unlike other trade agreements which cover goods, the ETCA proposes to cover services - specifically IT and shipyard services. This means that Indian nationals may move back and forth seeking employment in the island. The limited size of Sri Lanka's economy, the large population of India, and the sometimes contentious relationship between the two countries, have given rise to the suspicion that India would end up dominating the Sri Lankan economy through the proposed agreement. However, there is also a school of thought that believes Sri Lanka would stand to benefit from the fast-developing Indian economy. Nearly 32 percent of container cargo handled by the port of Colombo represents containers on their way to and from India. Trade with India is likely to grow, and Sri Lanka would benefit by going ahead with ETCA (or a similar arrangement) after addressing the concerns. However, this is unlikely under the present administration in Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, it is clear that a mutually rewarding strategic relationship is of utmost importance to both India and Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka cannot - and should not - be a strategic concern to India, as the Island and the ocean space around it is a part of Indian maritime and air strategic security umbrella. Whilst Sri Lanka should be mindful about India's strategic concerns, India should also be mindful about the mindset of the Sri Lankan people. Sri Lanka's development needs require constant flows of FDI, and tourism is one area where such investment could be targeted.

Sri Lanka and India need to improve bilateral relations for mutually rewarding economic prosperity. There is a need for more confidence building measures by both sides. India, being the bigger, more powerful country both economically and militarily, should take a more proactive role in confidence building. India also needs to address the illegal poaching and related issues by Tamil Nadu fishing trawlers in the Palk Strait and elsewhere in the territorial waters of the island. Such illegal activities are irreversibly destroying the marine ecosystem in the Palk Bay. The military-to-military relations between the two countries are strong and commendable; but there should be increased economic activities and people-to-people links through culture as well as religion. India should invest in Sri Lanka not merely to counter Chinese investment but also to boost the economy and prosperity of its southern neighbour.

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Looming US Retreat under Trump: Implications for Asian Security

Vivek Mishra*

Donald Trump's presidency and its consequent policies have spurred a series of geopolitical developments upending America's core beliefs about globalization. Trump's unilateral disruptions on various occasions, turning America's back on globalization, have impacted the global economy, security, trade, climate, and polity in almost equal measure. However, the most severe implications of the Trumpian retreat from globalization could be for Asian security, an area where the USA has commanded a dominant influence since the end of the Second World War. Even as a transactional foreign policy approach has started to flow from Washington, Asia's notion of collective security under the US umbrella faces an uncertain future. This process has been hastened by China's growing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The Trump Administration has withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Climate accord, and threatened to withdraw from the WTO, sabotaging any semblance of future trade or climate security. As the USA under Trump aims to boost domestic growth, the security dilemma of the Asia-Pacific is gradually transitioning into the IOR via the Indo-Pacific. A certain alliance restructuring and lack of emphasis on traditional security priorities by Washington has potentially created a security imbalance in Asia that needs to be restored. It is here that India, as a strong regional power and with its calculated bonhomie with the USA, could play the role of an Asian balancer. With a potential pan-Asian role depicted by its net-security-provider role, India is poised to fill the void that has been partially created by the American retreat vis-à-vis collective Asian security.

For a substantial period of time, the world order associated itself with the narrative of decline of nation states and a simultaneous rise in globalisation. As the forces of globalisation gathered momentum, such

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notional assertions started to assume authentic designs. The intensive and rapid nature of the processes of globalisation even churned the idea of a possible withering away of traditional nation states. However, it seems that both nation states and globalisation have remained critical to the current world order as major countries have reasserted the centrality of power and control in the nation state. As nation states consolidate their inward-looking orientation through rising protectionism, anti-immigration postures and even xenophobia, the time is perhaps right to assess the impact of the global retreat of globalisation.

Questions about the retreat, and even demise, of globalisation began to be asked at the end of the first phase of globalization; 1870 to 1914. The backlash against globalisation was intensified by the Great Depression and saw paralysed global trade. But globalisation, particularly augmented by economic integration, witnessed a bolstered return with the ideas of European integration and Southeast Asian integration through EU and ASEAN in the second half of the twentieth century. John Whalley of the University of Ontario raised[1] an extremely important question in 1999, when globalisation still seemed like an unstoppable force gathering steam: would there be a redefinition, a resurgence of sorts, in the idea of nation states as a consequence of globalisation? With a wave of detractive attitudes of countries towards globalisation, supported by a host of populist leaders across the world, Whalley's concerns are gaining ground in present times. The USA under Trump has been at the helm of the rising global tirade against globalisation. As such, the fundamentals of globalisation seem challenged, if not shaken, in the wake of the global retreat from globalisation led by the USA under the Trump administration.

Donald Trump and Globalisation

The 2008 financial crisis, somewhat reminiscent of the Great Depression in the USA, made America cautious going forward, even as job loss and low growth rates dogged the nation. Underlying this transformation was a simmering frustration among Americans about domestic companies manufacturing abroad, the loss of jobs to skilled foreign migrants in the USA and consequent anti-immigration sentiment, and perhaps even strongly about American expenditure abroad in various forms: wars, military bases, foreign aid, and other missions – all quintessentially validating the anti-globalisation narrative. Donald Trump managed to tap into this sentiment, and later converted

it into votes. Indeed, he looks on the road to secure a second term of Presidency.

Both economy and trade, the two basic variables of America's globalisation outreach, stood challenged in the face of a looming structural upending that the Trump Administration promised. Such threats made the world feel more nervous for two reasons: first, the threats to globalisation were flowing from the supposed guardian of globalisation; and second, that any snapping of global trade and economic linkages at a time when the world stands more connected than before would be highly detrimental. Donald Trump and globalisation have represented two contrarian ends of a spectrum since he embarked on his electoral campaign running up to the election results in January 2017.

Trump's emphasis on pulling out of some of major global negotiations, threatening to deport illegal immigrants in the USA, questioning traditional US policies towards other countries, and threats to American companies that were manufacturing in Asia and abroad symbolised Trump's crusade against globalisation. More specifically, the USA under Trump pulled out of global climate change commitments; the Paris Climate deal[2]; promised to build a wall on its border with Mexico to stop immigrants from entering the USA illegally;[3] promised to expand the border tax for American companies manufacturing abroad;[4] pulled America out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); questioned[5] the viability of a US alliance with Japan and South Korea, two of US' strongest allies in the Asia-Pacific region; threatened to walk out of the WTO; escalated trade wars with China and India; differed with the EU on trade matters and seems to be preparing to leave the reins of Afghanistan in the hands the Taliban through a Faustian bargain. All of these moves carry significant repercussions for America's global relations, particularly Asian security.

Retreat of Globalization and Asian Security

Through the post-War phase of the twentieth century, the USA made sure that its Asian connections were well established. Assuring a series of alliance partnerships across Asia, the USA established a labyrinth of relations that thrived on the twin mutuality of trade and security. Particularly, the Asia-Pacific emerged as the pivotal node of America's Asia relations. In the perpetuation of globalisation that was led by the USA, Asia remained an important spot. What followed were developments in the global order, ushering

the Asian domain into what is now being touted as the Asian century. Asia continued to be central to America's global relations. It is natural, then, that a retreat from globalization would have serious implications for America's relations in Asia, and for Asian security. In the same breath, it has been widely perceived that Trump's revisionist designs on globalisation and his seeking to revaluate the open global economic order would have serious implications for the political and security domains in Asia.

The Asia-Pacific

America's turning back on globalisation under Trump has led to the growing belief in the possibility of weakening, or even an end, of America's security alliances across the world, especially in Asia. Trump has threatened a revision of USA' ties with Japan and South Korea, and asked the countries to pay more for the American guarantee of security. Even Macron's France, a key trans-Atlantic ally, is not off Trump's radar. By making its security alliance rescindable with two of the most significant countries, Trump has thrown a spanner in USA's designs for creating the strategic augmentation in the Asia-Pacific to effectively tackle the rising Chinese challenge.

In the century that has been labelled as the 'Asian Century', America's relations with the countries of Asia have come to rest primarily on the twin pillars of economics and security. The Trump administration's strategic myopia has been evident in its attempt to decouple trade and security rationales in Asia. As such, a part of the reason why the erstwhile Obama Presidency endorsed the TPP was the much needed resuscitation of USA's security agenda in the Asia-Pacific: rebalance. Resultantly, Trump's decision to pull out of the TPP resulted in an unintended erosion of trust and reassurance among USA's allies in the Asia-pacific, affecting its relations with regional countries much beyond trade.

Starker strands of the chinks in America's Asian security armour began to be visible with Donald Trump rather nonchalantly proposing to withdraw US military support from Japan and South Korea, and even exhorting them to acquire nuclear weapons, thus hinting to end its extended deterrence.[6] A waffling and uncertain support from Washington to its allies in the Asia-Pacific created an unprecedented regional dilemma for US allies in the region, particularly in the face of a rising and assertive China. Such dithering paved way for at least two security implications: first, a weakened regional security resolve of the USA diminished the extended deterrence that it provides in the

region. Second, more importantly, is that it generated the strategic rationale for both South Korea and Japan to go nuclear amidst a shrinking US nuclear umbrella. This does not augur well for the security environment and stability of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly when both South Korea and Japan have been assessed as the most potent nuclear threshold states.[7] These states have depicted commendable nuclear restraint despite the possession of significant nuclear capabilities with military potential, and thereby have also been the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel in so far as achieving global nuclear disarmament is concerned. Exhorting nuclear threshold countries to acquire nuclear capabilities for defence would not only undermine the USA's extended deterrence in the Asia-Pacific but could also throw the strategic balance of the whole Asian domain out of gear.

The pre-eminence of the USA, backed by the US military support, has been the key differentiating character of Asia-Pacific security when compared to other regions of the world. It is the USA's avowed commitments to defend its allies in the region, even using nuclear weapons if need be, that has held up stability in the region. However, a non-committal attitude from none other than President Trump himself has had the American allies in Asia scramble in strategic disbelief for a home-grown readiness. Extended deterrence, both conventional and nuclear, today stands challenged in the face of a revocable rhetoric from Trump. The regional lack of confidence in the USA has also gained ground amidst increasing North Korean belligerence and consequent doubts among US allies about their security guarantor's willingness to risk its own security for its allies. More recently, North Korea has not only countered US rhetoric by conducting nuclear and missile tests with impunity but has sought[8] military 'equilibrium' with the USA. The ensuing environment that has had the Korean Peninsula sitting on a vulnerable nuclear edge threatens to destabilise or even obliterate the whole region.

As the USA intends to fold its nuclear umbrella under Trump, there is a looming threat over entire East Asia whose security has been almost fully guaranteed by American strategic forces — through its deployments in the homeland or from the sea aboard Trident ballistic missile submarines. This twin system of land-maritime security guaranty has become the mainstay of American strategy to protect its allies against regional and extra-regional threats, especially since the USA withdrew nuclear weapons from the region in September 1991.[9] American security assurance in the Asia-Pacific is probably at an all-time low, with successive instances of test-of-credibility for US security guarantees in the region. First, the number of American security forces in the Korean peninsula is probably at its lowest in a long

time. Second, repeated missile tests by North Korea, recent missile flights over Japan, along with successive threats of nuclear strikes on Guam islands, opposition to the installation of Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD), and defiant nuclear explosions backed by cascading anti-US rhetoric by the North Korean regime have all contributed to the mitigation of the perceptive credibility of the US security guarantee in the Asia-Pacific, in turn, denting its much acclaimed extended deterrence to the region.

The American stance on various aspects of Asian security under Trump has also questioned the potency of America's offshore balancing[10] in the region. When the Obama administration emphasised reviving its pivot to Asia policy, the underlying strategy was a shift from burden sharing to burden shifting. In this regard, in a January 2012 essay[11], Professor Christopher Layne claimed that the "Offshore balancing is a strategy of burden shifting, not burden sharing. It is based on getting other states to do more for their security so the United States can do less." As such, the grand strategy of the USA as outlined by the Obama administration was undergirded by offshore balancing which focused on withdrawing, or downsizing, its forces in Europe and the Middle East and, instead, concentrating its military power in East Asia. As an offshore balancer, the USA intended to reposition military forces in Guam, Hawaii, and San Diego. From a strategic standpoint, these locations would put US forces beyond the range of most Chinese counter-intervention threats as well as would increase the onus on regional allies, like Japan, South Korea and Australia, to do more in the region. Trump's policies in the region hit at the root of this formative strategy by threatening to withdraw American support to two of the strongest allies of the USA in the region. To the extent that offshore balancing is a strategy that can allow the USA to preserve its interests at home and abroad, without weakening its relationships with allies, it stands challenged in the Asia-Pacific with the Trump administration's retreat on globalisation.

The American alliance structure in the Asia-Pacific seems caught in a web of uncertainty with the Philippines distancing itself from the USA, and Japan and South Korea sparring openly. Some hopes of sustaining the USA's predominance in the Asia-Pacific through its alliance structures have now surfaced, with the country deciding[12] to sell sophisticated weapons and newer technologies to thwart an ever increasing North Korean and Chinese threats in the region. This effort to boost offshore balancing through the sale of sophisticated weapons to allies is a strategy that cuts both ways. Any attempt to change the security and stability status quo of the Asia-Pacific region by the USA is likely to be responded to in equal measure by North Korea and China.

The Indo-Asia Pacific: Reversing Anti-Globalization Sentiments

The American retreat on globalisation and interconnectedness in the Asian domain also threatens to destabilise the Asian order. The Indo-Asia Pacific region resides at the heart of America's new found connectivity in Asia, even as the region has come to straddle two growth epicentres in Asia: the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. Under the Obama administration, the Indo-Pacific became the fulcrum of US policy in Asia as the USA tried to balance its Asian strategy between the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. The US strategy in this regard became clearer with the Obama administration's focus on including some of the Indian Ocean littoral countries in its Asian rebalance. The US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region[13] outlined by President Obama and Prime Minister Modi in January 2015 became the next step in enhancing clarity in the USA's Asian outlook.

Amidst such commitments, a change of guard in the USA came with its own set of apprehensions for India in particular, and Asia in general. Trump administration's silence on its Asian strategy for a long time created room for speculations, among which the USA's retreat from economic connectivity with Asian countries, along with substantial cuts in military commitments, were discussed and debated. Trump administration's rather long silence on a substantive Asian strategy going forward also led to its Asian allies and partners preparing for any kind of eventuality. Donald Trump's initial instincts, in so far as America's involvement in Asia was concerned, was to withdraw. This was highlighted through his repeated warnings to both Japan and South Korea to fend for themselves, through sanctions on Iran, the intended pullout from Afghanistan, and the uncompromising stand on its own trade interests. Further, President Trump spoke his mind when he acknowledged[14] that his initial instinct was to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan in his outline of his US South Asia policy. Clearly, coming on the back of a spirited championing of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan, the American retreat from its purposes of strategic connectedness to Asia was destined but for the President's advisers and now a failed deal with the Taliban

Gradually, the assessment of the inevitability of Asian connectivity in US strategy has seeped in among the policy makers of the Beltway. The region of the Indo-Pacific has come to gain centrality[15] in US policy discourse. At least two decisions by the Trump administration have sought to relocate its Asian impetus. The Trump administration has resuscitated the 'New Silk Road' initiative, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC) linking South and Southeast Asia.[16] Through the IPEC, the USA seeks to "create new energy

linkages, open up trade and transport corridors, streamline customs procedures and border crossings, and connect entrepreneurs and businesses throughout South Asia and beyond."[17] The revival of two major infrastructure projects is also being seen as counter moves to Chinese land-maritime westward expansion through its Silk Route Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road.

The westward expansion of China poses newer challenges to both extra regional powers like the USA and regional power like India. As such, the Indo-Pacific region has provided reasons for India and the USA to locate their joint rationale for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Towards enhancing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, both India and the USA have pledged to maintain peace and stability in the region through a "2+2" ministerial dialogue, a format of engagement that India seeks to extend to other Indo-Pacific countries like Japan. Trump has also reinforced energy relations with India with the first-ever shipment of American crude oil to India from Texas having already taken place.[18] In the last two years, energy import from the US has also reduced trade deficit for the US with India. Complementing the US desire for strong ties with India in the Indo-Pacific region, India has held that "One of the main challenges confronting the world today is the evolving situation in the Indo-Pacific. Strong India-US partnership is critical for peace, stability, and prosperity in this region."[19] The mutual flow of perceived benefits from cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is quite apparent from the rhetoric of the leaders of both countries. India seems rightly placed to fill the void that America's possible retreat from Asia might create in the future. However, turning away from these assessed strategic gains will be difficult for the USA if it wants to continue to wield influence and power that has remained unchallenged until recently in this part of the world.

So, it turns out that a complete turning of its back on Asia seems close to impossible for America under Donald Trump, notwithstanding his promises, instincts, and political rhetoric. The snapping of trade and military ties with countries in Asia for the USA would only mean a debilitative US trade and security situation in the future which would be paving the way for a rapidly rising China amidst its inward-looking national policy orientation. In current times, when the USA's growing competition and conflict with China is being increasingly assessed[20] from the Thucydides's Trap angle, bolstering its economic and military ties with Asian partners, both old and new, should be a priority for the USA. Any retreat on its connectivity, trade or strategic ties to Asia by the USA will not only be tantamount to ceding international strategic space to its arch-rival China but letting other powers lessen their power and influence deficit with itself.

Restructured Asian Connectivity:
Towards a New Regional Order in Asia

As a result of the aforementioned realisation, the Trump administration should halt its retreat-from-Asia agenda. Its retreat from Afghanistan, which is on the cusp of materializing, is likely to increase Asian instability, and will increase spill-over security risks for India. Furthermore, the Trump administration should realise the unviability of snapping trade, connectivity, and strategic ties with its existing and potential partners in Asia.

Under Donald Trump, the USA seems to be moving towards setting a new and rapidly changing world order, primarily being driven by growth centres in Asia. As such, its relations with China, Japan, South Korea, and India remain critical in its rehashed relationship network with Asia. As the balance of power in Asia assumes an asymmetric shift favouring China, the USA has felt a definitive urge to restore the balance of power in its favour though newer partners, initiatives and, above all, challenging postures. It is within these paradigms that the USA since the Obama administration has been working towards a kind of restructuring in its Asian power relations. This restructuring has created space for new dimensions in USA's power relations with Asian countries. In this context, India has gained a new position in the USA's strategic handbook: Major Defence Partner (MDP). The MDP status of India has been variously assessed, the most prominent being the creation of a new space for the country in America's global parameters of gauging its proximity with countries around the world.[21]

American restructuring of relations with Asian countries is also depicted through the growing sophistication of its strategic ties with countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and India. However, the common strand running thorough USA's Asian restructuring is to strengthen collective security and gain an upper hand over China. Amidst the looming Chinese presence across Asia, the USA understands the risks and futility of resisting Chinese advance in Asia alone. Chinese military modernisation and its simultaneously rising bellicosity have also had a substantial affect on the nature of US' altered ties to Asia. In many ways, America's strategic restructuring in its Asian relations has been to counter Chinese strategies such as 'salami slicing', 'Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD)', the creation and subsequent militarisation of islands in the South China Sea, and increasing submarine presence by China outside its conventional sovereignty limits, the nine-dash-line, among various other surreptitious moves. The USA's offshore balancing finds its place within the paradigm of counter measures

that the USA seeks to take to retain an upper hand vis-à-vis China. Besides reformulating alliances and partnerships, sustaining dominance in Asia has required the USA to reposition its forces in Asia in a manner that puts American forces out of China's counter-intervention moves.[22] As a result, alliance and partners remain as critical to sustaining US dominance as the strategies themselves, although both strategies and partners are evolving in the current order.

Conclusion

The American war on globalisation resulting in tendencies of retreat from Asia might slow the process of global economic and political connectivity; but it cannot end it completely as other countries in the lower rungs are waiting for the right opportunity to take the mantle into their hands. Donald Trump's possible Asia retreat could leave substantial room for a new regional order in which major Asian countries will share the erstwhile burden of the USA in the region, and even globally. This could be most noticeably visible in the stepping up of both India and China in Asia, thus reshaping the security role and intent in the Indo-Pacific.

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BOOK REVIEW

Arvind Gupta, ***How India Manages its National Security,*** (New Delhi, Penguin Viking, 2018), Pages: 440, Price: 599.00

Those with an interest in any or many of the questions concerning India's defence, foreign policy, policing, or arms acquisition would have observed that, in recent years, the term 'national security' has acquired greater resonance and repetition in public discussions. There was a time when national security was taken to be almost synonymous with 'defence' and was conceptually limited to safeguarding our borders. Today, there is awareness of the multiple dimensions of the term, its complexities, the wide range of issues involved, as also the diverse agencies and actors associated with it.

The book under review is an excellent introduction to the subject, and a primer for the students and researchers entering the field. It answers questions such as: how does one conceptualise 'national security'? What are its many dimensions? Which are the principal agencies in India tasked with ensuring national security? How are these agencies constituted and run? And, what is their efficacy? The book also points to new areas apart from covering traditional threats, and looks at future challenges for the Indian establishment.

Arvind Gupta, the author, is uniquely qualified to undertake this project in public education. A professional diplomat from the Indian Foreign Service, Gupta opted for academic specialisation and pursued his interests at India's premier think-tank for defence and strategic studies, the IDSA, having served as its head. He also came to occupy senior positions in the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and, eventually, to head it in his capacity as the Deputy National Security Advisor. He is currently heading the Vivekananda International Foundation and, in that role, is at the intersection of India's thinking on major national issues, internal and external, macro and specific, strategic and tactical. His eclectic interests also include civilisational and cultural issues, environment and economy. He brings to the book, his vast expertise and experience as also a reflective mind that has pondered on many of the challenges described.

The Preface lays down the purpose of the book neatly:

> Having survived numerous security challenges since independence, India is on course to emerge as a major power. The path ahead, however, will

be difficult. Over the years, the security environment has become more complex and challenging. What are the sources of insecurity for India? What are the institutional mechanisms that India has set up to deal with these challenges? How effective are these institutions? This book looks into some of these issues.

The book is neatly organised. It begins with a comprehensive description of India's national security environment, a necessary starting point for an analyst. In an overview, the basic setting and structural aspects that frame India's position - geography, diversity, history of partition, and hostilities caused by history (primarily Pakistan and China) are briefly covered. There are short summaries of our relations with other neighbours, especially from the security point of view. Gupta also lists out the internal challenges, among them J&K, left-wing extremism, communalism etc. Other aspects such as border management, natural disasters, governance deficits, and non-traditional security threats, are also introduced. The role of technology, especially some critical ones in security, is identified.

Next, the institutional framework currently available to deal with the threats and challenges is summarised. Much of this is dealt with in separate chapters. Thus, there are independent chapters on: the armed forces; police; border management; intelligence; diplomacy; and technology. The outline of different institutions covered should be of interest to a non-specialist outside the government as it introduces the basic ethos and structure of diverse actors in managing security challenges. For example, the chapter on 'the police forces' gives a sound summary of the concepts of crime and punishment in Indian texts, how the police forces came to be organised under the colonial regime, the structure of the police in independent India, the changing nature of contemporary policing, and many ideas under the rubric of 'police reform'. Brief mention is made of central police organisations too. A useful feature is that each chapter has a 'conclusion' and, thus, draws the attention of the reader to the need for 'next steps'. There are similar descriptive accounts of 'intelligence', 'diplomacy', and 'armed forces', among other areas.

In introducing the ideas of non-traditional security threats, the author states:

Traditional security is about the protection of a country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and concerns military power. Questions of war and peace dominate the traditional security discourse…The traditional security discourse has been very state centric….However the discourse has been shifting rapidly (p. 267).

The recognition of newer unconventional threats is thereafter delineated. These include, at one level, critical areas, such as terrorism, genocide, organised crime, human rights violations and, at another level, issues that affect human wellbeing, such as climate change, water, and food shortage. Gupta recognises that the line between traditional security threats - generally coercive in nature - and other non-traditional factors that affect human wellbeing, is getting blurred. Therefore,

> What is required is a comprehensive and holistic understanding of security that combines traditional and non-traditional aspects. Anything that weakens a nation weakens its security. Anything that adversely affects individuals on a large scale is a security challenge…Seen from this perspective, it is necessary that a country develop its comprehensive national strength… (p. 268)

A separate chapter is devoted to cyber security challenges. The scope, scale, and the urgency of understanding this dimension come through.

A useful chapter deals with the 'National Security Council' and its functioning as a high-level coordinating agency to take a holistic view of all issues concerning national security. Gupta gives a much-needed perspective about the history, evolution, and performance appraisal of this institution and its secretariat. In his view, it needs to be strengthened, better staffed, and structured. It also has to meet more frequently and consider long-term challenges.

The last chapter, "How good is India's national security system?" is rich with ideas and suggestions. Gupta's considered answer is that India's institutions are evolving, are sufficiently strong to meet conventional challenges; however, there is need to focus on the emerging issues of the future, "which will not be just conventional military conflicts."

> Hybrid warfare, which is a combination of conventional military conflict, sub-conventional conflict, and warfare in cyberspace, and outer space, is more likely. Military warfare will be accompanied by economic warfare. Information warfare, which, combines cyber warfare with psychological warfare, is a distinct possibility … India will have to take into account the threat potential of these emerging technologies (p. 353).

In the concluding chapter, the author, with his deep expertise, makes a number of specific suggestions: it is emphasised that it is necessary to devise a long-term strategy or a master-plan, and not be limited to fire-fighting or daily challenges. The leaders of critical organisations should be carefully chosen, and not appointed through routine bureaucratic processes. The

coordination among different agencies is sub-optimal at present despite the NSCS and needs to be qualitatively improved. The inputs from think-tanks and the reports of earlier high-level review committees need to be acted upon. These and other ideas could have come only from a professional with long years of focused research and reflection on institutional questions. The book also has appendices, which lay out the organisational structures of key ministries associated with national security. It is a stated objective of the author that the book may be useful for students needing courses on 'national security'. The book meets that purpose admirably.

As this review was being penned in June 2019, after the assumption of office by a new Indian Government (termed as Modi 2.0), some significant developments took place. All the key ministers responsible for national security - home, defence, external affairs and finance - that have taken office come with a reputation for professionalism apart from deep domain familiarity. Further, the National Security Advisor (NSA) post has been raised to the Cabinet level. National security itself has come to occupy a pivotal priority in the agenda of this Government. Will there be a transformation in the way the associated issues are addressed in the future? The topicality of the book is, thus, assured.

Ambassador B. S. Prakash,
Former Ambassador of India to Brazil and to Uganda,
and former Consul General of India at San Francisco, USA.

★★★

Dilip Sinha, ***Legitimacy of Power: The Permanence of Five in the Security Council,*** (New Delhi, VIJ Books (India) Pty Ltd, 2018), Pages: (HB) 332, (PB) 321, Price: (HB) Rs. 1.250.00, (PB) Rs. 595.00

If one sentence could sum up the well researched work by Dilip Sinha on the "Legitimacy of Power: The Permanence of Five in the Security Council", the sanctum of multilateral diplomacy, it is in his own words as "the story of the saga of the United States and its four allies from the Second World War, Russia, Britain, France and China - their cooperation and tribulations". If one message that the reader draws from the author's searching enquiry of the UN's entire political record is that its reform, particularly of the Security Council, is no longer an option but essential for sustaining its own legitimacy in the global order, the book would have more than served its purpose

The pithy conclusion is based on an in-depth study of the evolution of the UN's security system, the Security Council's performance, the control of the Permanent Five over it, the military actions taken by them on its behalf, and the legitimacy that it has acquired as an essential tool over the last more than seven decades. Sinha brings out the irony that those entrusted with the special responsibility to maintain international peace and security through the Security Council have based their claim to this authority on their military power and not on their commitment to democracy, rule of law, human rights, and other values that the UN seeks to promote.

The author traces the genesis of the creation of the Security Council in the new international order back to the traditional thinking in Europe of international peace as being best preserved by a group of strong and responsible powers working together. The highest organ of the UN was, thus, conceived as a small body of members in which the wider membership reposed their faith for securing international peace. The dynamics of the San Francisco Conference and negotiations on the UN Charter recalled in the book are instructive for an insight into the blatant intent behind its provisions on the peaceful settlement of disputes, sanctions, military action, and the veto power. Created by the victorious states, these were all aimed at a greater concentration of power in their own hands, and to underscore the primacy of the Security Council in the UN system.

The Security Council was and remains as the only international body where the use of force can be legitimately authorised. Having won the War

and seamlessly transformed itself into a peacetime organisation, the UN embarked on its journey as the guardian of world peace and security in pursuit of the Charter's lofty affirmation of collective determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

According to the author, the effectiveness of the Security Council's authorisation of military action is a mixed one, and which continues to be debated. It evolved erratically, and varied widely in content, in different situations. The mandate was precisely defined in some instances, and left vague in others. All resolutions were based on the determination by UNSC that there existed a threat to peace and security, but its restoration was not the stated objective of all. He rightly reminds us about the equally relevant concerns about the Charter - that the compatibility and legality of these military actions have never been independently examined. In the absence of a judicial review, rightly emphasised by the author, questions remain whether the Security Council's actions meet the tenets of international law. It is also not without significance that all military actions were taken by Western countries led by the USA and NATO. Britain and France participated in most, while the Soviet Union and China stayed away from all.

Evaluating the Security Council's performance since 1945, Sinha identifies four distinct phases of two decades each. The first under Western control; the second under the Soviet Union working with the South; the third led by the West with the cooperation of Russia and China; and the fourth in which the East-West divide has come back.

The book examines a range of case studies of how the Security Council has acted in critical moments since its inception, both from the political and legal angles. The overview is based on debates in the Security Council and the General Assembly, UN documents, archival material, and authoritative commentaries. This academically sound methodology has the added advantage of a practitioner's perspective on the real world give and take in negotiations. The added significance of Dilip Sinha's study lies in his objectivity to draw hard conclusions on salient patterns, and his intellectual candour in throwing light on systemic flaws in the functioning of this apex body.

The review starts with some initial successes enjoyed by the Security Council in the early years, such as its ability to select its headquarters, elect Norway's Foreign Minister in exile, Trygve Lie, as the first Secretary General. It mediated ceasefires in Palestine and Kashmir even though it could not resolve the disputes, and tasted its first success in mediating Indonesia's independence when the Dutch tried to reoccupy it after Japan's defeat. But,

as the unity of the principal allies started unravelling, the UN's goalposts started receding. The Rules of Procedure of the UNSC could not be finalised, and the P-5 could not reach an agreement in the Military Staff Committee on the UN military force. A serious lacuna continues to be the absence of any reference to a quorum, and any automaticity in convening a meeting of the Council when asked for by a member. Likewise, the idea of a standing UN military under the command of the Council, pushed vigorously by the Americans in the early years, was revived several times after the end of Cold War, but met no success. Yet, Kofi Annan's attempt to bring a closure in 2005 to abolish the military staff committee was blocked by the P-5 who were not ready to make an admission of failure.

Korea remained one of only two instances of the Security Council authorising military action by member states. But, the Korean operation was a hurried response to an emergency, made possible by the Soviet boycott, and could not become a paradigm for future action. The other was an issue related to Britain, which was authorised to enforce sanctions against Southern Rhodesia in 1966. However, within four years after the War, the Allies were split in two rival camps. The formation of NATO in 1949 marked the end of cooperation among the three main founders.

Peacekeeping as an 'innovative compromise' has emerged as the singular contribution of Security Council to maintain international peace and security. Interestingly, though now seen as a regular feature of the UN, it does not figure in the Charter. A reader of the book will discover the genesis of this idea: it was initiated by UNSG Dag Hammarsjkold. Faced with a deadlock in the Council, he devised this mechanism by using troops from neutral or non-aligned countries, and got it approved through the General Assembly. He deployed it successfully in the Middle East and the Congo. The Peacekeeping agenda was modified by Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his Agenda for Peace when he sought to reorient the United Nations towards human security. But, under Kofi Annan, robust peacekeeping was revived once again.

The Suez and Hungary crises in 1956 exposed the variable standards applied by the permanent members (France, Britain, and the Soviet Union) in two concurrent and parallel situations. These also defined the limitations of the Security Council in dealing with military aggression by a permanent member. Such conflicts had not been envisaged in the Charter, and the Council was not designed to deal with them.

The collapse of the Soviet Union gave the Western countries full control of the Security Council. With no Soviet veto to restrain them, the USA revived

the Korean model of authorised military action to enable its forces, and those of its allies, to invade Iraq and compel it to withdraw from Kuwait. Its success emboldened them to more such operations, though with mixed results. The authorisation for the invasion of Libya in 2011 was particularly controversial. Russia blocked further military actions, except for two in Africa. The USA failed to get authorisation for coercive action in Syria despite repeated efforts.

The UN also expanded the machinery for implementing its newly acquired powers - international criminal tribunals for trying individuals; peacekeeping operations with Chapter 7 powers; and international transitional administrations. The Charter injunction against interference in the internal affairs was gradually side stepped by the Security Council in cases of 'grave humanitarian threat'. Once it became politically convenient for the big powers, state sovereignty came to be viewed as an impediment to global governance and, in this new era of activism, humanitarian intervention was turned into the responsibility of the international community. The concept of R2P is intended to make the UN the protector of the people of countries ruled by repressive regimes, and can be invoked for committing any of the four identified international crimes agreed at the World Summit in 2005. But, the R2P enthusiasts are not averse to including Human Rights in this list.

The author makes a trenchant critique of the addition of these new mandates without an amendment to the Charter. He rightly argues that, "if the Security Council deserves the power to intervene in domestic matters of a state to perform such functions as enforcing human rights or delivering humanitarian assistance, the UN Charter should be suitably amended". Moreover, the link between human rights violations with international peace and security itself has remained ambivalent even in Resolution 688(1991) on Iraq, which is considered to have drawn such a link. Although projected as one of the pillars of the UN, the permanent five have vetoed human rights resolutions against their allies and friendly states.

Based on his study of the Security Council in different eras, a deliberate expansion of its mandates without amending the Charter, and the lack of public support for such interventions in the countries championing these powers, Sinha concludes how a divided Council can no longer exercise the powers that were given to it by the Charter to fulfil its primary mandate. The fundamental assumption that the Council will be operated by the permanent members acting in unison made its functioning hostage to equations among the Permanent Five. Over time, this has led to inaction or the refusal to provide troops, compelling the Council to resort to

outsourcing military action. Even more confounding is the revelation about the Security Council's deviation from the original intent of its founding fathers, when it started lending its brand equity to endorsing military action by member states due to "the Organisation's incapacity for decisive intervention in and control of international relations". Sinha does not hesitate to describe this new trend as the "franchising of military action by the Security Council to powerful member states".

Clearly much needs to be done to bridge the gap between what the Security Council is expected to achieve, and what it has accomplished on the ground. It remains as a reflection of an outmoded Cold War order in which many important players justifiably complain about being left out. The argument is clear for reform and the restructuring of the Security Council which has been talked about since its inception. On the reform debate, the author comes to the conclusion that it is a struggle over political turf, where there is little incentive for the permanent membership to open the door for new members, and for the other members of the UN to vote them in. But, by bringing a spotlight on its mixed record during critical moments in its history of more than seventy years, the book serves to underline the urgency of the much needed change of the Security Council for it to better serve its mandate.

The book is highly readable, and a valuable addition for an insight into complex issues in multilateral diplomacy for scholars, practitioners, and students of international relations. A multilateralist himself, and with long standing experience of working in the UN in senior positions at headquarters and as India's Permanent Representative in Geneva, Dilip Sinha's informed assessment and experienced voice brings the force of conviction to the widely held view on the urgency of the reform of the Security Council. The book makes a compelling case for the international community to think back on how the UN was set up, how its apex body was constituted, and why it must be adapted to meet the challenges of today if it does not want to end up undermining the primary purpose for which it was created.

Ambassador Neelam D. Sabharwal
Former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands and, to UNESCO
Former High Commissioner of India to Cyprus

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T. V. Paul (Ed.), ***The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era,*** (Hyderabad, India, Orient Blackswan, 2019), Pages: (HB) 368, Price: Rs. 1,195.00

The India-China relationship is a complex and 'multi-layered' one that has evolved over a period of time. Today, both the countries are more engaged with each other than ever before, with 14 pairs of sister cities, Bollywood, Yoga, and the celebration of the International Day of Yoga having become popular in China. However, from time to time, skirmishes/stand-offs such as Doklam disrupt the momentum. The 73 day-long India-Bhutan-China standoff at Doklam was resolved by the 'expeditious disengagement' of troops from both sides. It is the biggest lesson drawn by both sides: that there is a need to deepen mutual understanding so that 'differences do not become disputes'. On a positive note, on 1 May 2019, China designated Masood Azhar as an international terrorist under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 sanctions committee. Nevertheless, other irritants in the bilateral relationship, such as Sino-Pakistan nexus, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, an unsettled border, and the looming trade deficit, still persist.

The book under review is written against the backdrop of Doklam, and covers the sources, strategies, and the mitigating factors of the bilateral relationship. Notably, there are frequent references to the Doklam episode in explaining most of the aspects dealing with the bilateral relationship. The second part expounds the various sources of tension in India-China relations. Mahesh Shankar goes to state that the longstanding territorial dispute between both sides is the constant source of tension between the two countries. He argues that a limited or managed 'rivalry' persists, but it is less intense as compared to the India-Pakistan rivalry due to numerous mitigating variables, ranging from economic to diplomatic factors. Manjari Miller does an interesting analysis of the Indian and Chinese views of the international order and the contrasting the differences between them. She concludes that it is this difference, which is the major source of conflict between both sides. Further, she highlights that while China is pushing for an alternative world order, it remains to be seen if India will accept a China led order.

Calvin Chen explores the race for resources between the two countries in Africa and Central Asia. Since both the countries have their own energy renewal policies, he concludes that, when it comes to resources, at least China and India are more similar than different in theoretical understanding. This makes the prospect of a future conflict between them seemingly bleak.

Selina Ho explains the issue of the water dispute between the two countries, and also offers a list of recommendations for dealing with the issue. In fact, Calvin Chen and Selina Ho are both precise in stating that the rivalry in energy and water have been overhyped by analysts.

The third part of the book deals with the strategies of the bilateral relationship. Andrew Scobell brings out reasons for 'great pessimism' about the prospects of the relationship, and states that the rivalry between the countries is "destined to persist". He further argues that, with the advancement in technology, the Himalayas are no longer a barrier. The rivalry becomes even more acute with clashing strategic culture narratives; and the interactions of each country with the third countries complicates matters further. On the nuclear issue, Vipin Narang states that 'assured retaliation' nuclear strategies — in which both countries pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict — has been the major stabilising factor.

The fourth part of the book deals with economic relations and the participation of both the countries at various multilateral fora. Mathew A. Castle explores trade as a generator of improved relations. He argues that while trade has indeed increased, this has been driven largely by increasing Chinese exports to India. The relationship is one of the many growing asymmetries. The official trade between India and China resumed in 1978. A major transformation in India-China trade has taken place in the last ten years. India-China trade that was US$ 2.32 billion in 2000–2001 is likely to reach US$ 100 billion in 2019. However, the trade is skewed highly in favour of China. Recently, significant shifts have taken place in India-China trade. However, the chapter does not show the changing dynamics for the simple reason that the data used is dated. Hence, it fails to capture the dynamism of the on-going trade. Castle goes on to state that this asymmetry in trade will be compounded by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In the multilateral institutions, both countries have a similar position on regional and global issues. In addition, they have combined their efforts in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS bank which is perceived as an alternative international institution. Feng Liu, in his essay, 'China-India Engagement in Institutions' argues that while some enduring conflicts and contradictions between China and India are irreconcilable in the short term, cooperation based on common interests is still a dominant aspect of India-China relations. While he brings out the positive aspects of the engagement, he does not throw light on China's objection to India's membership at the United Nations Security Council and the Nuclear Supplier's Group

(NSG). India's candidature in both the institutions is impeccable, and cannot be controlled by any other country.

In the concluding part, Paul F. Diehl, states that India-China relations have moved from one of 'hostile rivalries' to concerns on more substantive issues, including the boundary. With both countries gaining cyber capabilities, there are chances that they might use cyber-attacks more frequently. Thus, there may be a change of tactics from the military to newer forms of competition.

Overall, the book touches on the various variables of the bilateral relationship between India and China with a new approach. As the book is written against the backdrop of the Doklam crisis, a lot of weight is given to explaining the boundary dispute between the two countries. However, it does not give much importance to the trade issue between the two sides. There is a strategic dimension to the increasing trade deficit. Reinforcing economic ties can confer significant gain upon both nations. At the moment, the trade is not a win-win situation. Also, it may not be sustainable in the long run and will become a foreign policy issue, just as it has become between the USA and China. China needs to address this deficit sooner rather than later. There is a requirement of a broad trade agreement based on reciprocity between India and China.

The word 'rivalry' in the title of the book could have been avoided while defining the bilateral relations between the two Asian neighbours. Although, the book does provide an in-depth theoretical framework to defend that it is 'rivalry' rather than anything else, the onus is on the reader to comprehend whether it is actually 'rivalry' or the management of conflict and cooperation between the two neighbours. Additionally, a major aspect missing from the book is the absence of the Indian perspective on most of the issues raised.

Nevertheless, the book is one of the well-researched and argued books based on a theoretical framework on the subject. Since it covers vast themes of the bilateral relationship, it is highly recommended for academicians and policymakers dealing with Chinese foreign policy, comparative politics, and international relations. It is certainly a valuable contribution to the existing literature on India-China relations.

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★★★

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DEBATES

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS