

## **BOOK REVIEW**

K.H. Patel, *An Envoy Looks Back – A Memoir* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2011), Pages: 164, Price: Rs. 495.00.

K.H. Patel's book of memoir is a welcome addition to the growing number of books on memoirs and experiences by Indian diplomats. What is the value of these memoirs? The ambassador is strategically placed to study and interact with practically the entire spectrum of political, economic, social and cultural life in the country to which he is accredited. How do the developments in these fields impact on India's interests? The tenure of the Ambassador invariably contains many experiences which are tragic-comic and their inclusion adds to the readability of the memoirs and gives the experience edge and sharpness. The currents and cross-currents both overt and covert operating in the country of accreditation which influence the relations with India form the core of these memoirs. Some of the reports of the Ambassador's work naturally will be of diverse degrees of secrecy and could not be revealed. The trends and significance of these currents and cross currents often change and his memoirs could reflect many of them for the benefit of informed readers and greatly enhance the value of the memoirs.

Karanbhai Patel's major diplomatic assignments were in Reunion Islands (consul general), Uganda (High Commissioner) and Rwanda & Burundi (Ambassador). In these countries the two major factors governing our relations with them were (1) problems of large number of persons of Indian Origin (Reunion Islands and Uganda) and (2) violent tribal conflicts (Rwanda and Burundi). Reunion Islands part of metropolitan France – though small are situated in Indian Ocean and have great strategic value.

The interactions with people of Indian origin occupy the major attention of the author. In Reunion Islands they were the chief concern of the consul – general, as the Indian Embassy was far away and cultural and consular contacts were not easy. They were helpful in assisting the author to set up the consulate-general; the problem of establishing the administrative structure of the consulate general was not easy due to linguistic problems. The task was made easy by the people of Indian origin for whom the author has all the praise. In Uganda with the exit of Idi Amin the new government was favourably inclined to see the return of extradited people of Indian origin. The author had a delicate yet a very crucial task of creating a climate of confidence conducive to their

return. In Ruwanda and Burundi the violent tribal conflict between Tutsis and Hutis created the worrisome problem of evacuation of people of Indian origin. The difficulties were further compounded as there was no resident mission in these countries. The memoirs barely disguise the anxiety experienced by the author. It was the help extended by the French and American missions in Ruwanda and Burundi that made it possible to evacuate the bulk of people of Indian origin to safer places.

The number of persons of Indian origin living in foreign shores has increased by leaps and bounds. The composition of this category of people has also changed. There is now a mix of highly educated professionals and skilled and unskilled workers living abroad. With the spread of globalization and consequent turbulence in international economic climate new problems have emerged and challenges and issues emerging from the future of these persons has climbed to the top of the work agenda of the practitioners of diplomacy internationality.

Indian Diaspora has spread out far and wide and in a number of countries they are in numerical majority. Like Chinese and Jewish Diasporas they often tend to dominate economic life of the countries where they have settled. They evoke both admiration and jealous often bordering on fear. Our bilateral relations with host countries concerned need to be closely interwoven with our relations with the Indian Diaspora. In most of countries in Africa south of the Sahara tribal identity and languages greatly dominate social, economic and political structures. Most of the work in these areas has been done by European scholars and former colonial administrators. In view of fast increasing importance of African countries in international affairs our academicians, diplomats and experts working in Africa would greatly benefit from in-depth studies of African languages and cultures in our academic institutions and training and study programmes of Indian diplomats.

Before taking up his diplomatic assignments the author spent many years in the research and historical departments in the Ministry of External Affairs. In this work his academic qualifications which included international relations were of much help. His briefs and background papers on current affairs and issues in bilateral and multilateral fora were important inputs and he was valuable member of Indian delegations to UN organisations and specialized bodies like the international Court of Justice.

After retirement the author has continued his passionate interest in promoting and developing the interface between persons of Indian origin and

the government agencies and business organisations in India. He has travelled to a number of African countries and maintained contact with their diplomatic and commercial representatives in India. It is gratifying to note that the valuable experience gained during the diplomatic career has been put to active and productive use even after retirement.

I recommend the book for a wider reading by all especially interested in future of Indian Diaspora. The last chapter of the book clearly summarizes India's stand on all current international issues. The book avoids verbosity and technicalities and all readers interested in international affairs can benefit. It has a useful index.

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V.R. Raghavan (ed.), *Nuclear Disarmament: India-EU Perspectives* (New Delhi: Delhi Policy Group and Vij Books India, 2011), Pages: 133, Price: Rs 595.00.

Though there exists global unanimity on the substantive aspects of nuclear disarmament, differences of opinion on its procedures in different regions have been the biggest stumbling block in arriving at a common agenda. The book under review is an attempt to bring forth the comparative perspectives on nuclear disarmament, particularly in Asia and Europe.

The volume is an edited version of a conference on nuclear disarmament organized by the Delhi Policy Group wherein research scholars from India and the European Union have given their arguments. In the introductory remark, V.R. Raghavan explains the contours of the Indian and European positions on nuclear disarmament. From his elaboration, the differing voices of states in both the regions on disarmament are clearly discernible. Within Europe, Germany, France and Britain have views very different from those of their neighbours. Similarly, in Asia, India, Pakistan and China have equally differing voices and concerns which are properly amplified by both sets of scholars.

In the chapters giving the Indian perspectives, Arundhati Ghose gives the governmental perspective explaining how the Indian position was and has been pro-disarmament. Moreover, she forcefully highlights the compulsions and reasons why India had to change its policy and become a nuclear power, highlighting the changing security dynamics in the region after China acquired nuclear weapons and India's pleas were unheard at the United Nations. Ambassador Ghose also emphasizes the changes that have taken place to accommodate India in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and its implications on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), where she presumes credibility loss of the regime.

In the chapter by Gurmeet Kanwal and Monika Chansoria the focus is on the "outlier states", i.e. those nuclear weapon states that fall in the category of have-nots but have still managed to procure nuclear weapons. Studying the different outlier states, one notices that India's record has been the best with regard to proliferation. This is probably the reason why India has been recognized as "a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology" and the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Cooperation has been supported across the board. The same cannot be said for the other "outlier states" like Pakistan, Iran and North Korea.

Rajesh Rajagopalan's chapter focuses on deterrence and the effects of ignoring and/or rejecting nuclear deterrence. He also lays down two proposals, hoping that the debate on deterrence is taken seriously. About 140 states support the proposal that talks about a global nuclear convention. The second proposal is reduction in the extended deterrence of the US to its allies, which does not seem likely in the near future.

The chapters by Mueller and Kulesa give a brief historical reasoning for the European powers wanting complete nuclear disarmament not only in their region but in the world. Mueller points out how the EU non-proliferation strategy has developed and how the effects of the latest events in the nuclear arena, such as the Indo-US nuclear deal, the tests by North Korea, and the direction of Iran's nuclear programme have affected the EU policy towards nuclear disarmament. Kulesa on the other hand focuses on how Europe was and might still end up being a battleground between the United States and Russia. He brings out the "un-importance of nuclear weapons" in the European context but how at the same time the Europeans want to continue in the comfort of those weapons for fear of a war.

The book also has a section wherein the summary of discussion is given

by Kanwal Sibal, K. Subrahmanyam, and C. Raja Mohan, where they give their opinions and comments about the pointers put forward. Kanwal Sibal, a former Foreign Secretary, points out that until British and French perspectives are kept at the forefront, the European perspective would not be valid; and that India's nuclear deterrent is independent, but the European concept of deterrence is "US-dependent in some ways". He also argues that although the Indian opinion largely believes in disarmament as a permanent option, Britain and France are yet to completely agree with this stance. In the view of K. Subrahmanyam, nuclear proliferation has been a growing menace and the need is to view the problem from a different angle. C. Raja Mohan on the other hand states that "India's policy has significantly been evolved" but "it needs to evolve some more to contribute more actively in structuring a new international order". In that respect, even though the NPT is discriminatory, "India has not taken a contract to end discrimination in the international system". Instead, "it will be within our rights to support a discriminatory NPT because I would rather have a discriminatory NPT, than total anarchy".

As pointed out in the introduction, very rarely are the Indian and European perspectives compared and analysed. As a result this book brings forward not only a different perspective, but also tries to bridge the gap in the analytical discourse. The special emphasis on Germany and Poland is evident and brings in different European voices, apart from Britain and France. Being the nuclear powers in Europe, whenever there is talk of a European perspective on nuclear issues, Britain and France are inevitably represented, and very rarely other states are given the same platform as these two.

The chapters on India and India's disarmament policies do link past events with India's growing dilemma and the final decision to go overtly nuclear. While a set of papers at a conference would not lead to a single argument, nevertheless, different arguments and lines of thought, from renowned experts in the field, would certainly assist in forming a common perspective.

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Geoffrey Kemp, *The East Moves West: India, China and Asia's Growing Presence in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), Pages: 326, Price: \$29.95.

The Middle East continues to draw the attention of the world for several reasons, including the instability there. Other Asian countries have been making greater attempts to engage with the region in recent times. The rise of China, India and Japan on the world stage has led to competition among them for both political influence and economic engagement with the Middle East. Middle Eastern countries also have welcomed stronger business ties with these Asian countries, leading to a robust relationship. Energy supply, trade and investment, employment opportunities, etc. are the major attractions for the other Asian countries to engage with the Middle East. With the emergence of India and China as leading Asian powers and the growth of other Asian powers like Pakistan, Japan and South Korea, the region has gained greater focus in recent times.

India, though it has historical ties with the region, was not able to exert much political influence there immediately after its independence. But with India's growing economy, energy, trade, political and security ties and the huge Indian diaspora there, India has emerged as an important player in the region. India's policy of trade liberalization in 1991 boosted its trade with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. India has strengthened its ties with what the author calls the Greater Middle East – the major regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran; the smaller Gulf states; and the other neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. India is trying to maintain a balance in its relationship with the major regional powers. It has played low-key diplomacy and has not shown keenness to play a more assertive role in the region.

Unlike India, China did not enjoy a historical relationship with the Middle East. It is a "relative outsider" in the region, but the relationship has improved in the recent decades. China imported 44 per cent of its oil requirements from the Middle East in 2006, with Saudi Arabia and Iran being the two major suppliers. China has been undertaking huge infrastructure projects like highways, seaports, airports and railways, which may bring it closer to the Middle East using transit routes through Central Asia and Pakistan. Iran has been a major ally of China, with trade worth US\$ 27 billion in 2008. China imports 14 per cent of its oil from Iran. Iran has been an important market for Chinese arms as well. China has sold Iran anti-ship and surface-to-surface cruise missiles and missile guidance

equipment. China has also helped in the development of Iran's Shahab 2 and 3 long-range ballistic missiles. Saudi-China trade in 2007 reached \$25 billion. Saudi Arabia has also emerged as a major investor in China. China also wants to engage Saudi Arabia in building its strategic oil reserves. Similarly, China has increased cooperation with other small Gulf countries as well as the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the fields of energy, trade and investment and building infrastructures.

Pakistan, Japan and South Korea are the other key Asian players in the Middle East. Pakistan has a long history of military ties with the countries in the region. Between 1983 and 1987, Pakistan deployed around 20,000 troops to Saudi Arabia for the protection of the royal family. In 1991, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Pakistan despatched around 6000 soldiers to defend the Saudis from any spill-over of hostilities. Pakistan military was also involved in mine clearance in Kuwait thereafter. Pakistan also enjoys close defence ties with Bahrain. Pakistan imports LNG from Qatar and has reached a deal with Iran for overland gas import.

Japan and South Korea are also major players in the energy field but lack strong defence and strategic ties with the region. Japan is a key energy importer from the Middle East; South Korea is involved with a number of big construction projects in the region. Their policy focuses on the energy and economic field and does not interfere in the geopolitics and diplomacy of the region.

Despite being involved in an unending conflict over the Palestine issue, the author argues that Israel has managed to build and strengthen its relations with major Asian powers and has carved out a space for itself in the region. It has developed with them diplomatic and military ties and trade and business as well. Both India and China are engaged in defence cooperation with Israel; Japan and South Korea too have significant trade ties with Israel.

There remain, however, a number of strategic issues between the rest of Asia and the Middle East. These include piracy, nuclear proliferation, the US factor, and clash of interests in the seas.

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