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AGNI

STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

OBJECTIVE

AGNI is the journal of the Forum for Strategic and Security Studies [FSSS]. The aim is to use this publication to explore the perceptions and developing logic on strategic issues, that have a bearing on global stability and harmony, from a wide range of analysts, policy makers and academics world wide, who influence strategic thought in their countries or region, so as to create greater awareness and a wider understanding of the elements giving drive to formulation of State policies and responses.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The FSSS shall publish, solicited or unsolicited, studies by experts or groups conducting them, on strategic issues that have a direct or indirect bearing with immediate or long term implications, on regional or global security.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

The year, and the first decade of the century, closed with considerable turmoil both within the country as well as globally. A series of momentous legislations enacted by Parliament in the latter part of the year will have widespread impact on the security and governance of the country and in India's geostrategic calculus. The present government has reversed the earlier trend of disillusionment at the year-end about lost opportunities. It has taken the challenge of addressing crucial issues affecting the nation head-on. The Supreme Court also delivered far-reaching judgments during the year ensuring that the social fabric of society and its security were protected and further strengthened.

The war on terror continued unabated and saw many major achievements on this front. Starting with the Balakot strike, which heralded a new era of pro-active action against terrorism, a reversal from the earlier image of a reactive soft state. Azhar Masood was declared a global terrorist by the UN, despite a long history of China using its veto to block the resolution, and was a diplomatic victory for India. The decisive act of abrogating Article 370 and 35A in J&K literally pulled the rug from under the feet of terrorists and secessionists, not to mention Pakistan; it will have far reaching consequences in the resolve to integrate the state with the rest of the country. The path poses many challenges for the government and these are analyzed in this issue.

A related and significant issue to the removal of J&K's special status is India's assertion of its claim on Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and of raising the aspirations of the oppressed population of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Acquiring assets and modernization of the armed forces has continued. Force multipliers like Rafale fighter jets, S-400 Anti-Missile Defence System, armed drones, artillery guns etc will go a long way in improving the capabilities of the defence forces. Further increasing their reach were new and improved spy satellites and successful deployment of the first phase of the Ballistic Missile Defence system, a capability that only a few countries possess. The pace of modernization needs to continue as a priority of the government.

The Supreme Court's decision to close the numerous appeals filed with it against the Rafale fighter acquisition finally put an end to any uncertainty in this regard and was welcomed by the strategic community.

India finally got a Chief of Defence Staff in the last week of the year – a long awaited defence reform. Though the government has promulgated the reorganization of the Ministry of Defence, to what extent the charter of the CDS conforms with that visualized in the Kargil Committee Report will become apparent as its functioning stabilizes with time. It has indeed been a bold decision by the government and one that was required for traversing the path to superpower status. We shall be reviewing the role of the CDS in subsequent issues.

The internal security situation in the country has to an extent stabilized. There were reduced incidents involving Left-wing Extremists during the year, but the movement is yet far from extinct. The enactment of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019, which allows some classes of

specified illegal entrants in the country to be eligible to become Indian citizens, sparked off protests, based on misinformation and by bringing in racial overtones into the debate. The role of urban Naxals and extremist organizations behind the riots has been identified, with the Popular Front of India identified as one of the outfits responsible for large-scale arson in Uttar Pradesh. A crackdown on these outfits is required for strengthening the internal security situation in the country. An analysis of the LWE movement in the country is discussed in this issue.

The regional scenario continues to remain volatile. The uncertainty over the US withdrawal in Afghanistan continues and Pakistan is sinking deeper into a financial quagmire and has been given till February 2020 by FATF to implement anti-terror financing action plans, or face being blacklisted. Nevertheless, it continues to support terror and anti-national activities within India. India has to scale up its response against the Hybrid Warfare being waged by Pakistan as classical counterterrorism tactics cannot contain and marginalize them. The Pakistan Army and ISI are waging this warfare on multiple fronts, including cyberspace and social media, and through the overt support of internal dissent in India. This was evident in the recent protests against the removal of special status of J&K and subsequent to the enactment of the CAA. The partisan reactions spread globally within a short period of time. This needs to be countered urgently. Less known is the fact that the prescribed book of study in Pakistan's Quetta Staff College is Chanakya's Arthashastra, while our own institutions continue to disregard it.

It is important to remember what General Zia, who laid the foundations of the ongoing Hybrid Warfare "to bleed India through 1000 cuts" in J&K through 'Operation TOPAC' in April, 1988 said: "Islam is our goal. Quran is our constitution. Jihad is our path. War till victory, God is great. The war of Hizb is pronounced: Allah-u-Akbar. The call of Hizb is beware of India; and our aim is totally clear liberation of Kashmir valley.

A review of the China-India relations during the year produces a mixed bag. The improvement of bilateral relations post Wuhan managed to keep contentious issues within tolerable limits and reflected a commitment from both sides. But it also reflected that these relations are the result of a fear of confrontation rather than resolution of real issues. While India continues to view China's Belt and Road Initiative as an infringement of its territorial integrity, there was some positive movement in ties between the countries. It was agreed to revive the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar corridor at a meeting held in June. The two parties even presided over the second edition of the joint training program for Afghan diplomats in November, as agreed during the Wuhan summit. However, competition between both China and India in South Asia continued. India's unease over China's economic inroads in India resulted in India pulling out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations in November and to push for further development of the Quad by upgrading the grouping to ministerial level. China made major inroads within India's sphere of influence by agreeing to build a railway from Tibet to Kathmandu, announced during President Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal in October. A potential game changer for the region and for China's BRI plan for the country, the US\$ 3 billion project has now moved to the detailed feasibility study stage.

On the external front, the recent killing of a senior Iranian general in a US airstrike is likely to escalate the already precarious dynamics in the Middle East. In such a scenario, India would be one of those worst affected due to rise in price of crude oil – India imports 80 per cent of its requirement – and the presence of a large expatriate population in the region. An escalation of tensions in the region benefits no party and it is hoped that both the US and Iran will tread cautiously.

IN THIS ISSUE

In his article Revocation of Articles 370 and 35A by the Indian Government is a Game-Changer with Many Challenges, Ashok Kapur analyses the implications of this action for India. Even though it is an internal matter, the external repercussions cannot be ignored. The drastic alteration of the geopolitical situation in the sensitive border area rattled Pakistan and struck at

China's claim to the Aksai Chin. Moreover, the earlier special privileges accorded to the Kashmiri leadership and their secessionist constituents have been struck down. The splitting up of J&K state into two Union Territories now extends the Centre's direct control of this strategic region. The new administration in J&K and Ladakh faces challenges to create opportunities for the locals to become stakeholders in a new Kashmir and to receive the benefits of development. With these challenges come opportunities to change the alignments in this vital geopolitical northern area of India.

Claude Arpi in his article *Infrastructure, Tourism and Xiaogang Villages on the Tibetan Border* discusses the development of infrastructure in Tibet and the large number of model villages being built on the Indian border, which are changing the demography of these areas. The development of rail, road, airports and other facilities in this inhospitable terrain has been carried out on a massive scale by the Chinese government. This infrastructure is dual-use, implying that both civilians and the military will use it. This rapid progress has tilted the balance completely in favour of China in Tibet as Indian border areas have minimal facilities, coupled with the fact that large areas are still restricted for access by civilians. The Chinese strategy has led to rapid development of remote areas and improved their economic condition with large revenue inflows through large-scale domestic tourist activity. Side-by-side, the government has implemented a sophisticated way to submerge the local Tibetan population under waves of Han Chinese. The population of Tibet now comprises of a majority of Han Chinese.

Jai Kumar Verma in his article *Condition of War-Torn Afghanistan Becoming Bad to Worse: ISI Creating Trouble in the Country* analyses the current situation in the country. He traces the strategy initiated by the US for withdrawing its troops from the country. The plan was cancelled just when it was on the verge of being signed and has resulted in continued uncertainty in the country. With multiple terrorist outfits fighting for control in the country, though most are supported by the ISI, the author delves into the involvement of Pakistan and the strategy being followed by it to remain in the drivers seat after the US withdrawal. The limited Indian options in the country are also brought out, with the stark reality that these are likely to be further eroded. The economic condition of the war-torn country has also been discussed and it projects a gloomy outlook for the foreseeable future.

N Manoharan, Jaya Singh and Manisha M have carried out an exhaustive study of Left-wing Extremism in the country in all its dimensions in the article *Beyond the Red Corridor: Spread and External Links of Left Wing Extremism*. They trace the birth of the Naxal movement and its transformation from an agrarian rebellion in 1967 to its present countrywide presence. Though the year saw reduced LWE activity due to enhanced operations by security forces coupled with development initiatives in Naxal areas, the threat is far from getting extinct. On the contrary, they have made inroads in new areas of operations, mainly in the northeastern and southern states of India and in urban areas. Naxals have been able to establish links with militant organisations in neighbouring countries and with the ISI, which is always on the lookout for anti-Indian outfits that can further their break-India agenda. The authors have analyzed the causes leading to the growth of the movement, their strategy and listed out measures that the government should take to address the problem.

Shifting our focus to regional issues, NN Bhatia in his article *Saudi Arabia-Iran Sweepstakes, Trump and Howdy Modi* dwells into the complex reasons for the faceoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the geopolitics of the Middle East region. He brings out the traditionally strong relations India has with both countries, and of their importance to India in meeting its growing energy requirements. The author also briefly covers the on-going strife in Syria and Yemen and the interplay of various stakeholders in the volatile situation. He also discusses the role of the US in the region. The rapport that PM Modi has with these leaders could help India de-escalate the standoff between Saudi Arabia and Iran, since any conflagration in the region will have a direct adverse impact for India.

Continuing the focus on regional issues, VBN Ram in his article Epoch Making Changes in Hong Kong analyses the current situation in Hong Kong, which is facing a standoff between the authorities and pro-democracy protestors. The author traces the history of Hong Kong, its handover back to China and the special provisions that presently allow it to be run with a degree of autonomy. He also traces the history of past protests and uprisings due to attempts by Mainland China to subvert the Constitution and curb freedom in the island state. The present protests have had international repercussions and the enactment of a law by the US to monitor the situation in Hong Kong. The author also brings out the impact of the protests in neighbouring countries and in the South China Sea.

M Meher in his article The SCO Mechanisms for Security Cooperation: Implication for India discusses the history of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and how it has transformed from a small regional grouping into one of the most influential organisations in the world. Its goal is to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism within the member states. However, with the addition of India and Pakistan to the grouping in 2017, the advantages for India from the SCO in fighting terrorism is being questioned as there are divergences in opinion with other members on what constitutes terrorism. India has, however, been actively participating in the activities of the SCO and has benefit of access to its large database. The SCO does provide a tremendous opportunity for India for economic gains as it can assist and improve India's energy security by building various bilateral and regional transport linkages.

This issue contains a review of the book Reminiscing the Battle of Rezang La. This battle was a historic action during the 1962 Sino-Indian War in which a Company of the 13 Kumaon Battalion stood their ground against overwhelming odds, to the last man-last round. It has few parallels in military history. Since the war records have not yet been officially de-classified till now, most existing accounts of the battle suffer from inaccuracies. The author, Col NN Bhatia, is from the same unit and he has drawn on the unit War Diary, photographs, maps and personal accounts to present a factual account of the action on 18 November 1962. It will be of great interest to military historians and others having similar interests.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. P. Singh', written over a horizontal line.

Brigadier Amreshwar Pratap Singh (Retd)
Editor

**REVOCATION OF ARTICLES 370 AND 35A IN J&K
IS A GAME-CHANGER WITH MANY CHALLENGES**

By

ASHOK KAPUR

The revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution has far-reaching implications for Kashmir's future and India's external relations. The claim that Kashmir affairs are internal matters is valid - these areas were recognized as a part of the Indian Union in the Constitution - but still, there are external repercussions to be considered. The negative diplomatic reactions by China and Pakistan reveal sensitivity to the changed geopolitical situation in the frontier zones of India, China and Pakistan. The revoked Articles had created special privileges for the Kashmiri leadership and their secessionist constituents and yet most Kashmiris remained poor despite central aid for 70 years. The assertion that Kashmir was a disputed territory gave Pakistan a platform to intervene in Kashmir affairs. The new administration in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh faces challenges to use their knowledge and administrative skills to normalize the ground situation and create opportunities for the Kashmir youth to become stakeholders in a new Kashmir, and for mainstream people in the new Union Territories to receive the benefits of development. With these challenges come opportunities to change the political, economic and strategic alignments in this vital geopolitical northern area of India.

INTRODUCTION

In recent history, the Indian Government has made two major game-changing moves. Prime Minister AB Vajpayee ordered the conduct of nuclear tests in 1998. The tests had multiple targets and implications. Firstly, it undermined the anti-India orientation of the international

non-proliferation regime and wrecked the diplomacy of Western powers, China and Pakistan against India's nuclearisation. The longer the Indian government took to exercise its nuclear weapons option since it gained the capability in the 1960s, the stronger became the external pressures against the development of this program. Countries that opposed India's nuclearisation were led by strange bedfellows - China, Pakistan, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, and the anti-India lobby in the US and in the European capitals. The disarmament lobby of Krishna Menon and other disarmers in India, the NGOs and members of the Ministry of External Affairs lacked the confidence to build the Bomb and openly declare their policy of relying on nuclear weapons as a deterrent instrument of national security. The officials were apprehensive of China's as well as the Western response. Further, Indian and foreign NGOs were pressing the Indian government to abandon the nuclear option and to take the moral high road and support the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty as a pillar of international security. The Indian government forgot a cardinal principle of international relations in world history - power is taken, others do not give it as a gift and, there are no medals for the disarmers.

The 1998 nuclear action had multifaceted implications. Vajpayee claimed that it projected a response to the threat to Indian national security as a result of Chinese and Pakistani nuclear activities and cooperation, which reflected animus against Indian interests. He bracketed the two, something that had been hinted at by Indian commentators till then, but now there was public identification of the hostile nature of the China-Pakistan nuclear and missile cooperation. Some nations, like the Canadian Foreign Minister, rejected the Vajpayee line in 1998 but now it is widely accepted by the major powers that China and Pakistan are predators in different ways in regional and international affairs. India's diplomatic outreach emphasised that India was a non-proliferator and it had the record to prove it. The effort bore fruit with the George W. Bush administration in 2005. The waiver of sanctions along with the start of civil-nuclear cooperation between India, USA, Russia and France signalled the rehabilitation of India from its nuclear pariah status. The tests were defined as irreversible, and the development and build-up of nuclear and missile capabilities with a capability to reach Chinese and Pakistani targets changed the strategic calculus of China and

Pakistan. This fundamental change in India's nuclear policy gave confidence to Indian leaders and officials that India was acquiring a nuclear deterrent capability along with conventional strength. The 1998 tests gave a signal that India was now a part of the nuclear weapons game and its immediate neighbours could not blackmail it. They too now had to consider the costs to them of escalating a conflict with India. Moreover, the regional dynamic was no longer an India-Pakistan exercise; it was triangular in the nuclear and conventional spheres and India had new strategic partners in its quest for security and status.

The present action of 5 August 2019 concerning Kashmir's affairs is more complicated than the 1998 nuclear action because it involves the re-organisation of the geopolitics and the politics of a messy neighbourhood. There is a proliferation of state and non-state actors at play in this neighbourhood – from the Abdullah and Mufti families and their beneficiaries, the various pro-Pakistan groups within Kashmir, the Jihadis from outside Kashmir who have little interest in Kashmir's development and seek to build a caliphate in Kashmir under Al Qaeda/Taliban auspices, and finally, Pakistan wanting Kashmir for itself and China wanting to build up Pakistan's case because it is against India and favours their southern expansion into the Indian orbit. Post-5 August, the geopolitical arena has grown in complexity. It consists of Ladakh and Kashmir & Jammu, the two new Union Territories under the direct administrative control and political direction of the central Government. Further, at play is the tension between China and India on the Sino-Indian border along with tensions in the Ladakh/Tibet/Gilgit/Baltistan/Karakoram/Siachen/Kargil sectors.

Pakistan has also declared its support for Khalistan. Its use of drones to drop military arms into India's border state of Punjab in October 2019 shows its ambition to maintain an aggressive stance. For its part, the Indian government has announced that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir will be in the play in future. By its action, India has cut into several long-held Pakistani beliefs – that Kashmir is the core issue in Indo-Pakistan relations, and that J & K is disputed territory and Pakistan has an official status in its affairs because it is a party to the dispute. As such, Pakistanis believed that as an interested party it had the right

to wrestle Kashmir by force or by diplomatic and military intervention if India failed to negotiate terms to satisfy Pakistani demands. Moreover, many supporters of Pakistan believed that it was up to India to negotiate terms with Pakistan about Kashmir's future, and not the other way around.

India's revocation of J & K's special status has not only undermined Pakistan's standing on the Kashmir question but it has also opened up several nuances in international diplomacy. There are new twists in Moscow's attitude towards India and what Pakistan has conveyed in its statement at the United Nations; but the shift has taken place over time as Moscow adjusts to its declining international status and it seeks opportunities to maintain its influence in the regional affairs in the Middle East and South Asia. China has a growing interest in Afghan affairs along with its abiding interest to build its Pakistani connections. The attitudes of important Muslim countries are evolving concerning Pakistan and India but there is no uniformity in their support for either of these two countries. India's challenge is to bring normalcy to the Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh area, even as it argues that the revocation of provisions of Articles 370 and 35A was an internal matter and in the national interest. It could be argued that just as the 1971-72 War reorganised the geopolitics of India's eastern zone, the 5 August action is meant to reorganise the geopolitics of the Indian northwest – and that task faces challenges.

THE NEW DYNAMICS IN INDIA'S NORTHWEST STRATEGIC ZONE

Before the actual announcement, the Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had signalled earlier in a parliamentary statement that J & K's special status was a temporary one; nevertheless, the Government's promulgation on 5 August 2019 came as a big surprise. It pulled the rug from under Pakistan's long-standing Kashmir policy (1947-2019), which defined its identity within Pakistan and its international diplomacy. Its justification for wars with India (1965, 1971-72 and later in Siachin and Kargil) and the use of ISI/military supported terrorism (1980 onward) was legitimised by Pakistan's claim on Kashmir and it used outdated UN resolutions to justify these interventions. Furthermore,

the 5 August action caught the Kashmiri secessionists by surprise and their voice and narrative diminished following their transfer outside the region to Agra jail. Kashmir's political dynasties – the Abdullah's and the Mufti's – similarly lost their authority as they were placed under house arrest. Since 1947, Pakistan's diplomacy had kept J & K in the international and the South Asian limelight because China, being a powerful neighbour and a P-5 member of the Security Council, had its back. Pakistan was valuable to China because its strategic location and strategic policy gave it a line of military and commercial communication between China and the Arabian Sea. Chinese aid to Pakistan converged with their mutual desire to expand their strategic and diplomatic space in Kashmir and Afghanistan. Their strategy to maintain pressure on India was to keep it off balance on the ground and in the international sphere, recognising that India was too big to be defeated but it could be kept in a reactive mode in response to the Pakistani and Chinese initiatives.

China had become a party to the Indo-Pakistani Kashmir dispute because Pakistan transferred parts of Kashmir territory to China in 1963. India is not currently in a position to roll back this triangulation but by revoking Kashmir's special status and by establishing two Union Territories, India has formally and directly extended its administrative, constitutional and military control up to Ladakh in the proximity of Tibet, Gilgit, Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Further, India has reiterated its sovereignty rights over all of Kashmir including areas under Pakistani and Chinese control. It seems that the initiative to consolidate India's position in the area now lies in Indian hands and if it can use its power and knowledge of the northern strategic zone wisely to normalise the Kashmir area, it can maintain the strategic initiative and use it to her advantage. India has now been freed of the burden and constraints which J & K's special status placed on Indian diplomacy and its domestic politics. If the Supreme Court upholds the 5 August action as a lawful pursuit of the national interest and if the Indian government's actions truly lead to Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh's development and political normalisation, future Pakistani interventions in Indian affairs – for instance by its support of the Khalistani movement in Indian Punjab – could likely invite Indian retaliation against 'foreign aggression'.

LADAKH

Compared to Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh's location and history bestows it with immense importance in the context of Sino-Indian disputes. Jammu borders Himachal Pradesh, Indian Punjab and Pakistan. Its population is about 60% Hindu, 30% Muslim and some percentage Sikhs. Kashmir is a Muslim majority area bordering Pakistan-held Kashmir and the Gilgit-Baltistan area. Ladakh has a Buddhist majority population with a Muslim minority. It borders Kashmir to its west, Pakistan's northern area " Gilgit and Baltistan " to its northwest, Aksai Chin to its east, Siachin glacier to its north, and Tibet to its east. Xinjiang and China are both north of Ladakh and the Aksai Chin borders. As such, the combination of its strategic location and history and the region's international relations is significant in Ladakh's case. Ladakh's history is of dual importance. My comments are based on the scholarship of John Bray (Note #1).

During 1846-1947, Ladakh became a part of Jammu and Kashmir under its Maharaja. The British Indian government had sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir but the Maharaja had freedom over internal administration. The British Indian administration maintained a Joint Commissioner to monitor the trade routes between Ladakh and Tibet and there was a British Resident in Srinagar to oversee Ladakh-Tibet relations. As such, a Buddhist kingdom became a part of the British India Empire's commercial and political orbit in the 19th and 20th centuries. Bray says that direct British influence was limited but it existed in the context of the British administrators' views on relations between Ladakh and Tibet. Moreover, Imperial Britain was preoccupied with Central Asian affairs involving the interplay between the three empires – Russia, China and Britain. In the past, China has argued that Ladakh was a part of Tibet until the 19th century. Given China's past conduct in the use of ambiguity to assert territorial claims based on history in its diplomatic conduct with India, one may expect their claims to Ladakh based on history, old maps and the rights of the 'ancestors' may emerge again. The precedent is the case of Arunachal Pradesh. On the other hand, the ambiguities have a trend line in favour of Ladakh's strong ties with India. With Independence, Ladakh became a part of

the Indian Jammu and Kashmir state in 1947 and this is acknowledged in the Indian Constitution. Nevertheless, Ladakh's ties with mainstream India will need to be strengthened by a strong and benign government presence in Ladakh to pre-empt any future Chinese interventions or subversions in this area.

Wikipedia gives a timeline of the conflict involving Ladakh. In 1948 Pakistani raiders occupied Kargil and were ousted by Indian troops. In 1956 China constructed its road through Aksai Chin. In 1962 Chinese road building connected Xinjiang, Tibet and the Karakoram highway through Kashmir into Pakistan. India too connected Srinagar with Leh and then China closed the Tibet-Ladakh border, an old trade link (Note #2). The second strong element which favours Ladakh's alignment with the Indian government and society is that Ladakhis have constantly demanded direct rule by Delhi over Ladakhi affairs and the establishment of a Union Territory meets this demand. The Ladakhis have long complained about the Muslim government's neglect of Ladakh's development and its cultural identity, and the pro-Kashmir and pro-Muslim bias of the J & K administration, which have been in the hands of the Abdullah family and later the Muftis. The anti-Buddhist (and anti-Hindu) bias and concerns about a corrupt J & K administration were long-festering grievances among the Ladakhis and the Hindus of Jammu. The Ladakhis claim that their cultural identity differs from that of Jammu and Kashmir and had earlier argued that even if J & K gained independence Ladakh was aligned with India because of its affinity with its system of governance and laws. This alignment is significant although it must be recognised that Ladakhis are jealous about the preservation of their cultural heritage and environment, so a balance needs to be struck between development and the heritage of the local population.

Given this history, there is a challenge before the Indian Government to refresh its historical knowledge by dusting off old British India files about its frontier policies and calculations in the Himalayan areas if they still exist in India, or to consult them in the India Office archives in Britain; and use points which are relevant for future Indian actions concerning this strategically important conflict-prone zone. It made sense

for Indian nationalists to reject British colonial rule but it is not necessary to reject their strategic thinking about India's northern regions adjacent to China.

CHINA'S REACTIONS, HER INTERESTS AND AMBITIONS

China called India's revocation of the special status of Kashmir 'unacceptable' and that it was not binding on her. But it had no answer to India's argument that the matter was an internal matter and India expected it to observe that norm in inter-state relations. India tried to assure China that its action did not alter the situation on the China-India border. My view is that China's immediate reaction was a muted one considering its preoccupations with the protest movement in Hong Kong, the Sino-US trade war and tensions over the South China Sea. There are also rumours of internal opposition to President Xi as a result of his policies. China argues that India's action undermines its sovereignty. Apparently, this refers to China's claim to Aksai Chin. As a follow up in October 2019, new lines emerged in China's narrative outlined in its media even as President Xi and Modi were meeting in Mamallapuram, India.

What are the new messages and their intended recipients? Firstly, China will support Pakistan to uphold its rights in Kashmir. This is a one-sided assertion. What are these Pakistani rights? This message is intended to boost the Pakistani claim to maintain the pre-5 August status quo. How does the Chinese stance sit with the Xi view that China and India should respect each other's core interests? Secondly, China is against any unilateral action that complicates the situation. This is contrary to China's conduct, past and present. Who will call out China on its unilateral action to take over Tibet by force, and expand its military presence in the South China Sea unilaterally? If the consolidation of Indian sovereignty in Ladakh, which has been a part of India since 1947, hurts China's sovereignty in Aksai Chin, is this a seriously intended claim or a talking point for Chinese domestic opinion rather than of legal experts? The use of calculated ambiguity with threatening implications is a part of China's diplomatic playbook and a form of psychological warfare against the Indian mind, and as a signal to the

pro-secessionist forces in Kashmir. India's view that it is an internal matter is the legal position. It does not recognise the value of Chinese propaganda to build and support its political constituents in Kashmir. The longer it takes the Indian authorities to normalise the political and social life in Kashmir the greater is the opportunity for China and Pakistan to fish in troubled waters. Propaganda by its nature is deceptive but it is valuable if the other side is kept on the defensive, it is kept engaged in defending itself, and it is vulnerable to the development of multiple and competing voices which can muddy the waters.

The historical and geographical context of the Sino-Pakistan-India relations is relevant in assessing this topic. As per CIA data India has about 101,338 square km of Kashmir, Pakistan has about 85,846 square km of Kashmir and that J & K is about 222,236 square km in size. China occupies about 37,000 square km in Aksai Chin and Pakistan ceded about 5,180 square km to China in the early 1960s. The sovereignty question enters the discussion because China and India both claim the entire Aksai Chin and India has contested the transfer of the territory in Pakistan Kashmir because it claims that the Instrument of Accession covered the entire state of J & K. Issues with contested sovereignty between strong powers and neighbours are hard to untangle unless there is a political will by both the sides, and legal reference points are required to settle the issues. But for now, China and India value tranquility in the border areas pending a negotiated settlement. The sovereignty issue, however, is not a dead one because post-5 August the Indian Foreign Minister has indicated a desire to restore Pakistan's Kashmir to Indian rule. Is this a signal to the restless people of Gilgit and Baltistan to look to India for relief from their grievances that Islamabad has ignored their democratic aspirations and developmental needs, or is it a sign of future Indian military action to 'liberate POK', or is it a way to maintain uncertainty and pressure among Islamabad's leaders to induce their cooperation with Indian moves? I will not pursue this line of speculation in this paper because the present signs are that Pakistan will continue to send terror groups into Kashmir and Jammu and to expand its terror activity by supporting terrorist activity in India's Punjab, and India has no known and immediate plans to take over POK. But by bringing POK's future into play India has injected

calculated ambiguity into its narrative with Pakistan and China. In the foreseeable future, sovereignty issues may stay in limbo with the reality that possession is 9/10th of the law provided the possession can be defended by diplomatic and military means. One point is however clear. By revoking the special status India has rattled several skeletons in the Kashmiri closet and now Pakistani, Chinese, Kashmiri separatists and the interested members of the international community need to rethink and recalibrate their policies towards India and Kashmir.

China has a growing list of interests in this area and its current verbal reactions should not be regarded as final since China – judging by past practice – brings up issues when the time is ripe. Here is a list of the major commercial and strategic issues that may frame China's future actions.

Overall, China sees India as a major competitor for power and prestige in Asia, in the Indian Ocean littoral countries and in the Pacific area where India has shown its naval flag through exercises with USA, Japan, Australia and Vietnam, and India is building its commercial-political and cultural links with the SE Asian nations and Mongolia. India's soft power competes with China's soft power even though China has had a head start in its endeavours.

China has significant interests to develop its presence in the Gilgit-Baltistan area and to guard its assets in its economic and military corridor with Pakistan as a showcase of its Belt and Road project and as a line of communication to Gwadar. With the extension of India's direct rule into Ladakh, now Chinese and Indian power will be in direct contact and it will also serve as a point of contrast between Indian governance practices and developmental activities in the frontier zone in proximity to China's and Pakistan's frontier zones. Undoubtedly, China will try to subvert the local population in Ladakh with its mix of Buddhists and Muslims and one may expect competition between Chinese and Indian soft power concerning the Ladakhi population as well as a competition between Chinese and Indian hard power. India's revocation of J & K's special status has created fluidity in the northwestern region because it opens up the local population in Pakistan's side of Kashmir including

the Gilgit-Baltistan area, to comparisons between Indian practices and those of Islamabad. This is assuming that India uses its new power with knowledge and political-economic skills, to promote the well being of the local population in a discernible way.

China too is invested in Pakistan's hostility to India, which converges with China's rivalry with India. However, one has to bear in mind that judging by the actual record of past Chinese support of Pakistan, Beijing has clearly avoided high-risk commitments to Pakistan in a military crisis. Usually its diplomacy has been to threaten India with dire consequences but avoid risky adventures – see its caution during the 1965 and 1971-72 crisis. But to maintain this pattern of Chinese restraint, India needs a mix of hard and soft power and high quality diplomatic and military intelligence in dealing with China and Pakistan. A point in India's favour is that China does not like to lose face in a crisis or a major international issue, and if India manoeuvres China into situations where its choice is to lose face or act with restraint, it is more likely than not to have a big bark and a small bite. It should be remembered that China prefers the hegemony model in its dealing with her southern neighbours but India's interest lies in seeking a stable balance of Sino-Indian power.

Finally, China has growing strategic and diplomatic interests in Afghanistan, which is close to China through the Wakhan corridor. Afghanistan may be viewed as an extension of China's interests in Pakistan. However, multiple considerations are in play in China's Afghan policy: (a) China has invested about US\$ 3.5 billion in Afghanistan since 2005 compared to US\$ 60 billion in Pakistan. The Taliban is the wild card for China. Pakistan needs them as insurance against India but China does not want Afghanistan to become a haven for the East Turkeman Islamic movement that may influence Xinjiang's Muslims; (b) Afghanistan wants BRI investments from China but security is problematic if instability in Afghanistan threatens the Pakistan-China economic corridor and possibly Chinese investments in Afghanistan; (c) Richard Ghiasy (Note #3) explains why Afghanistan's stability is important for China and that its calculus is to expand its presence in the region. It wants to reduce the US/NATO footprint in Afghanistan.

It seeks to make Afghanistan into a buffer state. It also has interests in Afghanistan's significant copper mining and it does not want Afghan Jihadis to attack Chinese interests. Finally, Afghanistan's drug trade threatens China's social stability – remember the Opium War in the mid-1800s!

In brief, the regional situation is fluid and potentially challenging for India.

RUSSIAN INTERESTS AND STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS

Russia has complex strategic interests in the Middle East and South Asia and it has considerable experience in juggling many balls simultaneously to rebuild itself from the ashes after the end of the Soviet empire. Although its economy is the size of Italy, it is a military superpower and it possesses the ambition and the playbook with diplomatic and military tools to get involved in complex situations. Central Asia was at the heart of imperial rivalries between Russia, China and British India in Tibet and Afghanistan in the 19th century. Russia also sought influence in the Black Sea area, Turkey and Iran in the 19th and the 20th centuries in competition with the European powers. This history of strategic interaction in the Middle East and the Mediterranean arena is still at play in Syria, Turkey and Iran between Russia and the Western powers.

The Cold War brought the USSR and USA into contention in the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent following Britain's withdrawal from Asia. The eruption of the Kashmir dispute and its referral to the UN Security Council gave Moscow an important voice because it enjoyed permanent membership with veto powers. Moscow came down on India's side during the 1950s and the 1960s by casting vetoes against Western pressure and it saved India from international isolation. A pattern of Moscow-Delhi strategic alignment emerged with the provision of much needed military aid, which India could not obtain from the West. Then Moscow played a major role as a mediator in the Tashkent agreement (1966) that brought the 1965 War to an end, and then again it held firmly on India's side during the 1971-72 Bangladesh liberation.

Nevertheless, post-Cold War and in the 21st century Russia's India and Pakistan policies have developed several subtle changes and nuances. The contrast is with Moscow's clear positions during the 1950s and 1960s in India's favour and Moscow's new tilt towards Pakistan. Vinay Kaura (2018) provides a detailed account of the shifts and evolution of Moscow's South Asia policies and its contemporary implications (Note #4). Noteworthy is the start-up of military cooperation between Moscow and Islamabad and Russia's interest in playing a role in the future of Afghanistan. The events tell a story. Musharraf visited Moscow in 2003 and the linkup gained traction with Lavrov's visit to Pakistan in 2012 followed by the Russian Defence Minister's visit in 2014. The Russian embargo against military supplies to Pakistan was lifted, four military helicopters were supplied and the Karachi-Lahore oil pipeline received about US\$ 1.7 billion from Russia. The context is important.

First, US military aid to Pakistan was declining as Washington became skeptical about Pakistan's motivation and reliability as an ally. Following its debacle in the Afghan war during the 1970s, the prospect of a US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which was widely telegraphed by the Obama and Trump presidencies, allowed Moscow to develop its interests in the region – Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Further, Moscow feared the rise of terrorism and drug trade from Afghanistan given its Chechnya problem. In 2016 Moscow joined the USA, China and Pakistan in discussions about Afghanistan's future and later this group was expanded to include Iran, Afghanistan and India. 2016 was an important year because Moscow announced joint military exercises with Pakistan in the Gilgit-Baltistan area, which created disquiet in Indian official circles.

The Moscow-Delhi military supply pipeline is still robust with contracts signed for the S-400 system, frigates, T-90 tanks and AK rifles. These orders go into billions, while Pakistan-Russia trade and military supplies are much smaller. The changing dynamics in Russian calculations, however, should be studied. First, Moscow is displeased with the Modi tilt towards Trump in strategic affairs in the Indo-Pacific region. It should be noted that Moscow still thinks in terms of the 'Asia Pacific' region (which centers on China) and not the Indo-Pacific region (which

centers on US, Japan, Australia, India and Vietnam). Moscow has tilted towards China in economic and military affairs to offset the US economic and political pressures, particularly by the Trump administration. Second, Moscow prefers to deal with the Taliban because it is better than ISIS, and it recognises Taliban's staying power in Afghanistan and views its role positively. Third, Pakistan is a key player in Afghan and Taliban affairs and Moscow does not want to put pressure on Pakistan and lose its goodwill.

India's revocation of Kashmir's special status in August 2019 produced a subtle shift in Moscow's approach to the Kashmir issue. Its line – Moscow seeks normalisation between India and Pakistan. That divergences should be settled by diplomatic means bilaterally according to the Shimla (1972) and Lahore (1998) agreements. This was standard Moscow line from the past. But then came a significant twist in the Russian narrative. It added that the resolution of the Kashmir issue should also be based on the UN Charter and relevant UN resolutions. This was a new element in Moscow's India diplomacy and it fed into the Pakistani view about the importance of the UN resolutions as a basis to settle the Kashmir issue. This new element added fluidity in Russian diplomacy and it suggested a tilt towards Pakistan and China – a tilt that could be problematic for India in the future. Moscow's diplomacy now is not simply in the context of the historical relationship between India and Russia but it indicates a wider set of calculations – a desire to join China's BRI project and to reduce India's involvement in Afghan affairs while increasing Pakistan's and China's inputs.

In short, Indo-Russian relations have now developed two tracks – the first deals with arms supply and trade questions; the relationship is on a strong footing thus far on this track. The second track is looking at calculations about a post-US withdrawal scenario in Afghanistan, the growing importance of Taliban, Pakistan and China in Afghan affairs and the marginalisation of India's influence in Afghanistan. This points to the rise of importance of the Muslim factor in Russia's South Asian diplomacy. This factor is not insignificant as recent statements by Turkey and Malaysia have used strong language about India's 'invasion and occupation' of Kashmir and this is likely to incentivize other nations to

make such statements. The point is that Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh are India's internal affairs but the recent changes have external effects and their management requires nimble Indian diplomacy.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA: MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

The scale of India's problems in Kashmir itself is immense because the special status given to Kashmir allowed for reverse discrimination of non-Kashmiris, it subordinated the development of Jammu and Ladakh to the whims of dynastic politics of Kashmir's political elite and the J & K administration, and it gave them a sense of entitlement in the context of the special status accorded by Articles 370 and 35A. For Pakistan's military and political elites, Kashmir's status as an India-Pakistan dispute gave them a cover to try to take Kashmir by force or through international mediation or by terror activity; these were the tools in Pakistan's playbook. In the process, Pakistan and Kashmiri politicians sidelined the interests of the non-Muslim majorities in Jammu and Ladakh. This is a seven-decade old situation and now it is up to the Indian and Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh authorities to roll back the old political and economic arrangements and the entrenched belief system between secessionist Kashmiris and Pakistani authorities. This is not an easy task because many of the players, both within Kashmir and outside, have been and still are, invested in Pakistan's 70-year old narrative about self-determination and Azadi for Kashmiris.

Let me first list the players who are fully invested in the old narrative and then review the options to change this narrative.

The Pakistan based terror groups, the Kashmir based secessionists and advocates of autonomy, and the preservation of Kashmiri dynastic politics are sizeable and entrenched constituencies who, if given a chance, are likely to raise a demand to restore the old special status arrangements. Following the 5 August clampdown, the Indian authorities in Delhi and Kashmir have sent the known secessionists to Agra jail and placed the dynastic stakeholders under house arrest. Unless the Kashmiri dynastic and secessionist constituents are charged and convicted in a court of law, or voluntarily agree to opt-out of pro-Pakistani and

secessionist political activity, their release will bring back the demand for autonomy or self-determination.

India's calling card in the world is that it is a functioning democracy with a commitment to the rule of law. As such, peaceful protest should be acceptable as long as terror activity is curbed and punished. The red line should be against political violence, not peaceful protests, which has been a hallmark of India's regional and national politics. The secessionist constituency can be sidelined provided Kashmiri public opinion calms down through actions to bring the stone-throwers into the political and administrative mainstream by giving them jobs, enabling their participation in Kashmir's development, by building tourism and entrepreneurship in the J-K-L regions and by ensuring that the local cultures are preserved and respected.

The example of management of the Khalistani movement in Punjab in the 1980s and 1990s is relevant in Kashmir's case. In both cases, the insurgencies were tied to the demand for self-determination. A mix of strong-arm methods, developmental activities, and the involvement of Sikhs in peaceful commercial pursuits handled it successfully. The strong-arm methods created the disincentive to seek autonomy through political violence, and the call to follow a peaceful path with benefits to those who laid down arms was the incentive. KPS Gill was the architect of this approach. It may be useful to study his approach and the lessons learnt. Undoubtedly, to succeed the approach requires a high degree of political and military intelligence and good governance practices where knowledge, pressure, inducement and moderation are used to turn around a hostile population. In Kashmir's case, the Kashmiri Muslims grew up indoctrinated with the belief of 'Indian occupation' of Kashmir, and 'Azadi' became the slogan. Other than being a slogan what does Azadi mean? Kashmiris are still poor after 70 years of rule under special status and most Kashmiris currently do not have an upward trajectory towards economic and social mobility in comparison with many parts of India. However, Kashmiri politicians and secessionists have done well for themselves. Opportunities have to be created to encourage introspection among the Kashmiris about the metrics to measure Azadi. If they get government jobs, find admission into a medical and other

professional colleges, get a chance to compete in examinations for entry into the public service in Kashmir and India, get grants for their apple orchards, get a free vote and participation in local, provincial and national politics, and the Government invests in Kashmiri development and tourism, is that Azadi? India's Punjab provides a road map of responsible government under Sikh leadership with free and fair elections. If the Kashmiris turn to these metrics of Azadi, the appeal of Pakistan based terrorism may diminish. Killing the terrorists is essential but it is not enough unless the minds of the secession-minded population are turned around. This requires knowledge and understanding of the Kashmiri mind as well as that of the Jammuities and Ladakhis.

The Pakistan/POK based terrorist groups lack an incentive to develop Kashmir. For them, Jihad is part faith and part employment with pensions for the martyrs. They are hard-core followers of the Pakistan government line and they have benefited from Pakistani military training. Prime Minister Imran Khan has publicly acknowledged that a large number of terror groups exist in Pakistan and the role of the Pakistan Army's training of these groups has been acknowledged. There is no use repeating to the Pakistani authorities about these signs of state-sponsored terror – their hearing aids are turned off. But the world community is still listening and even China is concerned because it fears the spread of terrorism into its frontier areas. Thus a test of the success of Indian diplomacy is to target the foreign minds that advocate Pakistan's case. This requires a sharply focused psychological and diplomatic strategy. The relationship between terror financing and terrorism, and exposing credible details of the role of agencies within Pakistan, who facilitate this, requires extensive publicity and vigorous public diplomacy. The habit of the Ministry of External Affairs relying on official communiqués and global outreach on these matters is not sufficient in the age of social media; a strategy is required which is tailored towards selected diplomatic and public targets – known as the 'attentive publics' and who influence the decision-making process in the target countries. Even authoritarian regimes such as China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the anti-India US Congressional sources are open to persuasion and pressure as are members of the Paris-based FATF. But to succeed, this endeavour requires a long period of watching and learning of the selected targets'

pressure points and their compulsions by well-trained scholars, officials and journalists and by the publication of action-oriented deliberations. Public diplomacy must be data based to be credible and it must be delivered to multiple audiences in the international sphere and not simply in the UN and at other official meetings. In international relations, truth is not self-evident and it must be delivered continuously to skeptical audiences, and not simply in the context of a particular news event.

India should build its leverage towards Pakistan by using soft and hard power. In either case, disciplined messaging is important and it must be long term rather than as a reaction to any new event. By overt means, India should tell the POK authorities and the people in Gilgit, Baltistan and Pakistan's military and public, that they should concentrate on the development of POK in a democratic framework, give it rights and statehood instead of dreaming about liberating Srinagar. Otherwise, as Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh normalises, as Kashmir and Jammu regains statehood and secessionists are sidelined, the contrast between living conditions in the two Kashmirs will grow. This assumes that Kashmir will eventually normalise in a few months, which would be impressive because at issue are efforts to rollback 70 years of misrule in Kashmir by Kashmiri leaders and subsistence living among the people in J-K-L.

Further, India could use covert means to support the Balochi demand for fair treatment in the political and economic spheres. Just as China is watching Kashmir, India should be watching Balochistan and Afghanistan.

BUILDING LEVERAGE WITH CHINA

Nehru gave up India's leverage when he accepted China's takeover of Tibet and eliminated Indian rights in Tibet, and accepted Tibet as a part of China without securing China's acceptance of the McMahon Line as the legal boundary. He also declined to build up Indian leverage by a policy of non-armament and peaceful dialogue with a country that believes in the barrel of the gun. Post-Nehru India has learnt to combine Indian diplomatic activities with a policy of using the barrel of the gun in Siachin, Kargil, Doklam, and Balakot by developing a credible nuclear

force that can act against China and Pakistan, and by developing a credible naval force in the Indian Ocean and combining it with diplomatic actions in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the BIMSTEC countries.

Moreover, the BJP leadership fought a national election in 2019, in part, on a platform of building national security. The Indian electorate endorsed this platform, a signal development because Indian elections since Nehru's time were mostly about bread and butter issues, not foreign and military affairs. China, Pakistan and the Western countries have noted this sea change in India's body politic. India's economic record in recent years has also raised India's profile in the world but there are signs that the economy is slowing and that the growth is not organic.

India's claim to the entire Aksai Chin is moribund; China is there to stay. Instead, the opportunity to build leverage comes from the Indo-Pacific arena rather than the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICKS. I refer to the role of the QUAD. Currently, it is an informal security grouping of US, Japan, India and Australia. Its common element is to seek security in the Indo-Pacific region. This grouping was the result of Prime Minister Abe's initiative and he framed it as a grouping of like-minded democratic societies with a shared interest in an open, inclusive and peaceful IPR. Its name is significant because it does not refer to 'Asia-Pacific', which is China's medium to maintain its leadership. The QUAD had strong sponsors – PM Abe, Vice-President Dick Cheney, PM Manmohan Singh and PM John Howard. They initiated a pattern of naval cooperation (the Malabar exercises) as a response to China's growing power and its military expansion in the South China Sea. Kevin Rudd, a mandarin speaking PM of Australia, however, was soft on China and felt that the QUAD looked like an anti-China alliance; he withdrew from it and his successor Julia Gillard maintained that stance. However, the remaining members of the QUAD kept up with the Malabar exercises. Rudd and company was not good for India because they declined to sell uranium to India despite the Bush administration waiver on the issue. In 2017 PM Malcolm Turnbull reversed the Rudd approach, Australian uranium came to India, and the Malabar exercises continued.

China does not like the premise of the QUAD – it favours democratic peace and an inclusive and free IPR. There is speculation to expand the grouping by including like-minded countries from SE Asia, the Korean peninsula, Mongolia and Central Asia. Rudd's withdrawal to please China was an aberration in Australian politics and its foreign affairs. Since 2018 Australian commentators and government experts are concerned about the brazen attempts by the Chinese government authorities to mobilise its large Chinese community in Australia, which includes Australian citizens, to use their influence to shape Australia's commercial and intellectual activities – such as books written by Australian Professors – to favour Chinese causes. The blowback in Australia has been significant.

The QUAD gained ground following the start of the US-India military cooperation in the 1990s. In 2005 US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and India's Pranab Mukherjee, under UPA auspices, signed the 'New Framework for India-US Defence'. The growth of this pattern of bilateral cooperation indicates a UPA/BJP consensus and it is not simply a Trump/Modi project. Moreover, the QUAD has legs. During 2017-19 it met five times and this cooperative pattern is likely to continue because concrete issues are at stake. For India, strategic cooperation with Vietnam is also significant and although Hanoi is not a formal member of the QUAD it functions as an honorary member because of its strategic ties with the US, Japan and India, and it is actively resisting Chinese activities in the South China Sea.

India's leverage issue vis-à-vis China is a long term one and it comes from the following sources. First, the QUAD members are like-minded with similar concerns about China's expansionist and unilateralist activities (Note #5). China has not recognised limits to its expansion even though it speaks about respecting the other parties' core interests. Second, China does not like the Indo-US military alignment, which was established pre-Trump and is viewed as an important part of US national

interests. Third, Mamallpuran was an interesting choice to host Mr Xi as the temples and the carvings highlighted India's deep civilizational roots and the ancient trade links with China. The encouragement of people-to-people movement and easier visas for Chinese tourists will give them a glimpse of Indian poverty and infrastructure deficiencies, but it will showcase the civilizational links with China and the economic prospects of the two powers as well. Mr Xi should be encouraged to carry on with his Indian elephant/Chinese dragon song and dance act but for India, the real challenges are to maintain the strength of the Indian military positions along the border areas, to participate actively in the development of hard power in the IPR via the QUAD and the Indo-US military arrangements, to strengthen ties with Vietnam, and promote Indian soft power in the IPR – from Africa to SE Asia and Mongolia/Central Asia areas as long term projects. Just as China is watching India in Kashmir, it is appropriate and necessary for Indian scholars, officials and journalists to watch the developments in China's frontier areas, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and within China's political and economic arenas, because China's rise as a global hegemon is not inevitable.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE, TOURISM AND
XIAOGANG VILLAGES ON THE TIBETAN BORDER**

By

CLAUDE ARPI

*T*ibet with its mystery is the spiritual Garden of Eden and is longed for by travellers home and abroad. Only by stepping on the snowy plateau, can one be baptized by its splendour, culture, folklore, life, Snow Mountains, Saint Mountains, sacred lakes, residences with local characteristics and charming landscape.

Thus *Chinanews.com*, a Chinese website started promoting the Roof of the World in 2015.

THE SIXTH TIBET WORK FORUM

Very few realized that the Sixth Tibet Work Forum, held in Beijing on 24-25 August 2015 would be a turning point for the plateau. Tibet Work Forums are large meetings called every 5 or 10 years to discuss the Chinese Communist Party's Tibet policies. They are attended by all members of the powerful Politburo's Standing Committee, members of the Central Committee, senior PLA generals, United Front Work Department officials, regional leaders, etc. The 2015 gathering was presided over by President Xi Jinping. Addressing the Forum, Xi spoke of promoting the economic and social development of Tibet – he asked for more efforts to promote economic growth and all-round social progress in Tibet and Tibetan-inhabited areas.

The Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Tibetan-inhabited areas in four provinces (Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai and Yunnan) have been clubbed together as far as Beijing's policies for Tibet are concerned.

Xi said that Tibet "has entered a critical stage toward fulfilling the country's goal of building a moderately prosperous society comprehensively." A 'moderately prosperous society' would become the leitmotiv of the Chinese government thereafter.

The Chinese President asserted that "Development, which aims to improve living conditions for various ethnic groups and beef up social cohesion, should be advanced in a prudent and steady manner, and all measures taken should be sustainable."

The dual objective of improving the 'local conditions' and 'beefing up social cohesion' pervaded the speech of the President who urged "bettering basic public service and adopting targeted measures to alleviate poverty." It is an admission that poverty among the local population in Tibet still exists, 60 years after its so-called 'Liberation'.

It was a turning point because for the first time perhaps 'dual-use' of infrastructure was institutionalized. Any road, airport, railway line built thereafter would be for dual-use, civilian and military. From a strategic point of view, this move would completely tilt the balance in favour of China vis-à-vis India which was, and still is, struggling with an Inner Line Permit system and extremely slow infrastructure development in border areas.

THE DISNEYLAND OF SNOWS

One of the main decisions taken during the meeting was to develop tourism as the main activity on the plateau – Tibet soon became a large entertainment park, a thousand times larger than Disneyland. Beijing began marketing the Land of Snows as the ultimate 'indigenous' spot for the Chinese to spend their holidays, it was Tibet's USP (Unique Selling Proposition).

In 1985, the Dalai Lama spoke of the ‘vast seas’ of Chinese migrants who “threaten the very existence of the Tibetans as a distinct people.” In an article in *The New York Times*, he had explained: “In the eastern parts of our country, the Chinese now greatly outnumber Tibetans. In the Amdo province, for example, where I was born, there are, according to Chinese statistics, 2.5 million Chinese and only 750,000 Tibetans. Even in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region i.e. central and western Tibet, Chinese government sources now confirm that Chinese outnumber Tibetans.” The Dalai Lama then pointed out: “Today, in the whole of Tibet 7.5 million Chinese settlers have already been sent, outnumbering the Tibetan population of six million...” This was in 1985!

President Xi and his colleagues had found a more sophisticated way to submerge (or immerse) the Tibetan population under waves of Han Chinese. Tibet has two unique assets: first, its physical reality. The beauty of the landscape, the imposing mountain ranges, the purity of the air and the rivers, the dry pure sky, especially when compared to the sky of China’s great metropolises; Tibet was the ideal place to visit and have a break from the fast pace of the polluted mainland. The second advantage is the rich historical past of the Roof of the World, the Land of the Lamas. In Tibet, you can find everything claims the Chinese propaganda: a beautiful Chinese princess falling for the powerful emperor and converting him to Buddhism; the monasteries and nunneries, seat of a wisdom lost in the mainland; the folkloric yak or snow-lion dances; the *Shoton* (yoghurt) festival; the colourful handicrafts; the exotic food, you name it – and ultimately, a couple of million Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) who could guide the tourists through the mega-museum. When 33 million ‘tourists’ pour into a few selected places like Lhasa, Shigatse or Nyingtri, one has to be ready to ‘receive’ them and provide them ‘entertainment’. It is what the Communist leadership has been doing during the last couple of years by developing infrastructure, which can also be used to ‘defend the border’.

DUAL USE INFRASTRUCTURE

To understand the importance of infrastructure on the plateau, one has to look at the civil-military integration or dual-use of infrastructure. Already by 2015, Xinhua had mentioned that the joint civil-military development of airports would “strengthen aviation safety and combat support capabilities.” A joint statement of the People Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and General Administration of Civil Aviation (CAAC) explained that the integration would include joint maintenance of airport support facilities, joint flight safety support and joint airport management.

Interestingly, the Lhasa Gongkar Airport in Tibet and Sunan Shuofang International Airport in Wuxi in Jiangsu province were the first two pilot airports to implement the ‘integration’ in China. It was done during the second half of 2015. The PLAAF/CAAC circular further affirms, “All the civil-military airports will conduct strengthened integration next year.”

THE INFRASTRUCTURE

On 1 July 2006 Tibet witnessed a tsunami of change when the first train arrived in Lhasa. It was perhaps the most radical transformation since the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) crossed the upper reaches of the Yangtze River and entered eastern Tibet on 7 October 1950.

On 31 October 2018, the *China Daily* reported that the Qinghai-Tibet Railway had been the driving force of Tibet’s growth. The Communist Party’s mouthpiece explained: “Since it’s opening in 2006, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway had been serving as an important driving force for the economic development of Tibet. Linking Xining and Lhasa, capital cities of northwestern Qinghai province and the southwestern Tibet autonomous region, the 1,956 kilometres long railway is the region’s first railway in history.” According to the Qinghai-Tibet Railway Company, during the first 12 years, the railway has transported 182 million passengers and 552 million tons of goods.

The *China Daily*, run by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China, affirmed: “The railway is known as a ‘sky road’ because it is built at the highest altitude and is the longest railway sited on a

high plateau. As a result, the geographic conditions brought many challenges, including the high altitude and lack of oxygen, to the operation of the railway."

Due to the opening of the rail line, the TAR's GDP rose from 24.88 billion yuan (US\$ 38 billion) in 2005 to 131.06 billion yuan in 2017; this growth is generally attributed to the railway. It brought a tremendous change in strategic terms too.

NEW RAILWAY LINES ON THE PLATEAU

On 18 September 2018, an article in Xinhua dealt at great length with the 'LaLin' section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway – 'Lalin' is a short form for the Lhasa-Linzhi railway – linking the Tibetan capital to the region north of the Indian border. The news agency reported that China Railway's 11th Bureau had successfully laid the first group of ballasts for the Gonggao station, a new station in the railway line "thus created the traffic conditions for the passage of the Lalin Railway."

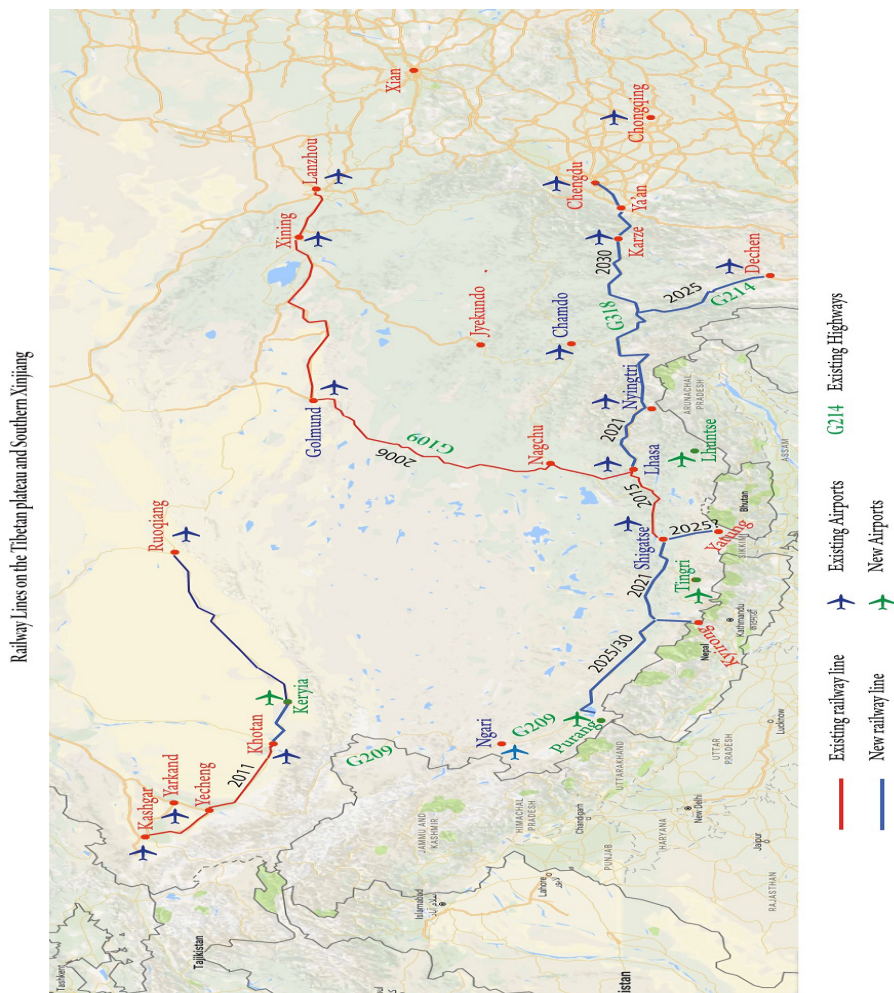
Liu Jun, the Secretary of the Lhasa-Nyingchi Project, told the agency that the Sichuan-Tibet Railway was a key project of the National 13th Five-Year Plan, "Upon completion, it will become another railway artery connecting the plateau with the mainland."

The 'Lalin' section is an important section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway – this part is relatively easier to build than the eastern part (Nyingchi-Chengdu). It will have a total length of 435 kilometers with 34 stations, out of which 17 already exist. It will start in Lhasa and the terminus will be at Nyingchi City and it will follow the Yarlung Tsangpo River.

The construction of this section started at the end of 2014 – it will take about seven years to complete the entire project and the planned speed of the train will be 160 km/hour – it will be the first electrified railway in Tibet. The Railway line will cross the Yarlung Tsangpo 16 times. The railway bridges use large-span bridge structures: "The mountains are high in water depth, the rivers are rushing, the technology is special, and the construction is extremely difficult. There are 14 high-risk tunnels

out of 47 tunnels, of which 7 are extremely high-risk tunnels," explained China Railway's 11th Bureau.

Shen Yubin, a project manager for the China Railways Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway Second Division affirmed: "The total length of bridges and tunnels on the Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway is 331 km, 75 per cent of the total distance of the line. Of these, there are 120 bridges totaling 84 km, which accounts for 21 per cent of the total length of the line. As a single-track railway, there have been difficulties in construction and logistics transportation while building the Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway." To highlight the difficulties in executing the project, Shen added: "We have also encountered unique geographical, climatic, and environmental



situations, which have brought unique challenges to the beam-laying process."

NEW ROADS

In October 2017, the Lhasa-Nyingchi High Grade Highway was opened for trial operations. Quoting from the TAR's transportation department, Kangba TV reported: "Except Songduo Tunnel and Milashan Tunnel, Lhasa-Nyingchi High Grade Highway has been well prepared and begins trial operation from October 1." The four-lane Lhasa-Nyingchi High Grade Highway is 398 km long and it is designed for an average speed of 80 km/h.

According to the Chinese media "The operation of Lhasa-Nyingchi High Grade Highway shortens the travel time between Lhasa and Nyingchi from ten hours to four hours, which can greatly improve the traffic condition of the golden tour line as well as boost local economic development." Since then, all tunnelling has been completed. As part of the Lhasa-Nyingchi Highway, China has also built the Lhasa-Lhoka (Shannan) Express Line (Highway).

On 6 March 2017, *China Tibet News* published some pictures of workers on the Lhasa-Lhoka Express Line driving an engineering vehicle. The news agency commented: "At present, the Lhasa-Shannan Express Line project goes well. This project started on August 26, 2016. The whole line is 48 kilometres with bi-directional four roadways. The designed speed is 80 kilometres per hour. The project can not only bring the benefits of development to both Lhasa and Shannan but also has a positive significance to improving people's livelihood and driving the accelerated development of the whole region's economy industry chain." The highway will serve the Indian border, particularly north of the "Twang sector; it will run parallel to the railway line and have dual-use".

A MAP OF FUTURE RAILWAY LINES

Interestingly, on a map found on a Pakistani website accompanying one of these articles, not only the 'Lalin' railway line is prominently displayed,

but several new lines are shown reaching the plateau. They are worth noting:

- The Lhasa-Shigatse-Kyirong section, which should be completed in a couple of years – it was delayed due to the 2015 Nepal Earthquake.
- The Lhasa-Yatung section reaching the Chumbi Valley and the Indian border in Sikkim. This has serious strategic implications for India, especially after the Doklam episode. Though it is rarely mentioned in the Chinese press, it is clearly on the cards.
- The projected Yunnan-Tibet railway line that has special strategic implications for India too, particularly for the border in Arunachal Pradesh (shown by a dotted line on the map). It will join the Sichuan-Nyingchi line somewhere near Chamdo.
- The Korla-Golmud line is already under construction. It will be the second major railway line linking Qinghai province to Western Xinjiang.
- The Shigatse-Rutok-Kashgar line (in dotted line). It may follow the G219 Highway (known as the Aksai Chin Road). Will India protest if China starts building a railway line on what is legally Indian territory?
- A new Qiemo-Korla line across the Taklamakan desert. An extension of G216 Highway is under construction. This line should be following the highway.
- The Khotan-Qiemo line in Xinjiang. It will link up with the Khotan-Kashgar line. It is probably important for the totally unstable Muslim province, to 'stabilize' southern Xinjiang and build new model villages/towns along the line.
- The Khotan-Tashkurgan line, leading to the border with Afghanistan. Tashkurgan has historically been a part of the Silk Road. "Major caravan routes converged leading to Kashgar in the north, Yecheng to the east, Badakhshan and Wakhan to the west, and Chitral and Hunza to the southwest," says Wikipedia.
- A never-seen-before project to link Chengdu in Sichuan to Golmud in Qinghai. It will close the loop linking the two provinces on the West and North of the Tibetan plateau and link up Xinjiang through the above-mentioned Golmud-Korla line.

More recently, Xinhua announced that the new railway linking Dunhuang city, in Northwest China's Gansu province, and Golmud city, in Qinghai province, was scheduled to be operational in December 2019. The construction of the 509 km railway began in December 2012, with a total investment of 13.48 billion yuan (US\$ 1.92 billion). It allows trains to run at speeds of 120 km per hour. It will link Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang. But plans are not restricted only for the railways.

GONGKAR AIRPORT IN LHASA

In November 2019, *The Tibet Daily* announced that a new apron of Gongkar International Airport in Lhasa had started operating on Sunday. Welcoming its first flight by Tibet Airlines, the newspaper reported: "According to the Tibet Administration of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, the airport has 27 boarding gates in total after the construction of the four boarding gates for the new airport apron finished on October 20." The Chinese newspaper added that it was "equipped with high-tech facilities and devices, the newly launched apron will help the flight safety, operation efficiency, and management effectiveness of the airport."

In the year 2018, the Tibetan capital city received a record 4 million passengers according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China's Tibet office; the passenger volume at Gongkar Airport, the largest airport in the TAR, exceeded 2 million in 2013, and 3 million in 2016. Tibet's civil aviation industry has witnessed accelerated development, thanks to the use of new technologies since the country's reform and opening-up four decades ago, noted the Chinese media. Tibet now has 10 airlines operating a total of 81 routes, enabling convenient connections between Tibet and most of the major cities in China according to CAAC. It is estimated that the airport will see 4.3 million passengers by the end of 2018.

NEW TERMINAL OPENS AT NYINGCHI AIRPORT

In March 2017, Xinhua announced the second-largest airport terminal in Tibet had started its operations in Nyingchi: "The new terminal, the sixth to open in Tibet, is located at Nyingchi Mainling Airport. It covers

an area of 10,300 square meters and will be able to handle 750,000 passengers and 3,000 tons of cargo annually by 2020."

Nyingchi is located at an average elevation of 2,950 meters above sea level. Xinhua says: "The city has attracted more visitors in recent years thanks to tourist attractions such as its 'peach blossom festival'." More than three million used the airport facilities according to Chinese statistics – out of a total of seven million visitors in the region in 2018. Incidentally, Bayi Township, owned by the PLA ('bayi' means 8-1 or 1 August, the anniversary of the PLA) is located nearby and the same airport also serves it. The Indian border will also now be well served ...in case required!

THREE NEW AIRPORTS IN TIBET

On 9 June 2018, the CAAC and the TAR government announced that Tibet would soon have three new airports. The announcement came during a conference held in Lhasa on 8 June. A communiqué stated: "Construction of the three airports, all above the altitude of 3,900 meters, should begin in 2019." Xinhua gave the official rationale: "Tourist travel will be more convenient, and economic development in Tibet's agricultural and pastoral areas will also be assisted."

The Chinese-language press provided more information about the location of the three airports – one will be located in Lhuntse in Lhoka (called Shannan by the Chinese) area, north of the Upper Subansiri and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh; the second will be between Tingri and Lhatse counties of Shigatse City, north of Zangmu, the border post with Nepal; and the last in Purang, near the tri-junction of Nepal-Tibet-India, north of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand, on the yatri's route to Mount Kailash. While Tingri airport is near the Nepali border, the two other (Lhuntse and Purang) are at a short distance from the Indian border. The airports should be completed in 2021; by then, there will be eight airports in the TAR, plus three close to the Indian border in Xinjiang, i.e. Kashgar, Hotan and Yarkand.

The news agency added: "At present, the preparatory work for the three airports is underway. The preferred sites have been determined,

and the construction of temporary weather stations at each site is completed.” The three airports will be high altitude airports and companies including Air China, China Eastern Airlines and Sichuan Airlines that are already flying in Tibet, will operate from them.

ACCELERATING HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT IN AN ALL-ROUND WAY

Ma Jinglin, Director of the Development and Reform Commission of Tibet Autonomous Region, stated that Tibet had completed the medium-term adjustment of the 13th Five-Year Plan last year and the number of projects under the Plan increased from 189 to 197; among them, 52 projects have been completed, and 94 are still under construction. The investment had increased by 22 billion yuan (US\$ 3.57 billion) to 380 billion yuan (US\$ 61.7 billion): “These key projects are important drivers to build Tibet’s competitive industry chain and enhance core competitiveness, as well as significant measures for developing Tibet’s economy and increasing employment.” As we can see, China envisages an overall development of the region.

GOVERN THE BORDERS

For years, Xi’s plans for Tibet were clear; the ‘core’ leader had declared: “Govern the nation by governing the borders; govern the borders by first stabilizing Tibet; ensure social harmony and stability in Tibet and strengthen the development of border regions.”

Over the last few years, the authorities in Tibet have started implementing the emperor’s theory, while the Party’s propaganda was doing its best to entice the local Tibetan population to side with the Communist Party – this is a serious development, unfortunately largely ignored in India. Another important way to ‘govern the borders’ is the development of strategic Xiaogang model villages.

WHAT ARE XIAOGANG VILLAGES?

For the Communist Party, an important event took place in 1978; 18 farmers in Xiaogang village, in Anhui Province, signed a secret agreement

to divide collectively-owned farmland into individual pieces and drop the collectivization of the Great Leap Forward (GLF), which between 1958 and 1960 resulted in some 40 million casualties; in Xiaogang itself, 67 villagers out of 120 had died of starvation between 1958 and 1960.

Forty years later, the name 'Xiaogang' is been used for a different project – the building of a large number of 'model' villages in Tibet, along the border with India.

This has extremely serious implications for India's defence.

YUME, XI'S MODEL VILLAGE

How did it start? Soon after the conclusion of the 19th Congress, President Xi Jinping wrote a letter to two young Tibetan herders who had written to him introducing their village, Yume, north of Upper Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. Xinhua then reported that Xi "encouraged the herding family in Lhuntse County, near the Himalayas in southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, to set down roots in the border area, safeguard the Chinese territory and develop their hometown." Xi acknowledged "the family's efforts to safeguard the territory and thanked them for the loyalty and contributions they have made in the border area. Without the peace in the territory, there will be no peaceful lives for the millions of families," he wrote.

The two Tibetan girls, Choekar and Yangzom, had told Xi about their "experiences in safeguarding the border area and the development of their township over the years." It appears that many Tibetans from nearby villages now want to move their homes to Yume. Choekar's sudden celebrity will certainly help her village to grow exponentially – and the border to be better protected. Against who, if not India!

Today, Han tourists have already started pouring in. Villagers will build new guest accommodation and the border village will become wealthier and the border will become more stable. That conforms to Xi's plan to have 'moderately well-off villages' looking after the border with India.

Choekar was soon elevated to an important political position – she became one of the 1,964 members of the National People's Congress. For a long time, Yume was said to be the smallest village in Tibet – a decade ago, the hamlet was supposed to have 2 inhabitants. In January 2018, it had 32. *The Global Times* mentioned the hamlet: "A sparsely populated township in Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region has been connected to the state electricity grid, ending life without electricity for its 32 residents." Today, less than two years later, the population has grown to 192 inhabitants.

Incidentally, why does China always write "China's Tibet Autonomous Region"? India does not write "India's Tamil Nadu" or "India's Uttarakhand" or even "India's Arunachal"? Beijing is feeling insecure.

The same article affirms that Yume, located about 200 kilometres from the county seat of Lhuntse, which will soon have an airport, is a 'happy' village "with the development of economy and the improvement of environment of Yume Township (yes, it has become a township!!), it has built numerous new houses for local villagers." But local villagers are not in a majority anymore. In 2018, it was said that the "197 villagers of the township will be moved into their new houses, and their living environment will be greatly improved." What does it mean?

There is a definitive plan to re-populate the borders with India by creating new model 'townships'. This should be a serious worry for Delhi. Some two years ago, long before anybody had heard of the hamlet, Wu Yingjie, the Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, had visited the area. Probably based on his report, Chairman Xi adopted the tiny village.

TSONA COUNTY, NORTH OF TAWANG

On 19 October 2018, *China Tibet News* had reported that since the beginning of the year, Tsona County, north of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang District, has been vigorously promoting the construction of border 'Xiaogang' villages'.

Already in 2018, Tsona County had invested 519 million yuan (US\$ 74 million) in construction projects of nine border villages, benefiting 1,961 people from 617 households. More than 40 per cent of the project has since then been completed, and a investment of 2.2 billion yuan (US\$ 314 million) spent.

In May 2018, *China Tibet News* affirmed that Lepo, the first village in Tibet, north of the Indian border, boasted of rich vegetation and clear waters: "With impressive natural scenery and unique ethnic customs, Magmang ecological civilization village is also situated in Lepo Valley, Tsona County."

The website continues: "The construction of Magmang ecological civilization demonstration village began in March of 2014 and was completed in December. On January of 2015, the village was inaugurated and a year later, Magmang was awarded 'China's beautiful leisure village' by the Ministry of Agriculture."

On 25 November 2019, *China Tibet News* published an article *Enjoying Prosperous Life* saying that "In 2018, a total of 55,943 people visited Lepo Valley scenic spot, the tourism revenue reached 25.64 million yuan RMB, realizing year-on-year growths of 41.6 per cent and 60.5 per cent respectively. In July 2019, Lepo Valley scenic spot was awarded the title of 'China Natural Oxygen Bar'."

This gives an idea of the happenings, just a few kilometres north of the McMahon Line. China has 26 national key tourist attractions – Lepo Valley, close to the Thagla ridge, which saw the first clashes between India and China in October 1962, is one of them. The new tourist scheme, "Slowing down the speed of the tour, enjoying the sea of azaleas in Lepo Valley", prolonged the peak season, explained the Chinese authorities.

Near Lepo, north of the Thagla ridge, a war memorial can be found – it was the Forward Command Post of General Zhang Guohua, who commanded the PLA operations against India in 1962. His headquarters has been reconstructed and is now open to tourists. It is located in Marmang village, the other hamlet north of Lepo.

Incidentally, on 30 March 1959, the Dalai Lama spent his last night in Tibet in Magmang when he was on his way to India. The next day, he crossed the border at Khenzimane. He would certainly now not recognize these villages. 'Information Warfare' will certainly be an important part of any battle tomorrow – by opening these areas to mainland visitors, China is clearly winning the 'information' battle.

CHANGING THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE INDIAN BORDER

Since the time it had been adopted by President Xi Jinping, Yume has become the Model Township for the 200 or so other 'Xiaogang' (moderately well-off) villages near the Indian border. If one looks at this development along the entire Sino-Indian border, it probably means that China will have a new population of 'migrants' selected for their good behaviour on the Indian border.

It is still not clear if these 'migrants' are Tibetans or Hans – they are probably a blend. This development has been linked with 'poverty alleviation' and the 'defence of the borders'. The scheme is now called "The guardians of the sacred land and the builders of happy homes".

Apart from Yume, Lepo and Marmang, the mushrooming new 'model' villages on the Tibetan side of the Indian border can be seen along the entire border from Kibithu (with a War Memorial for the soldiers who died in Walnng in 1962 as a bonus), north of Arunachal Pradesh to Metok, north of Upper Siang district. 'Model development' is also taking place in the Chumbi Valley (Yatung), near the trijunction of Nepal-India-Tibet (Purang), and on the Ladakh border (Chiakang).

THE CASE OF METOK

Written Medog by the Chinese, Metok means 'Flower' in Tibetan language – till 2013 it was the last county in China without a road. It is located in Nyingchi City (Prefecture) on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which becomes the Siang as it crosses the Indian border and then the Brahmaputra in Assam. A Chinese website said that Metok County "boasts of amazing natural landscapes due to its unique geographical position. Before the traffic opened up, people could

not reach Metok except by walking; getting in and out of Medog was a dangerous journey."

It further adds: "Frequent natural disasters such as avalanches, landslides, and mudslides blocked visitors from the outside world. The construction of roads to Medog is a tough task because of the complicated geological conditions and disastrous weather. With several attempts thwarted in the last decades, a 117 kilometre highway connecting Medog with neighbouring Bomi County finally opened on Oct 31, 2013."

Six years later, according to *China Tibet News*, the county has 46 administrative villages (including one so-called multi-ethnic inhabitation area consisting of Monpas, Lhopas, Tibetans and Hans) with a total population of 13,725. "In 2018, the county's GDP has reached 606 million yuan RMB; farmers and herdsmen's per capita disposable income and cash income have reached 10,380 yuan RMB and 8,833 yuan RMB respectively, realizing year-on-year growths of 14.4 per cent and 14.8 per cent."

In 2018, nearly 230,000 outsiders visited what used to be considered the last paradise on earth: "[it] created more than 160 million yuan in tourism income. Nearly 9,000 acres of organic tea gardens directly provided income to nearly one-third of the total population."

To get rich, first build the road was the motto of the Chinese Government; and with the roads, along come the tourists.

YATUNG BETWEEN BHUTAN AND SIKKIM

Yatung, called Yadong by the Chinese, is occasionally in the news recently due to the annual opening of the Nathu-La pass for trade between India and China and the opening of Nathu-la as one of the routes for the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims – Yatung is the first large town in Tibet. Every year *China Tibet Online* notes: "The Nathu La Pass Trade Channel in Yatung County, Shigatse City, southwest China's Tibet opened on the morning of May 1."

The official website, affiliated to Xinhua, informs its readers: “The Nathu Pass is the only land route trade pass between China and India, and it is a seasonal trade port.” (Though this is not a factual statement as Lipulekh-la (Uttarakhand) and Shipki-la (Himachal) is also opened for official trade between the two countries).

On 30 May 2019, *China Tibet News* announced that the First Yatung International Border Trade Tourism and Culture Festival would be held from 2-8 June: “During the festival, bonfire party, photography, calligraphy and painting exhibition, commodity fair, fitness activity, investment invitation and other activities will be held.” Will this help promote trade?

Most certainly not, but the Chinese authorities are keen to develop Yatung as a tourist destination. The website says: “Yatung is one of the most pleasant border towns on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. It has six kinds of comprehensive and professional natural tourism resources for tourists to choose, including historical and cultural tourism, natural ecological tourism, ethnic festival tourism, hiking adventure tourism, self-driving special tourism and border trade characteristic tourism. Besides, it is also rich in tourism resources, and its main attractions include Chomolhari Snow Mountain, Nathu La Mountain Pass, Khambu Hot Spring, Dungkar Monastery, Kagyu Monastery, Phari Grassland, Ruins of the Customs of Qing Dynasty, Rinchengang Border Trade Market.”

The so-called occupation of the Chumbi Valley by the Manchus is a way to rewrite history and show that these areas close to the Indian border have always belonged to China and are part of the Silk Road, so dear to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

According to Chinese statistics, in 2018, Yatung County received 119,870 tourists – an increase of 43 per cent compared to the previous year – but the revenue from this activity was only 33 million yuan (US\$ 5.3 million). During the first quarter of 2019, Yatung received 43,620 tourists and got revenue of 4.52 million yuan (US\$ 730,000).

SOME CONCLUSIONS

During the 2018 National People's Congress, Phurbu Dhondup, a deputy and Governor of Lhoka, affirmed that there were 96 such border villages in Lhoka Prefecture alone; the prefecture is north of Bhutan and Tawang district. Dhondup asserted that the Provinces of Hunan, Hubei and Anhui would help Lhoka "make the dramatic transition" from poor border villages to prosperous ones with electricity, first-rate access roads, irrigation systems and potable water. The participation of the 'rich' Provinces of China in the scheme is an important factor. This gives an insight into the theoretical background of the new Chinese campaign on the borders of India.

Similar stories have been reported from Purang, near the tri-junction of India with Nepal and Tibet, and in Ladakh. At the same time, the empowerment of the border villages can be read as a reiteration of the border between India and China. But on this, the tremendous development on the Tibetan side of the Sino-Indian border, particularly the string of 'model villages', and also the unimaginable infrastructure, needs to be closely watched in Delhi and measures are taken to improve the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**CONDITION OF WAR-TORN AFGHANISTAN
BECOMING BAD TO WORSE: ISI INVOLVEMENT**

By

J.K. VERMA

The economic condition of war-torn Afghanistan is deteriorating and the country, besides terrorism, is also facing drought. The basic objective of the US is of "preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan." President Trump wants to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan because of domestic compulsions. He appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad as a special representative for this purpose. When negotiations were in the final stages, President Trump had to withdraw his plan because the Taliban carried out a terrorist strike in which an American soldier was killed. However, in the last week of November 2019, Trump visited Afghanistan and announced that negotiations with the Taliban to restore peace will resume shortly.

Pakistan wants to install a puppet regime in Afghanistan; hence the ISI is assisting several terrorist outfits in the country. The ill equipped Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) are in no position to fight the diverse terrorist organisations active in the country. Both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State want to establish a stronghold in Afghanistan. The Islamic State has created the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) and propagates that it wants to set up an Islamic State where Sharia law would be imposed. The rule of Al Qaeda or the Islamic State will be detrimental to world peace, hence all regional as well as global powers should chalk out a detailed plan so that both these terrorist organisations are defeated in Afghanistan. The world powers should train and equip the Afghan security forces

so that they can fight the terrorist outfits and establish peace and tranquility in the country.

INTRODUCTION

The condition of war-ravaged Afghanistan is going from bad to worse and there appears to be no solution in sight to the present impasse. The economic condition of the country is deteriorating rapidly and growth in 2018 was a meager 1.8 per cent. The country also faced acute drought and according to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, about 3,812 civilians died in the first six months of 2019 and more than 1.1 million Afghans were displaced within the country because of continuing violence. A large number of Afghan refugees who went abroad because of internal strife are now returning to their motherland and this is also becoming a burden on the already precarious economic situation of the country. To add to their woes, no new investment is coming into the country because of the poor security situation.¹

In Brussels, the Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan was held in October 2016, which was attended by representatives of 75 countries and 26 international organisations. The conference pledged an assistance of US\$ 3.8 billion per year through 2020. The Afghan government had presented an ambitious reform and development plan at the meeting, which was reaffirmed at the November 2018 Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan. The World Bank had also promised to pursue the plan but nothing tangible occurred, and poverty continues to rise. As economic growth was less than the population increase, the per capita income has also further declined. Poppy cultivation also dropped by 30 per cent, which further affected the poor farmers. The trade deficit in 2018 increased to 35.3 per cent of GDP. Unemployment has also increased and about 80 per cent of existing employment has become unreliable and vulnerable. Approximately 8 million young Afghans with no education or technical competence will enter the already saturated employment market, which will further worsen the situation.²

The security as well as the economic condition of the country is worsening, hence all parties are convinced that there cannot be a military solution

of the problem and that it can be sorted out only through peaceful negotiations. War-weary Afghanistan and all other stakeholders in the country, albeit for different reasons, are feeling fatigued because of the prolonged 18-year war. A few days of ceasefire occasionally announced by one party or the other is of little consequence.

US STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN

On 11 September 2001, 19 Al Qaeda terrorists carried out four coordinated terrorist attacks in the United States in which 2,977 persons were killed and more than 25,000 were injured. Property worth US\$ 10 billion was destroyed. Besides this, many more people died because of related cancer and respiratory diseases. The US asked for the deportation of Osama bin Laden and demanded for Al Qaeda to be driven out of Afghanistan. In the beginning Al Qaeda refused to acknowledge its involvement, but in 2004 it took responsibility for these strikes. Al Qaeda gave three reasons for the attack – US assistance to Israel, deployment of US troops in Saudi Arabia and sanctions against Iraq.

The Pakistan intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) accorded shelter to Osama bin Laden and he evaded arrest for ten years. However, intelligence sources state that during these ten years Laden lost his importance and the ISI, to please the Americans, disclosed the hiding place of Laden. In May 2011, US SEALs captured Osama Bin Laden from Abbottabad and executed him.

In reaction to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, US-led forces attacked Taliban ruled Afghanistan, as it not only sheltered the Al Qaeda but also helped them in carrying out terrorist activities in the US. In the last 18 years more than 2,400 US soldiers have been killed and approximately US\$ 133 billion spent in Afghanistan by the US in its “war against terror.” An elected government replaced the Taliban government in Afghanistan and efforts were made for the country to progress. However, the basic objective of the US remains “preventing any further attacks on the United States by terrorists enjoying safe haven or support in Afghanistan.”³

President Trump, desperately wanting to withdraw troops from Afghanistan due to domestic compulsions, appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad as the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation on 5 September 2018. Khalilzad is an Afghan-American diplomat who has also served as a counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In a drastic change in its earlier policy, the US agreed to negotiate without the involvement of the Afghan government, as till then the US had insisted that there would be no negotiations without their involvement.⁴

The US team led by Khalilzad and representatives of the Taliban had seven rounds of talks to facilitate the withdrawal of US troops; in exchange the Taliban would guarantee that foreign terrorists would not use Afghanistan for carrying out terrorist attacks on the rest of the world. Afghanistan is passing through its deadliest period where more and more Afghans are being killed and any truce would help the country in coming out of this quagmire. President Ghani stated in January 2019 that more than 45,000 Afghans had been killed in the last four years, while according to UN figures, more than 32,000 civilians were killed in the last ten years. Taliban insurgents are also being killed during night raids, ground fighting and airstrikes, including drone attacks. The US claims that it is spending US\$ 45 billion every year in the country.⁵

After his appointment, Khalilzad contacted the Taliban, Pakistani and Afghan representatives. Besides them he also met representatives of other regional powers including India, China and Russia. It appeared that his sincere efforts would succeed and there would finally be a peace settlement between the Taliban and the US. Khalilzad even told a news agency that they had more or less finalised an agreement and the US would start withdrawing its troops shortly. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Taliban representatives were also invited by President Trump to Camp David for a meeting on 8 September 2019.⁶

However, the Taliban in utter disregard of the ongoing peace negotiations carried out a bomb blast on 5 September in which 10 persons including one U.S. and one Romanian soldier were killed. Not only this, the Taliban increased their attacks on Afghanistan's National Security Forces (ANSF) also known as Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF),

as well as on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to maintain pressure. The ISAF is a NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan, which was established in 2001 by the United Nations Security Council. On 2 September the Taliban had blasted a powerful bomb in Kabul in which 16 persons were killed and more than a hundred injured. President Trump took these blasts, including the killing of an American soldier, seriously and he not only annulled the peace negotiations but also cancelled meetings fixed with Taliban representatives and President Ghani at Camp David.⁷

Although President Trump called off the peace negotiations, it was clear that the 18-year old war in Afghanistan could be resolved only through peaceful negotiations. Hence, on 25 October representatives of Pakistan, China, United States and Russia met in Moscow and it was endorsed by all that the Afghan war could end only through negotiations and that the US should resume talks with the Taliban. It was also decided that talks would be resumed in Beijing and it is anticipated that representatives of Taliban and the Afghan government would also participate.⁸

PAKISTAN'S DOCTRINE OF STRATEGIC DEPTH

Mohammad Ayub Khan, the second president of Pakistan and who overthrew the first President Iskander Mirza through a coup in 1958, had suggested the formation of a federation of Pakistan and Afghanistan with Islam forming the basis. Later he also floated an idea of a confederation between the Muslim states of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. President Ayub pleaded that the confederation would be able to stand up against its larger neighbour and foe India. The policy of strategic depth could be used in case India attacked Pakistan. The ISI, to achieve this concept, justified the use of violence and funding of terror outfits. In 2010, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Chief of Pakistan Army, also mentioned that Pakistan wanted "strategic depth in Afghanistan but [did] not want to control it." However, military strategists claim that the concept of strategic depth is "militarily bankrupt" as it concedes that in case India attacks Pakistan, it will take shelter in Afghanistan.⁹

NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES OF ISI

Pakistan has twin objectives; on the one hand it wants to gain strategic depth in Afghanistan while on the other hand it wants to annul India's sway in the country. Pakistan is afraid that if India's influence grows in Afghanistan, in that scenario it may have to face hostilities on both its eastern and western borders. The Pakistan army, which proclaims itself as the saviour of the country, enjoys several perks on the basis of a perceived threat from India. The ISI has created an impression in the country that Kashmir is a Muslim majority state and they have revolted against India and Indian security forces are unable to control the uprising. They also propagate that soon Kashmir will be merged with Pakistan. It has also convinced the semi-literate fundamentalist masses in Pakistan that the Sikhs are also fighting for an independent Khalistan, and with active support of Pakistan, India will soon be bifurcated. The ISI claims that this partition of India will be retribution for Pakistan, as it alleges that in 1971 India dismembered Pakistan and created Bangladesh.

The ISI, to achieve these goals, started financing and providing assistance to existing terrorist outfits and also created new terrorist organisations in Afghanistan. They also provided weapons, training, financial assistance, intelligence, hiding places and safe houses for their family members. It considers the Taliban as an important strategic asset and if they succeed in capturing power, ISI may install its henchmen in Kabul. The ISI also feels that if they do not support the Taliban, then it may carry out terrorist activities within Pakistan itself. Islamabad is also aware that Washington acknowledges its influence on the Taliban; hence the US wants ISI's support in the negotiations. However, the ISI does not want a strong Afghanistan, as a powerful government in Kabul may become a threat to Islamabad.¹⁰

The ISI alleges that Afghanistan started cross-border terrorism against Pakistan in 1960 in Bajaur district, while Pakistan began retaliating only from 1975 onwards under Operation Cyclone. ISI provided weapons, finance, training and guidance to different terrorist outfits including the Hezb-e-Islami (H-e-L), Northern Alliance etc. The ISI continued its

assistance to the Afghan Taliban even after the departure of troops of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

After the US-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces entered Afghanistan in 2001, Pakistan assisted the Taliban in attacking the foreign troops. The US threatened to stop assistance to Pakistan, but ISI was not deterred as there were other countries, particularly Russia, which was ready to help Pakistan's clandestine activities. The US can, however, adopt alternate measures to pressurise Pakistan. It can increase drone attacks on the Taliban in Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan; Islamabad is facing a difficult economic crisis and the US can pressurise the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to downgrade Pakistan to "blacklist" from the existing "grey-list". Nonetheless, Pakistan is strategically located and is a nuclear weapons state; hence the US has limited choices other than to deal with Pakistan diplomatically.¹¹

Pakistan's AQ Khan, who played a pivotal role in the development of nuclear weapons, illegitimately supplied nuclear weapons technology to Libya, Iran and North Korea. Recently, Turkey saved Pakistan at the FATF from getting downgraded from "grey-list" to "blacklist" as it is also interested in acquiring nuclear weapons technology.

The ISI is playing a double role in Afghanistan – on one hand it shows to the US that it is assisting US forces, while surreptitiously it supports the Afghan Taliban who are attacking the US-led ISAF. Besides anti-US activities, the ISI is also assisting anti-India outfits. Members of these anti-India groups attack Indian diplomatic missions as well as Indian projects under instructions from the ISI. The Special Services Group (SSG) was created in the Pakistan Army to fight communists, but it is now fighting along with the Taliban and provides strategic advice to them. Directorate S, an important unit of the ISI, is also directly involved in assisting different terrorist outfits in Afghanistan. The Afghan Logistics Cell in the ISI also provides logistics including weapons, finance, safe houses etc to the Afghan Taliban.¹²

The ISI is infusing young Madrassa-trained Pakistanis and Afghans in various outfits of the Taliban. These young Jihadists are crueller and

follow the instructions of the ISI instead of their Taliban leaders. The Haqqani network, which controls more than 15 per cent of the Afghan Taliban, owes its loyalty to the ISI. Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada, who issues most of the fatwas and is head of the Islamic Courts, also gets direct assistance from the ISI. The Taliban are also involved in drug smuggling, abduction and extortion while few Taliban outfits also collect taxes and run kangaroo courts. The ISI also provides tactical intelligence to the Taliban; hence they can plan attacks on the ANDSF where they are the weakest. This results in the Taliban being able to bring more area under their direct control and to increase terrorist activities.¹³

SELECTION OF TERRORISTS FROM AFGHAN REFUGEES

The all-powerful ISI forcibly recruits terrorists from the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. First, they select the targets and then enroll them in Madrassas where Maulvis convince them for Jihad, or to work as a suicide bomber. If they refuse to act as Jihadists, they and their family members are tortured and sometimes even forced to return to Afghanistan. The ISI also infiltrates a large number of Madrassa-trained Pakistanis from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas. Pashtuns residing on both sides of the Durand Line have more or less the same dress, customs and language; hence Pakistanis pose as the Afghan Taliban and indulge in terrorist activities.

ISI TRAINS THE AFGHAN TALIBAN

The ISI and its sponsored terrorist outfits run numerous terrorist camps in different states of Pakistan including Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which is a semi-autonomous tribal region. It was merged in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018. Intelligence reports mention that the ISI also runs a few terrorist camps in Punjab province. Afghanistan watchers claim that nearly 80 per cent of the Afghan Taliban has been trained by the ISI at their training centers. In these training camps, training is imparted by serving and retired Pakistan army officials on the use of small arms, preparation of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and guerrilla warfare. The ISI instructors also give extensive

training to select Afghan Taliban to survive and fight in jungle terrain. Special emphasis is given on religious training during this training. A religious teacher regularly visits these camps and preaches a distorted version of Islam under which undue importance is given to Jihad, where it is told that those who die during Jihad go straight to heaven and where they get the best of everything they desire.

ISI SUPPORT TO TALIBAN ESPECIALLY THE HAQQANI NETWORK

The ISI, which considers the Afghan Taliban as their tactical strength, covertly helps them while overtly it portrays that it is helping the US-led NATO troops. Admiral Michael Glenn Mullen, who served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1 October 2007 to 30 September 2011, mentioned that the Afghan Taliban are proxies of the Pakistan government and that they attack Afghan troops as well as the US-led NATO forces. The US is aware that the ISI is helping the Haqqani network, which is an Afghani guerrilla terrorist outfit and fighting against the NATO and ANDSF troops. Maulvi Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin Haqqani were the leaders of the outfit, which is based in Miranshah town. Miranshah is the administrative headquarters of North Waziristan in Pakistan. Miranshah, which is also known as Miramshah, is ideally located as it is just 17 Kilometers from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The family members of the Haqqani network stay in Miranshah town and after carrying out terrorist activities in Afghanistan, the terrorists cross the border and take shelter and relax in safe houses there. The US designated the Haqqani network as a terrorist organisation in 2012, while Pakistan ostensibly banned it in 2015.

The US is unable to take action against Islamabad, as NATO forces located in Afghanistan are dependent on Pakistan for their logistics. Several Arab outfits, including the Al Qaeda, get assistance from the ISI as well as from Saudi Arabia. The ISI also supports the Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), founded by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. However, ISI stopped helping HIA once it signed a peace deal with the Afghan government in 2016.

AFGHAN LEADERS NOT TOEING ISI LINE ELIMINATED

In intelligence work normal ethics does not have any place. The ISI is notorious for killing its opponents inside Pakistan as well as in neighbouring countries. The ISI assassinated several Afghan leaders who refused to take instructions from them. The prominent Afghan leaders killed by the ISI include Ahmad Shah Massoud, Abdul Haq, Burhanuddin Rabbani, just to name a few. Besides these Afghan leaders, the ISI also supplied information to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) about the whereabouts of several other leaders who were then eliminated through drone attacks.

ISI SPONSORED MAIN TERRORIST OUTFITS IN AFGHANISTAN

It is difficult to list out all the terrorist organisations, splinter groups and their sub-groups, which are assisted by the ISI. Disgruntled leaders sometimes form groups and sub-groups, but these groups cease to exist once their leader is exterminated, or merges with another group. The ISI also helps some groups for specific operations and thereafter withdraws its assistance. In some cases the ISI selected terrorists from two or three groups and trained them to carry out terrorist activities. Not only this, the ideology of several terrorist groups is similar to each other, hence terrorists also change groups.

The following are the prominent Afghan terrorist outfits that receive assistance from the ISI:

1. Al Qaeda is a Salafist Jihadists organization, which was founded by Osama bin Laden and other Arab nationals to fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The Al Qaeda claims that Christian and Jewish alliances want to eliminate Islam. It wants to impose Sharia throughout the world. After attacks in the US on 11 September 2001, the US attacked Afghanistan. However, the ISI sheltered Osama bin Laden, but US Navy Seals under Operation Neptune Spear killed him on 2 May 2011 at Abbottabad, Pakistan. The ISI trained Al Qaeda fighters belong to different countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq and several Muslim and western countries.

2. Lashkar-e-Omar was constituted in January 2002 when terrorists of numerous terrorist outfits including Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Jaish-e-Mohammed joined the outfit. Besides these groups, some members of the Taliban and activists of Al Qaeda also joined the outfit. The ideology of the organisation is based on Deobandi and Salafi Jihadism. The organisation vows to attack US troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

3. Jaish-e-Mohammed, which is again a Deobandi Jihadist organization, is active in Kashmir. However, as it gets substantial assistance from the ISI and has close relations with the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda, it is also involved in terrorist activities in Afghanistan. Although the Pakistan government banned it in 2002, since it was created by the ISI, it has continued functioning in Pakistan.

4. Harkat-ul-Mujahideen-al-Islami (HUM) is also helped by the ISI to carry out terrorist activities in J&K. The outfit has close links with Al Qaeda; hence it was declared a terrorist organisation by the United Nations, United States and the United Kingdom. Thereafter, it changed its name to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. However, after a while the group disintegrated and another group, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) was formed in Afghanistan to fight the Soviets under the instructions from the ISI. India has proscribed HuJI as a terrorist outfit.

5. Jaish-ul-Adl or Jaish-al-Adl is a Salafi jihadist terrorist organization, which is active in south eastern Iran but as it was constituted by members of Jundallah, a Sunni terrorist organisation based in Pakistan, the ISI has influence over the outfit.

6. Al-Badr was created by the ISI in June 1998 to carry out terrorist activities in J&K independently. The group was carved out from Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), which fought in Afghanistan along with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-I-Islami (HIG). Al-Badr is an Islamic fundamentalist outfit and has headquarters at Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The outfit is banned by the United States as well as by India.

7. Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin was founded by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and it is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation. Besides the ISI, the outfit also receives support from several countries including Saudi Arabia and Chechnya. The Taliban and Al Qaeda also assist the organisation. However, in 2016 the organisation signed a peace agreement with the Afghan administration.

ISI SPONSORED MAIN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

Numerous terrorist organisations are active in war-ravaged Afghanistan; a few are supported by the ISI while others operate independently. These terrorist outfits incessantly attack the ANDSF as well as the ISAF. The ISI supported Taliban on the one hand was negotiating with the US, while on the other hand they continued their terrorist attacks. The Taliban strategy was to pressurise the US through enhanced terrorist attacks during the peace negotiations. Even after the US withdrew from the negotiations, the ISI and its assisted terrorist outfits continued with terrorist attacks, as they were aware that peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through negotiations and they feel they have the upper hand. It is not feasible to list all terrorist attacks in the country, but the following are some of the major terrorist activities in 2019:

1. On 24 May a bombing attack occurred in Al-Taqwa mosque in Kabul in which three persons including the Imam of the mosque was killed, while 20 others were injured. According to Afghan security agencies the terrorist attack was the handiwork of the ISI supported Taliban.
2. On 1 July 2019 the Taliban made a combined gun and bomb attack in Wazir Akbar Khan near Kabul in which 45 persons were killed and 116 persons were injured.
3. In Kandahar, on 15 July a bomb blasted in a bus in which 11 persons were killed and about 35 were injured.
4. On 25 July three terrorist attacks occurred in Kabul in which 15 persons were killed. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took responsibility for two of the bombings, while the Taliban claimed responsibility for the third attack.
5. On 28 July a suicide bombing occurred in the office of Amrullah Saleh in Kabul in which 20 persons were killed and about 50 people, including the Vice Presidential candidate, Amrullah Saleh, was injured. Analysts claim that the attack was carried out by ISI supported Taliban.
6. On 7 and 17 August 2019, in two different terrorist incidents more than 100 persons were killed and about 300 civilians were injured. A large number of the victims were Shias. Although ISIL took responsibility for these blasts, but the involvement of the ISI cannot be

ruled out since in Pakistan the divide between Sunnis and Shias is increasing.

7. In September 2019 several incidents of terrorism occurred. On 2 September a bomb blast occurred at a housing complex of international organisations, in which 16 people including Nepalis, Britishers and a Romanian diplomat was killed and 119 persons were injured. In another incident on 5 September, a suicide car bomber killed 12 persons including an American and a Romanian soldier in Kabul. Again, on 17 September two suicide bombings occurred in Charikar and Kabul in which 48 people were killed and more than 80 persons were injured.

8. A suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Deh Bala, Nagarhar on 18 October in which 69 persons were killed and 36 others were injured.

9. On 13 November a suicide car bomb exploded in Kabul in which 13 people were killed while 20 were injured.

Besides these terrorist acts, there were several other incidents of terrorism in Afghanistan. In fact, it is difficult to list all the incidents, as there are large number of terrorist outfits and their splinter groups. The ISI is clandestinely assisting several terrorist groups and instructs them to carry out terrorist activities; however, the name of ISI never comes out.

WAY FORWARD

The law and order situation is not improving in battle-weary Afghanistan. The US-led NATO forces are exhausted and President Trump due to domestic compulsions wants a honourable exit from Afghanistan. The ill equipped Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) are in no position to fight the diverse terrorist organisations active in the country. According to an assessment of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), there are about 8,000 to 10,000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) operating in Afghanistan. The influence of the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) is increasing and the organisation has about 2,500 to 4,000 fighters in the country.

According to the United Nations assessment, the Afghan Taliban are key associates of several terrorist outfits including Al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Haqqani Network, Turkestan Islamic Party and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which are operating in Afghanistan. However,

besides these groups there are several other groups and their splinter groups, which are also operating. After the eradication of the Islamic State (IS) from Iraq and Syria, it is in search of a suitable location from where it can run its organisation. The Islamic State is trying to capture Afghanistan, as well as the bordering areas of Pakistan through the ISKP. The ISKP also includes parts of India, but at present its main activities are in eastern Afghanistan and in northern Pakistan. Initially, the Islamic State appointed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan commander, Hafiz Saeed Khan as Chief of ISKP and the Afghan Taliban leader Abdul Rauf Aliza as the deputy leader of ISKP. However, both of them were killed in US air strikes. The IS had appointed the ISKP Chief from Pakistan and the Deputy Chief from Afghanistan so that the influence of ISKP grows in both the countries. The aim of the Al Qaeda and the Islamic State is to try to increase their influence in the region as well as globally through the ISKP. To counter this, regional and global powers should work together so that the terrorists do not succeed in their nefarious plans.¹⁴

The ISKP propagates that it wants to establish an Islamic Caliphate, which will be ruled by Sharia. Fanatic Muslims support the notion of a Caliphate and consequently the ISKP is getting support in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. If the Islamic State succeeds in overthrowing the present government and captures power in Afghanistan, it will be a disaster not only for the region but also for the whole world. First of all, the IS will render all-out support to the Uighur Muslims of Xinjiang region of China. Uighur Muslims are already fighting for an independent country. The Islamic State, which professes to spread Islam globally, would also create trouble in Russia, as Islam is the second most popular religion in the country. Not only this, Muslims in Chechnya and Ingushetia are already fighting for more rights.¹⁵

Further, the Islamic State, which does not consider Shias as Muslims, will assist Sunni Muslims in Iran. The Islamic State helps Sunni extremist outfits, which carry out terrorist activities against Shia mosques and localities. The IS will also be dangerous for Pakistan, India and Bangladesh as extremist Muslims will be encouraged to join it. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will also not be spared if the IS comes to power. The IS has methodically put a lot of Jihadi as

well as anti-Western material on the Internet. The disenchanted Muslim youths read this extremist Islamic literature and become 'lone wolves', carrying out terrorist attacks independently. Consequently, it is essential that the US and China both pressurise Pakistan that instead of abetting the Taliban, it should assist the Afghan security forces so that they can counter both the Al Qaeda and the IS. Here it is important to keep in mind that the Taliban is not a cohesive force and even if there is truce with some Taliban groups, others will continue with their terrorist activities.¹⁶

President Trump should not withdraw the US-led NATO troops completely unless the ANDSF can stand up to the Al Qaeda and the Islamic State forces. ANDSF requires advanced weaponry, training, motivation and security for their family members. India is already imparting training to Afghan officers, but that is not enough; few batches of all ranks should also be trained, as this will generate confidence in the troops.

The intelligence department of the Afghan security forces must be strengthened so that they can produce actionable intelligence. The intelligence should be gathered through Open Sources, confirmed intelligence could be procured through technical devices; however, in disturbed areas importance of human intelligence is crucial. The agents should be trained in their tradecraft including secret communications, surveillance, raising and handling of sources etc. Indian intelligence officers, serving as well as retired, can impart theoretical and practical training to Afghan security officials. If security forces get accurate intelligence about the hideouts of terrorists, their elimination will be much easier.

Fighters of several countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Uighur Muslims, Bangladesh, Chechnya, Arab countries etc are fighting in Afghanistan. The IS fighters are more motivated, and they have better weapons too. The ANDSF cannot face them without outside support. Hence, it is essential for the neighbouring countries as well as the world powers to chalk out a long-term strategy so that the IS and Al Qaeda can be vanquished in Afghanistan.¹⁷

Efforts should also be made so that the financial condition of Afghanistan is improved. The government should initiate employment-generating programs. Corruption is a major issue in the country and sincere efforts should be made to reduce this as no country can progress unless corruption is controlled. The country also requires widespread political, administrative and economic reforms.

President Trump had withdrawn from peace talks as one American was killed in a Taliban attack; however, peace can only be restored in war-ravaged Afghanistan through negotiations. It is a positive move that President Trump paid an unannounced visit to US troops in Afghanistan in the last week of November and announced that talks will be resumed soon.

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**BEYOND THE RED CORRIDOR: SPREAD
AND EXTERNAL LINKS OF LEFT WING EXTREMISM**

By

N. MANOHARAN

Left-wing Extremism (LWE) continues to remain one of the major challenges to India's internal security. Its intensity continues to persist especially in three states – Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa – apart from a significant presence in West Bengal, Bihar, and Maharashtra. At the same time, the left-wing extremists have successfully managed to penetrate in some of the states of the northeast and south India, and into a few urban areas. Interestingly, there is a reduction in the number of middle and top-level Maoist leaders due to killings, arrests or surrenders. Yet, one still cannot assert with confidence that Left-wing Extremism is on the wane. Significantly, the spread of Naxals beyond the 'Red Corridor' and their external links are a cause for concern.

SPREAD BEYOND THE 'RED CORRIDOR'

The problem of Left-wing Extremism (LWE) has been like a shifting pain that moved from West Bengal to Bihar in the 1970s, and then to Andhra Pradesh in 1980s. After nearly two decades, when there was pressure in Andhra Pradesh, the Naxals found suitable sanctuary in central India comprising parts of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar and West Bengal. Now, there are reports that the Maoists are spreading to the northeast and south India. Why? Are they moving in search of new 'safe zones' because of military action in central India? Or, are they spreading because

they have found new breeding grounds for left-wing extremism? Or, is the shift to a “new theatre” because of some other reason?

It is known that Indian Maoists have good networking with several key militant groups of northeast India that have existed since the mid-1990s. In fact, with some groups like the People's Liberation Army of Manipur, the exact modalities of working – formal, semi-formal and informal – have been formalised through a “memoranda of understanding”.¹ The linkages range from procurement of arms, ammunition, communication devices to receiving training from the northeast militant groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), anti-talk faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) led by Paresh Barua, People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak), Revolutionary People's Front (RPF), Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), Gorkha Liberation Tiger Force (GLTF), Gurkha Liberation Organisation (GLO), Adibasi National Liberation Army, Adivasi People's Army (APA), and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB). Maoists, in turn, are said to be providing explosives (ammonium nitrate) and funds to these groups. Chinese small arms find their way to the ‘Red Corridor’ mainly through these groups. It is through the northeast groups that the Maoists have access to the militant groups in Myanmar. The mutual support between Naxals and the northeast militant groups is not just restricted to material but extends to moral aspects as well. While Naxals have strongly supported the “people's movements” of the northeast, the northeast militant groups have stood by the “revolutionaries”. “Enemy's enemy is a friend” is the guiding maxim in their relationship. ULFA leader Paresh Baruah once remarked, “The Indian colonial government is also viewed as an enemy by the Maoists. Our enemy is also the same and so there is an understanding with them.”²

But a matter of bigger concern are the attempts by Maoists to push the boundaries of the ‘Red Corridor’ and set up support bases in upper Assam and some tribal areas in the hilly interiors. The presence of Maoists is felt in pockets of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sivasagar, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, and Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh (adjoining Tinsukia). The hub of Maoists

activities is said to be in Sadiya area, situated on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border. The Governments of Assam and India have admitted to this.³ How deep is this penetration? This is where the ULFA chief Paresh Barua went partly wrong when he observed: "We have a definite strategy and we do not think Maoism will be able to strike deep roots in Assam".⁴ Maoists have a clear-cut objective – the capture of power – as against ULFA's secession from India. Northeast India has now become the new 'strategic area' for the Maoists. To Maoists, the 'strategic areas' are hilly regions with dense forest cover, having sufficient economic resources, a vast population, and a vast forest area spreading over thousands of square kilometers. "In such areas the enemy is weak, and these areas are favourable for manoeuvres of the people's army. In these strategic areas, we can defeat the enemy completely by fulfilling the tasks of building and consolidating a strong proletarian party and a strong people's army; procuring the people's support and economic resources, while developing the guerrilla war aiming at the building of liberated/base areas in these areas".⁵

Therefore, apart from the military utility of training, arms procurement and sanctuary, the Maoists also found parts of the northeast of India as a new zone of 'revolution' to establish what they call as 'base areas'. In this regard, two major causes are being exploited – deprivation amongst the tea workers of Assam and anti-dam sentiments in Arunachal Pradesh. Since there is a political vacuum in both these causes, the Maoists are more than willing to step in. Interestingly, the Adivasis in the tea gardens are descendants of migrants from present-day Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh from the colonial British period. The Maoists have already set up local committees in these areas. From there, it will be easy for them to link up with the southern parts of Bhutan, which has a large number of Nepali refugees.

The Maoists have also been trying to extend their presence in southern India. In an internal communication, the Ministry of Home Affairs has observed that the CPI (Maoist) has been expanding its organisational base in the Western Ghats, especially around the tri-junction of Tamil Nadu-Kerala-Karnataka. In 2013, the presence and movement of armed cadres of CPI (Maoist) have been noticed on over two dozen occasions

in Malappuram, Wayanad and Kannur in Kerala; and Mysore, Kodagu, Udupi, Chikmagalur and Shimoga in Karnataka. Though the adjoining areas of Tamil Nadu have not witnessed any movement of armed Naxal cadres, activities of its front bodies have increased in Erode district.⁶ Confirming this, the Maoists in a document released to celebrate the 9th anniversary of their formation, observed: "Our comrades are putting determined and tireless efforts facing some of the toughest conditions that our movement had ever faced in new areas of extension in the strategic tri-junction area between Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala."⁷ As is their strategy, the Maoists try to exploit local grievances to gain influence. In the tri-junction area, they smelt an opportunity during the eviction of forest dwellers and tribals from the Western Ghats under the National Park Act and the government's move to implement the Kasturi-rangan report on conservation of the Ghats.⁸

The year also witnessed Maoists' increasing their presence in urban India. Significant Maoist activities, especially of its front organisations, have been reported from places like Delhi and the National Capital Region, Gurgaon, NOIDA, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Pune, Nagpur, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Raipur, Durg, Patna, Hyderabad, Rourkela, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati and Chandigarh. The urban fronts comprise of organisations involved in 'revolutionary democratic' activities, opposition to 'war on people', displacement and 'violence on women', and in 'cultural' activities.⁹ Also significantly, CPI (Maoist) is systematically penetrating the student community as well as workers in the unorganised sectors, and this could have a large impact on the future course of the movement.

What are the reasons for a major urban push by the Maoists? Due to a depleting tribal cadre base, Maoists have to turn somewhere for replenishment. They find urban regions a good catchment area. The main advantage with urban cadres, which is missing in their tribal counterparts, is that they come with adequate intellect to take the movement forward. They may find life in the forest too difficult to sustain, yet the Maoists wish to cultivate them "to lead militant activities that are facing a leadership crisis due to depleting recruitment, elimination of the existing cadres due to security operations and large-scale

surrenders by senior cadres.”¹⁰ Immense financial and human resources are being invested in running “urban activities and guidance on how to develop better coordination among the urban frontal organisations of the party.”¹¹

EXTERNAL LINKAGES

The external linkages of Maoists with both state and non-state actors, within and without India, are also substantial. Contextualising and justifying external linkages within the Maoists thought, the Naxals hold that:

“There are two different kinds of United Fronts. One, between people, and the other between people and enemy (a section/group/persons from enemy classes) using the contradictions among the enemy. [Maoist] Party has to do that. This scope is there to some extent on some issues. We call it the indirect reserves of the revolution which can be used carefully. If we have clear understanding that they are not our class allies, then we would not have right opportunist deviations. We need united fronts of this kind for the success of the revolution”.¹²

The Pakistan based Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), in its attempts to rope in India-based militant groups, has found Indian Maoists more than suitable for carrying out their agenda. For this, the ISI has made use of underworld dons (mafia) like Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel, to facilitate the linkage.¹³ Naxals are now part of ISI’s “Karachi Project” that aims to bleed India, both militarily and economically, without leaving any evidence of its involvement – a ‘plausible deniability’ operation. Can the ISI get better ‘Fifth Columnists’ than the Maoists? The overall intention of the ISI is to give an impression to the outside world that all terror attacks in India are homegrown. The Pakistani intelligence agency has also facilitated contacts between the Maoists and anti-India terror groups based in Pakistan like Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Harkat-ul-jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), Bangladesh-based Islamic militant groups and those that operate in India like the Indian Mujahideen and the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).¹⁴

These groups are using the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders as transit routes to reach out to the Naxals.

These external contacts have opened a wider world for the Naxals in terms of new opportunities of fundraising that includes trafficking of drugs and counterfeit currencies, arms procurement and training. Some of the training camps are located in Bangladesh, funded by the ISI and run by Bangladeshi left extremist groups.¹⁵ Apart from this, as the Maoists are now expanding into urban areas, they are keen to harness the latent existing infrastructure of militant Islamist groups like the Lashkar. By their admission, Naxals are presently “weak in urban areas”, but have identified it as the “most important urgent task”.¹⁶ The alliance between the “major source of external threats” with the “biggest internal security threat” cannot be a more deadly combination.¹⁷ At the same time, Naxals are a bit cautious in their liaison with jihadist groups because of long-term consequences. Therefore, the Naxal leadership is said to be in favour of “specific and need-based exchanges” with these groups that could be restricted to “consequential solidarity”.¹⁸ The Maoists are aware of the fact that if the LeT-Maoists alliance is comprehensive and deep-rooted, it would be easier for the Indian state to club LWE also under anti-terrorism and respond accordingly. The Naxals would not wish for such a State response that could be more ruthless than the present “holistic” one. At the end of the day, the ideology and objectives of these groups are quite different. However, even limited cooperation is a cause for concern, as the Naxals are desperately looking outwards to enhance their military potential vis-à-vis the Indian state's ongoing military push.¹⁹

Involvement of the ISI and some militant groups from northeast India in facilitating the drug trade for Naxals has also been noted. Naxal-dominated areas are not only rich in minerals and inhabited by tribals, but also popular drug cultivating tracts – cannabis and poppy in particular – in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Apart from being the world's largest producer of illicit opium and the only authorised user of the gum-method of opium production for pharmaceutical preparations, India is also sandwiched between the ‘Golden Crescent’ and the ‘Golden

Triangle', the two major drug-producing and trafficking regions of the world.²⁰ This geo-economic factor has not only helped Maoists to collect protection money from drug cultivators, traders and traffickers, but also to involve themselves directly in drug trafficking. This became evident after the seizure of large quantities of contraband marijuana that was being brought from states, and specifically areas, which are Naxal-infested. They are the latest entrants in this trade to fund their activities. Drugs like marijuana from Naxal areas are found for sale on the streets, even in remote areas of southern states like Kerala. The marijuana cultivated in the Naxalite-dominated forests bordering Orissa and Andhra Pradesh (called "Sheelavathi" locally) is said to have higher tetrahydrocannabinol content, a psychoactive compound, than that of locally produced drugs (called locally as "Neelachadayan"). Naxal-linked middlemen peddle these drugs in large quantities by rail and road, including on buses plying on inter-State routes.²¹

The Maoists' strategy is expansion by mergers and networking with like-minded revolutionary organisations to "fight against the common enemy: Imperialism" (Ganapathy, 1998). They call this as the "second wave".²² They have clearly stated that it is "part of our policy to have relations with all communists and nationality struggles"²³ (Ganapathy, 1998). They believe that CPI (Maoist) is part of the world proletariat revolution and is not independent. If it succeeds, then one part of the revolutionary world would succeed. It would work as a part of the world socialist revolution and is strictly related to the success or failure of the world socialist revolution. At the same time, more working class struggles in the imperialist/capitalist countries will have a favourable impact on the Indian revolution as well. They are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, according to Maoists, it is important for the success of the Indian revolution as an inseparable part of the greater world socialist revolution to actively defend Maoism, fight imperialism and support class struggle throughout the world and also take the support of the International Maoist Parties/Organizations/Forces, proletariat and people.²⁴

It is for this purpose they maintain fraternal relations with Maoist and anti-imperialist forces and firmly believe that it is both important to

extend help as well as take international help for the success of any revolution. The relations are maintained through several umbrella organisations that exist at regional and global levels.

Prominent among these organisations is CCOMPOSA (Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia), formed in July 2001, with a purpose to unify and coordinate the activities of “genuine” Maoist parties and organisations in South Asia. Nepalese Maoists, PWG, MCC, Purbo Banglar Movement (Bangladesh), Communist Party of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and other Indian left-wing extremist parties became members. The present constituent parties of CCOMPOSA are United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Poorba Bangladesh Sarvahara Party (CC), Communist Party of East Bengal (ML), Red Flag Communist Party of Bhutan (MLM), Communist Party of India (MLM), Communist Party of India (ML) (Naxalbari), and Communist Party of India (Maoist). The CCOMPOSA members have agreed to share each other’s experiences and strengthen one another in “fighting back the enemies in the respective countries” and “making South Asia a blazing center of world revolution.”²⁵ The aim of the organisation was identified to “develop mass movements against the common enemy i.e. Indian Expansionism; the world imperialist system, particularly US imperialism, the No. 1 enemy of the world people; and to overthrow the existing system in the countries of South Asia.”²⁶ Conferences are held from time-to-time to take stock of the situation and plan responses. So far, only five such conferences have been held since the formation of the body – once in two years on an average. However, CCOMPOSA received a setback with the Nepali Maoists joining the political mainstream and renouncing violence.

At the global level, FOIR (*Friends of Indian Revolution*) is an important umbrella organisation whose representatives abroad seek to raise finances in several countries, especially that of the West, for the “cause” of the Indian “revolution”. Then there are bodies like ICMLPO (*International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organisations*), RIM (*Revolutionary Internationalist Movement*), World People’s Resistance Movement (WPRM) and ICM (*International Communist Movement*) that link LWE groups located all over the world,

stretching from Peru in the West to Philippines in the East. They sustain fraternal ties and jointly conduct mutually beneficial programmes.²⁷ This does not mean that the Maoists are unanimous in their opinion on linkages with international communist movements. For instance, before the merger of Maoists Communist Center (MCC) and People's War Group (PWG) to form CPI (Maoists), the MCC had joined RIM in 2002, but PWG opposed the idea. After the merger, the MCC pulled out of RIM as per the decision of the new Party. The RIM went out of action anyway.

The "outreach efforts" of Maoists is more of a recent phenomenon unlike in the past when the movement remained more local in scope. Connecting to larger international communist movements commenced only in the 2000s particularly after the formation of CPI (Maoists). It was the People's War Group that initiated relations at different levels with different militant communist organisations across the world that follow the same ideology, but relations with other groups were to be at a functional level.²⁸ They have been participating in international debates and sending delegations to international forums though, according to them, much progress needs to be made on this front.

COUNTER-MEASURES

Efforts by both the Central and the State governments to deal with Left Wing Extremism are 'holistic' in nature. 'Holistic' here means by addressing the areas of security, development, ensuring entitlement of local communities and promoting good governance. Keeping this in view, the Government of India, in close consultation with the States, has identified 106 Districts in 9 States for special and focused attention in the areas of security and development. The view and the policy of the Government is to effectively deal with the LWE insurgency by primarily facilitating capacity building of the State Governments concerning both the security and development fronts.

On the security front, the Union government has been supplementing the efforts of States that include providing Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA); sanction

of India Reserve (IR) battalions; setting up of Counter Insurgency and Anti-Terrorism (CIAT) schools; modernisation and up-gradation of the State Police and their Intelligence apparatus under the Scheme for Modernization of State Police Forces (MPF scheme); reimbursement of security-related expenditure under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme; filling up critical infrastructure gaps under the Scheme for Special Infrastructure in Left Wing Extremism affected States; providing helicopters for anti-Naxal operations; assistance in training of State Police through the Ministry of Defence, the Central Police Organisations and the Bureau of Police Research and Development; sharing of Intelligence; facilitating inter-State coordination; assistance in community policing and civic action programmes etc. The underlying philosophy is to enhance the capacity of the State Governments to tackle the Maoist menace in a concerted manner.²⁹

The Government is implementing schemes related to improving the security environment viz., the Security Related Expenditure Scheme, the Special Infrastructure Scheme, the Scheme of Construction of Fortified Police Stations, etc. Following the internal security meeting of chief ministers, the Center has decided to step up its counter-Naxal operations. About 40,000 Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) personnel drawn from the CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF and SSB are deployed at present in the States for anti-Maoist operations, along with State police forces.³⁰ These deployments are dynamic in nature and are based on three factors: requirements projected by state governments, availability of forces and security situation in a particular location. Besides, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) stationed at Begumpet airport have been helping the ground forces to track Maoist movement. The UAVs are under the command of CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), but the footage relayed by them is being used by all the partner states. Efforts are also being made to set up another UAV base at Bhilai in Chhattisgarh. Significantly, Maoists are said to have been trying to use drones for reconnaissance purpose on the deployment of forces in the Bastar region.³¹

Simultaneously, focused attention is also paid to development and governance issues particularly at the cutting edge level. As rightly pointed out by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Left Wing Extremists operate in

the vacuum created by functional inadequacies of field level governance structures, espouse local demands, and take advantage of prevalent dissatisfaction and feelings of perceived neglect and injustice among the underprivileged and remote segments of the population. In this context, the funds allocated to the States under various Central Schemes like the Backward Regions Grant Fund, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Prime Minister's Gram Sadak Yojna, National Rural Health Mission, Ashram Schools, Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidhyutikaran Yojna and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan acquire special significance.

Further, the Government is implementing the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) to address the development deficit in public infrastructure and services in 82 selected Districts. The Government is also implementing an ambitious Road Development Plan in 34 worst LWE affected districts through the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, especially the provisions relating to allotment of title deeds to individuals and communities, is also an area of priority.³²

The Union Government has instituted several review and monitoring mechanisms for different aspects of the LWE problem and the measures needed to deal with it. These include:

1. A Standing Committee of Chief Ministers of States concerned, under the chairmanship of the Union Home Minister, to work out a coordinated strategic policy and tactical measures to deal with the problem simultaneously on political, security and development fronts.
2. A Review Group (earlier called Task Force) under the Cabinet Secretary to review efforts across a range of development and security measures.
3. A Coordination Centre chaired by the Union Home Secretary to review and coordinate the efforts of the State Governments, where the State Governments are represented by the Chief Secretaries and the Director Generals of Police.
4. A Task Force under the Special Secretary (Internal Security), Ministry of Home Affairs, with senior officers from Intelligence

Agencies, Central Armed Police Forces and State Police Forces, to monitor and coordinate counter-LWE efforts.

5. An Empowered Group of Officers under the Chairpersonship of Member-Secretary, Planning Commission has been set up by the Government to over-ride or modify existing instructions on implementation of various development programmes and flagship schemes, having regard to the local needs and conditions in Left Wing Extremist affected areas. The affected States have been asked to constitute an Empowered Group at the State level.

However, in countering Left-wing Extremism, both Central and State governments face numerous challenges. For one, the modernization of the police force, which this strategy requires, is wanting in the heavily affected states. Most of the states are found wanting in the utilisation of police modernisation funds. They do not even have perspective action plans for modernisation. As the Parliamentary Committee rightly points out, "... when it comes to the control and superintendence of police forces, the States do not want to yield even an inch of their jurisdiction. But at the same time when it comes to improve and strengthen their police forces, they simply raise their hands expressing their inability to do so because of financial constraints."³³ The Centre also has to share blame for the delay in releasing funds. The reason for the delay is partly due to the States' failure to submit 'utilisation certificates' on time. But overall, the scheme has undoubtedly made a positive impact on strengthening the 'first responders'.

Besides, the training imparted to the police has been limited to 'military' aspects for neutralizing the cadres as opposed to the 'civic' aspect like strengthening ties with the local population. Recognizing the limitations of this approach, the states are expanding their civic action programs by initiatives like holding health camps, distributing food and clothes, holding sports tournaments and tribal festivals, but much more will need to be done to overcome years of distrust of State institutions and policies.

Apart from counter guerilla operations, poor State resources also impede the effective implementation of other strategies to supplement hot

pursuit. A good example is the surrender policy implemented by individual States. The Central government provides them assistance by reimbursement of expenditure up to Rs 10,000 for a surrenderee, without arms, and up to Rs 20,000 with regular weapons under the Security Related Expenditure scheme.³⁴ However, the rehabilitation of the surrendered militants remains of primary concern and a weakness in the surrender policy. This problem is particularly acute in Maharashtra where the surrendered Naxals have come under repeated attacks.

In the absence of proper coordination with the CRPF, the state police are finding it difficult to keep pace with the Maoists. For instance, in 2013, a major coordination issue erupted in Bihar. It started when the State police instituted an inquiry by an IG-rank officer into the killing of one Arvind Bhuiyan by the CRPF in June 2012 in an encounter at Baltharwa village located on the border of Gaya-Aurangabad districts and inside Chakarbanda forest. The CRPF was held guilty. Though the local police did not initiate any follow-up action, it did hurt the Central Force, which in turn decided to restrict its job to only guarding its camp in Maoist-infested areas. The differences, however, turned ugly when the Bihar police HQ lodged a case and subsequently jailed an assistant commandant, Sanjay Kumar Yadav of the CRPF, after taping his phone call, which revealed that he was passing operational details to Maoists in Aurangabad. The case highlights the extent of difficulties faced in cooperation between the Central and State forces in LWE-affected States.³⁵

THE ROAD AHEAD: COUNTERING THE NAXAL THREAT

The issue of Naxalism started as an agrarian rebellion in the aftermath of a police-firing incident in Naxalbari village of West Bengal in May 1967. Presently, the LWE has reached a critical phase and there is a paradigm shift in how Naxals operate. Looking ahead, the conflict is going to continue. Some of the pointers emanating from the Maoists should be taken note of. In a letter to his cadres, CPI (Maoist) leader Ganapathi asked his men to “explore all legal and illegal ways” to get the jailed leaders out – either by breaking in or by obtaining bail. On

urban expansion, Ganapathy, in an interview on a different date, observed:

“It is not true that we have been completely eliminated from the urban areas and plains as some people are propagating or as some others believe. [...] We have gained many experiences in urban areas. We have enriched our policy on urban work. [...] It is ridiculous and unreal to say that we would never be able to extend to urban areas. If rural areas are liberated first, then basing on its strength and on the struggles of the working class in urban areas, cities would be liberated later. Along with the liberation of cities, the comprador rule and imperialist control would also be forced to end in our country”.³⁶

Therefore, it is not enough to just assess an incident and move on. The important question should be: What should be done to counter left-wing extremism? Despite being dubbed as “India’s greatest internal security threat”, the threat assessment of Left-wing Extremism has not been realistic. The nature of LWE has substantially transformed. From an ideologically driven movement, it has transformed itself into a guerrilla force with its army, sophisticated arms, weapons manufacturing capabilities, funding sources – internal and external – rigid organisational structure, fertile recruiting base, ideal terrain to hide and thousands of sympathisers across India even among civil society. What is more worrying is their need-based linkage with both state and non-state actors within and without India. Rapid economic development and improvement of transport and communication infrastructure have added new dimensions to the threat.

However, the present anti-Maoist strategy of ‘Clear-Hold-Develop’ has not taken the real gravity and dynamics of the menace into consideration. LWE is no more a “public order” issue and falls well within the innermost circle of what Justice Hidayatullah calls “three concentric circles” of threats.³⁷ Given the inter-State and global nature of the threat, the Union Government is duty-bound under Article 355 to “protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance.”

What is required, at the outset, is a political desire, if not political will, to deal with the entire gamut of the threat. All political parties have to rise above narrow electoral consideration to fight the Naxals. As long as political consensus on the issue is not reached, a long-lasting solution to the problem will remain evasive. Leading national parties, along with the concerned State political parties, have to take the lead in arriving at a common understanding of the causes, consequences of and counter-measures to Left-wing Extremism. It should also be noted that the rise of LWE could also be attributed to the failure of moderate political parties in articulating the rising expectations and grievances of the people at the right time, in an adequate manner.

The parties, therefore, have to get on to their primary task of 'interest aggregation'. It is important to develop a strong participatory mechanism. Grassroots democracy would ultimately prove to be the ideal foil to militancy. They give enough space – for mainstream and regional political parties, civil society groups, or even dissidents – for political action. Provisions under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act that mandates tribal advisory councils to oversee tribal affairs and empowers Governors of each State to intervene in matters where they see tribal autonomy being compromised are hardly used. The PESA Act not only accepted the validity of "customary law, social and religious practices, and traditional management practices of community resources", but also directed the State governments not to make any law which is inconsistent with these.³⁸ Accepting a clear-cut role for the community, it gave wide-ranging powers to Gram Sabhas to approve plans, programmes for social and economic development, identify beneficiaries under poverty alleviation programmes, certify utilisation of funds by Gram Panchayats, protect natural resources, including minor forest produce and be consulted before land acquisition. The full-fledged implementation of PESA Act would empower the marginalised tribals and, in turn, would deal a bigger blow to the Maoists.

Instead of slackness on account of the prevailing disturbed environment, the administrative apparatus should work overtime to ensure that all

socio-economic development and poverty alleviation programmes are implemented with high efficiency and honesty and within an urgent timeframe. Good governance is the key. Attention is also required in making sure that the criminal justice system functions with speed, fairness, transparency and honesty as otherwise it is difficult to bring down the prevailing “crisis of legitimacy”. Overhauling is required in all three stages of the criminal justice system – investigation, prosecution, and adjudication.

At the operational level, it is only intelligence that will help in finding the ‘invisible enemy’. The key to success in fighting Naxals effectively lies in obtaining accurate and reliable intelligence. In short, it is enhancing the ability to ‘expect the unexpected’ that holds the key. Although the local police forces are the first responders, they are considered the weakest link in the entire response chain. What India requires is, as the Padmanabhaiah Committee advocated, a “highly motivated, professionally-skilled, infrastructurally self-sufficient and sophisticatedly trained police force.” Although the Army’s successful track record in counter-insurgency is well established, its primary role is to safeguard the country’s territorial integrity from any external aggression. The Army, therefore, can be best utilized in training CPOs and State police forces in counter-insurgency tactics, techniques and procedures.

In doing so, the human rights aspect should not be ignored. The core counter-Naxal strategy should revolve around “less fear-mongering” and “more confidence”. Adhering to human rights obligations when combating Maoists helps to ensure that advocates of violence do not win sympathy from the ranks of those harmed and alienated by the State.

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SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN SWEEPSTAKES, TRUMP AND HOWDY MODI!

BY

N.N. BHATIA

In this thought-provoking article, the complex reasons for the faceoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia have been analyzed. The pan-Arab dispute over the naming of the Persian Gulf water body known historically and internationally as the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Gulf highlights the hostility between Shia Iran and the predominantly Sunni Salafi Saudi Arabia. The only other Salafi country in the Middle East, though tiny, blessed with an abundance of hydrocarbons, is Qatar and which mediates between the two archrivals. The rivalry between the two giant oil-producing neighbouring nations is highly exacerbated and volatile. Both support opposing terror groups in rival countries and in the ongoing power struggle in the Middle East between Shia-Sunni sectarian conflicts.

Till Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the erstwhile Shah of Iran ruled the country; both Iran and Saudi Arabia constituted Nixon Doctrines' 'Twin Pillars' policy in the Middle East. The monarchies in the Middle East favoured alliances with the US. With the ouster of the Shah, the scenario quickly changed with the arrival of the revolutionary Khomeini as a threat to the numerous Sheikhs ruling many Sunni countries in the Middle East region. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are also rival influences in Yemen and Bahrain.

India-Iran Relations have always been good. Till partition of the country and separation of Pakistan, both countries shared historical and cultural linkages that contributed to regional security and stability.

India's relations with Saudi Arabia have also been traditionally strong. Both countries are major suppliers of India's energy needs. President Trump of the US, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran and Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman have good personal rapport with Prime Minister Modi, which can help in mediating in the present standoff between both the countries and thus ensuring India's energy needs are met uninterruptedly.

THE MIDDLE EAST TANGLE

My late father was serving in the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), Abadan, Iran in the Medical Department much before I was born on 13 October 1942. He was forced to leave the AIOC on its nationalization in May 1951 by Dr Muhammad Mussadeq, the then Prime Minister of Iran during the Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi's regime. Later, my father shifted to the Qatar Petroleum Company (QPC) where he served till mid-June 1965.

Persia is the traditional historical name of Iran. Like we write PIN codes on our addresses in India these days to ensure mail reaches its destination, appending Persian Gulf at the end of the address was the norm while posting overseas letters when my father was serving in Iran in those times. Later, when he shifted to Qatar, if one wrote Persian Gulf on an overseas mail, the letter would not be delivered as in the Arabian Peninsula this water body was called the Arabian Gulf. The pan-Arab dispute over the naming of the Persian Gulf water body known historically and internationally as the Persian Gulf to Arabian Gulf, highlights the hostilities between Shia Iran and the predominantly Sunni Salafi version of Islam followed by Saudi Arabia. The only other Salafi country in the Middle East, though tiny but blessed with an abundance of hydrocarbons is Qatar, which is made to play ping-pong between the two archrivals.

Why is there a faceoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia? Of all the Muslims in the world, nearly 80 per cent of them are followers of the Sunni sect, while the remainder 15-18 per cent are predominantly from the Shia sect. These two groups disagreed over who should be the successor to

Prophet Muhammad. While Sunni Muslims choose Abu Bakr as the successor, Shias designated Ali Abi Talib. Saudi Arabia is the leader of the Sunni Muslim sect. The Sunni dominated countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey and Syria, which also has a sizeable Shia minority. Iran is the leader of the Shia Muslim sect and Shia dominated countries are Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Kuwait and Yemen, which also has a sizeable Sunni minority. The rivalry between the two giant oil-producing neighbouring nations is highly exacerbated and volatile primarily due to their political and economic struggle, religious differences over the Shia-Sunni divide and sectarianism in the Middle East region. Both the countries, for geo-political and geo-strategic ambitions, exploit this as part of the larger struggle for domination over each other. Both support opposing terror groups in rival countries and in the ongoing power struggle in the Middle East between Shia-Sunni sectarian conflicts. The crux of Syria's bloody civil war is primarily due to the major sectarian struggle between the Sunni and the Shia Muslims and so is the case in many other such countries. Major Sunni terror groups are the Al Qaida (AQ), Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hizbul Mujahidin (HM), Indian Mujahedeen (IM), Haqqani Network (HQN), Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI), Harakat ul-Mujahidin (HUM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) etc; while the active Shia terror organisations are the Hezbollah (Lebanon), Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Iran), Jaysh al Adl Muslim Brotherhood etc. Both sides have numerous splinter groups working in areas of their local/regional inter & intra interests.

In its long sea border to the south of Saudi Arabia, between the eastern and the western world, lies Yemen, which has long existed at the crossroads of cultures. With a 2,000 km long coastline stretching till the Red Sea, it is strategically located for trading to the west of the Arabian Peninsula where lies the Arabian Sea and Oman, and to the east the Gulf of Aden. To the south, it has more than 200 islands, including one of the largest islands in the Middle East, Socotra, which though politically a part of Yemen being an Asian country, geographically it is a part of the African continent. Yemen is one of the world's poorest

countries, having been devastated by prolonged civil war. It is also amongst the most corrupt countries in the world.

Several dynasties emerged in the country between the 9th and 16th centuries. The country was divided between the Ottoman and British empires in the early 20th century. After World War 1, in North Yemen the Zaiydi Kingdom was established, while South Yemen i.e. Aden remained a British protectorate until 1967, when it became an independent communist state. The two Yemeni states united to form the modern Republic of Yemen in 1990. Yemen, with its majority Sunni Muslim population and a sizable Shia minority, had for years been within the Saudi sphere of influence, much to the dislike of Iran. The Houthi movement – an Islamic political and armed struggle – was started by the Shia Houthi tribal leader Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi in northern Yemen in the 1990s. It fought against the corrupt former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011 and his successor Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, both of whom were backed by Saudi Arabia and the United States. The decade-long Houthi insurgency was supported by Iran, with accusations of covert support for the rebels frequently stoking tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The 2015 UN report alleged that Iran provided the Houthi rebels with finance, training and arms shipments since 2009, a charge which was vehemently denied by the Iranian government.

A fortnight after the drone attacks on its oil installations on 14 September 2019, Saudi Arabia accused Iran of knocking out half of its daily oil production, severely impacting the global oil market and triggering fresh tension between both the countries. However, Iran again vehemently denied the hostile act and blamed the Houthi rebels for the same.

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are rival influences in Bahrain. While Bahrain is predominantly a Shia state, its ruler Al Khalifa is a Sunni, who accuses Iran of supporting terrorist plots to overthrow his monarchy. Bahrain, like other Sunni states, has long feared Iran stirring up unrest among the regional Shia minority population.

THE US ANGLE

Till Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran ruled the country; both Iran and Saudi Arabia constituted Nixon Doctrines' 'Twin Pillars' policy in the Middle East. The monarchies in the Middle East favoured alliances with the US, working towards a grand strategy to ward off the Soviet Union and emerging Chinese influences in the region. With the ouster of the Shah, the scenario quickly changed after the arrival of the revolutionary Khomeini who was also seen as a threat to the numerous Sheikhs ruling many Sunni countries in the Middle East region.

Saudi Arabia alleged that Yemen's Shia minority Houthi's 1 September 2014 coup-d'état against President Saleh and his successor President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, was supported by Iran to gain a foothold in Yemen and posed an immediate security threat to Saudi Arabia and its oil fields. The Saudis in 2015, with its other Arab allies less Oman, launched airstrikes, ground offensives and a naval blockade of Yemen. The US joined the fray in October 2016 when Houthi rebels fired missiles on its warships.

There are allegations against the Iranians for alleged harassment of oil tankers sailing through the Strait of Hormuz and the shooting down of a US surveillance drone, which shows the country's pro-active role, though keeping short of eliciting a full-scale military response. After repudiating Iran's nuclear deal, President Trump lacks credibility and has fewer allies and options. By not taking military action against Iran he has also annoyed Saudi Arabia, which feels let down by its time-trusted ally. Knowing from their past experiences in getting involved by interventions in Cambodia, Vietnam, Afghanistan and elsewhere, the US prefers using economic measures against the Iranian regime to ensure it does not go to war, and to simultaneously persuade Saudi Arabia to tackle the issue diplomatically as an economic war – more so when Trump is eying winning the next US Presidential election in 2020. Saudi Arabia knows its military is no match for the Iranian armed forces and fears the Iranian development of tactical nuclear weapons clandestinely, to be used against them in desperation, if cornered.

INDIA-IRAN RELATIONS

Till partition of the country and separation of Pakistan, India shared a common international border with Iran along Baluchistan. Both countries share historical and cultural linkages that contributed to regional security and stability. Indo-Iranian relations have been robust and both Prime Minister Modi and President Rouhani have visited each other's country to strengthen bilateral relations drawn upon a shared culture, Sufism, and geographical proximity. The core relationship is based on India's crude energy needs and regional security issues due to a hostile Pakistan, Afghanistan and Chinese interests in building the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This has led to the Indian initiative to develop Chabahar port in Iran to provide an alternate and safe strategic road connectivity to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) as a counter to the Chinese CPEC running through Indian territories held by Pakistan, and in the Aksai Chin by China.

Despite the close ties, there are a few irritants over the perception of India and Iran on certain geostrategic and security issues like differing views on the role of the US in Afghanistan. India considers the US presence in Afghanistan essential for regional security while Iran wants immediate US withdrawal as it feels that the US military presence has only contributed to the deterioration of the security and stability of the country. India and Iran also have divergent views on the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Iran feels that the Taliban is both a problem and a solution to the Afghanistan imbroglio, while India feels that the continued presence of the Taliban would spike terrorism. Further, while Iran seeks a role in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the US forces, it feels that the presence of Pakistan in Afghanistan would contain terrorism, a perception not supported by India that is of the view that Pakistan has never shown any positive role in Afghanistan. It is upon the leadership of both countries to address these divergent views appropriately. Prime Minister Modi and the Iranian President Rouhani met on 26 Sep 2019 on the backdrop of the UN General Assembly session in New York and discussed bilateral relations and progress on the Chabahar port.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEAL & JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA)

The Iran nuclear deal framework was signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), along with Germany and the European Union, in 2015. It was to formulate a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. On 8 May 2018, President Trump announced the unilateral withdrawal of the US from the JCPOA as they suspected clandestine development of nuclear weapons and missiles by Iran. The US also put major restrictions on Iranian nuclear plans with threats of serious consequences. This dealt a severe blow to the JCPOA. Trump appeared belligerent and wanting to change the Iranian regime, as he feared that the Iranian-backed Shiite militias were planning attacks against US troops in Iraq in the backdrop of the alleged Iranian clandestine nuclear weapons development programme. The US Administration, to pressurise Iran, deployed the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group along with a bomber task force in the Persian Gulf. There were reports that the US airlifted 1500 additional troops to Iraq to pressurise Iran further. These actions created a dangerous standoff with Iran over their suspected missile and nuclear weapons programme and support to terrorism in Iraq and the Gulf region. The US also ordered the withdrawal of US citizens on duty in Iraq, fearing impending Iranian attacks in that country. Trump, to further corner Iran, only allowed Japan, China, South Korea, India and Turkey to continue importing about one million barrels of Iranian oil per day. Iran on their part threatened to close the narrow Straits of Hormuz and the Red Sea to block oil supplies from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Large numbers of rival US, Iranian, Israeli, Saudi and UAE troops operate in the Gulf region, which has a proliferation of oil wells, refineries, pipelines, storage facilities and oil terminals, with numerous oil, gas and crude tankers in transit. All these assets are highly vulnerable to massive fire catastrophes in case of war and bombing attacks, and will give an excuse to the US and its ally Israel to jump in and escalate tensions. The US must understand that Iran has a robust armed force and that in any conflagration direct action would be counterproductive and that talks, consultations and negotiations perhaps are the only alternatives to diffuse any situation.

India's core relationship with Iran is based on its crude energy needs and regional security issues due to the hostile Pakistani-Chinese nexus in developing the CPEC, and an unstable Afghanistan that led to the Indian initiative to develop Chabahar port to provide alternate and safe strategic road connectivity.

INDIA-SAUDI RELATIONS

Relations between Saudi Arabia and India are strong and close, especially in commercial ventures. Saudi Arabia, like Iran, is a major supplier of India's energy needs. Indo-Saudi bilateral trade reached US\$ 27.48 billion in the financial year 2017–18, up from US\$ 25.1 billion in the preceding year. Saudi Arabia's exports to India stood at US\$ 22.06 billion whereas India's exports were US\$ 5.41 billion, a considerable imbalance due to India's high energy requirements. Like with Iran, India has cultural and trade contacts with Saudi Arabia over centuries and Saudis had once dominated the spice trade from India to Europe. Ever since India's independence, bilateral relations have improved and Saudi, besides being the largest supplier of oil, is the fifth largest investor in India. In January 2006, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia made a special visit to India, becoming the first Saudi monarch in 51 years to do so. The Saudi King and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed an agreement forging a strategic energy partnership that was termed the 'Delhi Declaration'. During Prime Minister Modi's historic visit to Saudi Arabia in 2016, both countries decided to further enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism operations, intelligence sharing and law enforcement. The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited India on 20 Feb 2019 and the two countries decided to constitute a comprehensive security dialogue and set up a joint working group on counter-terrorism to effectively deal with the challenges of terrorism. The Crown Prince said, 'We look forward to India's continued partnership. Saudi Arabia has valued India as a close friend and a strategic partner.'

Saudi Arabia has evinced a desire to enhance cooperation with India to combat terrorism, including choking funds to terror networks and sharing terrorism-related intelligence. The Indian company, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), has announced plans to sell a 20 per cent stake in its refining

and petrochemicals business to Aramco for US\$ 15 billion as part of a plan to reduce its massive debt. According to the terms of the deal, Saudi Aramco will also supply 500,000 barrels per day of crude oil to RIL's twin Jamnagar refineries; these deals were possible due to PM Modi's initiative to give a boost to India-Saudi Arabia ties. India cannot allow any distancing of its ties with Saudi Arabia, which also has a close relationship with Pakistan and whose Prime Minister Imran Khan has been making efforts to convince the Saudi authorities about the 'Hindutva' ideology and Prime Minister Modi's 'deep-rooted RSS connections'.

While Saudi Arabia had earlier declined to comment on the Kashmir issue, saying it is for India and Pakistan to resolve it, the Crown Prince Salman had visited Pakistan and India in back-to-back visits in February 2019, just after the Pulwama terror attack when Indo-Pak tension were very high, advising both sides to scale down tensions. Though Saudi Arabia is leading the global campaign against terrorism, terror financing and extremism, due to its proximity to Pakistan – another camp follower of Saudi Arabia – one often suspects Saudis of funding Sunni terror organisations which are being equipped, trained, motivated and are operating from Pakistan. During his whirlwind two-day tour of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Modi in his 29 Oct 2019 joint press statement made an important assertion stating both sides discussed regional and international issues, reiterating rejection of all forms of interference in the internal affairs of countries. Modi also spoke on the scrapping of Article 370, which he stated was a temporary provision and was an internal matter of India, who was well within its rights to change it. This standoffish Riyadh's joint Indo-Saudi Arabia statement would be a big jolt for Pakistan, further isolating them. Prime Minister Modi also delivered a keynote address at the high-profile Future Investment Initiative (FII), synonymous as 'Davos in the Desert', and an Strategic Partnership Council was established to coordinate important issues between the two countries.

Howdy Modi!

Howdy is an informal friendly greeting meaning "how do you do", particularly associated with western US states like Texas. There was

Modi mania in Houston on 22 September 2019 where over 50,000 Indian-origin Americans greeted Prime Minister Modi with this greeting, and President Trump was mesmerized by the Howdy Modi phenomenon. Both Prime Minister Modi and President Trump addressed the gathering and further cemented their warm friendship, economic and strategic interests. Both the leaders also emphasized on border security and on fighting radical Islamic terrorism. With presidential elections in the US next year and President Trump seeking re-election, this made for a good start in an otherwise Democrat stronghold of Texas, by luring the powerful Indian diaspora lobby. While Modi took potshots on Pakistan sponsoring terrorism by referring to both 26/11 and 9/11 attacks by radical Islamic terrorists trained and supported by them, the revocation of Article 370 in J&K was reiterated as an internal matter of India. Prime Minister Modi further elaborated that the dispute over Kashmir was a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan, hinting at President Trump to shun mediation attempts between the two. While bonhomie between Trump and Modi were the hallmark of the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston, it certainly isolated Prime Minister Imran Khan whose bellicose war and nuclear threats reflected his country's helplessness, further coupled with their diplomatic despondency and financial bankruptcy. However, both Prime Minister Modi and President Trump exceeded formal diplomatic norms by utterances that both leaders made – Modi sloganized '*Ab ki baar Trump Sarkar*' (This time Trump Government) and Trump called Modi 'Father of India' – both not realising the fallout of such public utterances. Modi must realise the repercussions and fallout of his slogan if the Democrat candidate wins the next year's US Presidential election, and Trump for belittling the 'Father of the Nation' Mahatma Gandhi.

Since India has a long-standing border dispute with China – Pakistan's only remaining friend – the development and progress India has made, has to an extent checkmated Chinese pro-active policies against India. China also realizes that India is a big market for Chinese goods. India's look-East policies and the joint Japan-US initiative in getting India to play a bigger role in the strategic Indo-Pacific Region and in their interests in oil energy explorations in the South China Sea, are initiatives to contain China. Further, China cannot afford to antagonize the US,

being its largest market. China has the highest concentration of Muslims in the northwest provinces of Xinjiang, Gansu and Ningxia, with a significant presence in the Yunnan province in southwest China and in the Henan province of central China, which should be worrying China over their radicalisation. Further, the situation in Hong Kong would be more worrying for China than Afghanistan, Kashmir or the Saudi Arabia-Iran conundrum!

INDIA'S KEY ROLE IN THE SWEEPSTAKES

India is considered as an emerging superpower with the world's fastest-growing economy, an important geostrategic location in the Indian Ocean region and having transoceanic commerce and trade with the Far East, South Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe and both North and South Americas. More than 35 million Indians live across the globe and the world's largest democracy aspires to be a permanent member of the UNSC. India is an active member of the ASEAN, SAARC, Commonwealth, BRICS, Indian Ocean Rim Countries Association (IORCA), Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD), G-20 and the SCO.

India has a long and strong relationship with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. India's relations with both the US and Russia in many fields of activities are on strong footings. Any standoff or conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran adversely affects regional and India's national security, economic and developmental needs. There is a strong Modi Government in power with a fresh mandate and President Trump of the US, President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman all have good personal rapport with Prime Minister Modi that can help in de-escalating the present standoff between both the countries.

For India, it is essential to have peace in the Persian Gulf and the entire Middle East region. Any military intervention in Iran or warlike situation in Yemen adversely affects India's energy security, regional security, trade and its relations with the US and the European Union (EU). The EU supports the belligerent US Iran policy and the sanctions being imposed by the US on both Iran and India. These sanctions and

warlike situation in the region are not conducive to India's development of Chabahar port, as Indian and international companies hired by India to develop the port are then reluctant to work on this ambitious project. Meanwhile, the UK raised its threat to British shipping in the Persian Gulf to the highest critical levels advising their ships to avoid the Persian Gulf as the region got embroiled in a new tanker war. The US imposing fresh sanctions on China would complicate trade and talks between the two countries and further strain their relations. Iran has also declared having stockpiled adequate enriched uranium, beyond the limits prescribed by the JCPOA. The mercurial President Trump, while declaring good relations with Prime Minister Modi, continues imposing fresh sanctions on India. All these events have set off a flurry of diplomatic activity between the US, Iran, China, India and the European countries, while President Trump has warned Iran to 'be careful.'

In this scenario, India must diplomatically persuade the US that while it is deeply concerned with the missile and nuclear weapons development plans of Iran, it has a different yardstick for rogue nations like Pakistan and North Korea developing these technologies under the Chinese umbrella. During their UNGA addresses, while Prime Minister Modi spoke on ending terrorism and creating an environment conducive to peace, sadly Prime Minister Imran Khan's venomous speech centered around hate-Modi, the Indian bogey and nuclear war hysteria, least realising that the mantra of non-violence and non-interference in other countries' internal affairs preached by Mahatma Gandhi over seven decades ago was still relevant. Bilateral issues are best resolved by maintaining peace in the region, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and through dialogue. It appears Pakistan is yet to learn lessons from its East Pakistan fiasco that led to the liberation of Bangladesh in December 1971.

India needs to emphasize to the US that while they are wanting to withdraw from Afghanistan and not to fight others' dirty wars, they would be leaving behind a highly volatile region vulnerable to Islamist militants, isolating India with a big investment in the unsettled country and which is infested with Al Qaida and the Taliban. In the meanwhile, it is getting further embroiled in a more chaotic situation in the Gulf region, thus destabilizing regional security and world peace.

India needs to highlight to the international community its operationalisation of the strategically important Chabahar port in Iran for providing safe and alternate connectivity with landlocked Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics (CARs), to counter the CPEC running through disputed Indian territory, thus ensuring a much-needed balance in international affairs and power symmetry. The Modi government understands that belligerence against and the isolation of Iran would only disturb peace and tranquility in the region. With the current Pakistan sponsored terrorism in J&K and unrest in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Libya, India should endeavour for negotiations over the Saudi Arabia-Iran standoff, notwithstanding and fully understanding India's bounty of soft goodwill along with the deficiencies in its hard power balancing, against the backdrop of its twin requirements of its oil needs from both Saudi Arabia and Iran and the strengthening of its bilateral strategic partnership with the US. The Modi government must address the latest power equations arising amid the Iranian oil embargo, the situation in the Arabian Peninsula, the impending financial crisis coupled with the changing threat perception issues emerging in the wake of US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping visited India from 11-12 October 2019 for the 2nd Informal Summit. The two leaders had their inaugural Informal Summit in Wuhan, China on 27-28 April 2018. They expressed concern over the issues of terrorism and radicalisation. Modi and Xi also discussed enhancing bilateral trade volume, India's trade deficit and identified investment areas. They deliberated that radicalisation and terrorism should not affect both countries' multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies over the backdrop of bilateral strained ties over the J&K issue. On a positive note, it was also reported that both the Indian and the Chinese armies celebrated the 70th Chinese National Day along the border in Arunachal Pradesh with a new-found bonhomie, and frequent meetings are being held to resolve local issues amicably and peacefully. Such changing relationships are the first steps to resolve larger issues and irritants.

Modi's diplomatic blitzkrieg is paying rich dividends. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, along with a dozen ministers, travelled to India on 31

October 2019 to seek ways to strengthen trade cooperation. Germany's Parliament recently called for upgrading bilateral ties with India amid China's growing clout and signed agreements on Indo-German Partnership in Higher Education, Cooperation in Skills Development and Vocational Education. India thanked Germany for its support for India's accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime, Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement and for India's early accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), rooting out terrorist safe havens and infrastructure, disrupting terrorist networks, financing channels and halting cross border movement of terrorists. Modi and Merkel interacted with the business community and Germany told India it could play a key role in doubling farmers' income as they have expertise in farm mechanization and in post-harvest management.

CONCLUSION

India, unlike Pakistan, is thus playing its cards well internationally for its development and security, and to ensure Saudi Arabia and Iran resolve their differences for maintaining uninterrupted supply of India's energy needs, keeping the big sharks away from the deep sea.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EPOCH MAKING CHANGES IN HONG KONG

BY

V.B.N. RAM

A chronological synopsis relating to the epoch-making changes in Hong Kong would be landmarked thus:

The People's Republic of China (PRC) came into being in 1949. As noticed often in the past, PRC as a matter of policy refuses to accord recognition to accords/compacts signed by regimes preceding its formation, even though such agreements may have been consented to by areas now within PRC. PRC's refusal to recognize the McMahon Line as India's border with the Tibet Autonomous Region of PRC, is just one example, amongst many others.

Hence, it goes to the credit of Britain that, from time to time, it was able to put such enormous pressure on PRC that it continued to accept and recognize the sanctity of the terms of the Second Convention of Peking held on 9 June 1898. Right since the time the First Opium War (1839-42) got over and the Treaty of Nanking was signed, the Qing Dynasty had become so weak that it was open to exploitation. Consequently, the Qing Dynasty had to lease out the New Territories to Britain for 99 years.

The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1 July 1997 facilitated the transfer of Britain's sovereignty over Hong Kong back to PRC, coinciding with the lapse of the 99-year lease. The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1997 facilitated complete autonomy for Hong Kong for the next 50

years i.e. till 2047. This arrangement has broadly come to be termed as "One Country Two Systems."

Mainland China has repeatedly attempted to curb such freedoms and undermine the "one country two systems" principle and thrust its own culture, educational curriculum and curtailed press freedom in Hong Kong leading to several uprisings. The immediate trigger for the latest protest, which started six months back, was the attempted legislation of the controversial Extradition Bill, which has since been withdrawn. The protests against the Extradition Bill and other major pro-democracy protests over the decades, have been covered in this article.

HISTORICAL LEGACY

The subjugation of Hong Kong by Great Britain (GB) came about as a result of trade relations between GB and Qing Imperial China (QIC), which began in the 17th and 18th centuries. Imports by GB primarily consisted of silk, porcelain and tea and Qing Imperial China's main import was silver through the port of Canton – this port facilitated the two-way trade.

On 9 June 1898, the British under the reign of Queen Victoria brokered a 99-year lease agreement with the QIC after the latter lost a series of wars. QIC's inability to offer suitable commercial compensation for Britain's perceived "monetary loss" from its commercial ties with QIC compelled the latter to offer Hong Kong to Britain on lease.

In 1941 Japan seized Hong Kong and kept it under occupation from December 1941 for about three years and eight months. After the Japanese defeat in World War II, Hong Kong was retrieved by the British and brought yet again under their control. It is interesting to note that the then US President Franklin Roosevelt tried to put pressure on the then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to return the island of Hong Kong to China as a concession for the support given by the latter during WW II.

It is a historical irony that even though in 1941 the US was pleading with the UK for returning Hong Kong to China, now in 2019 the tables

have turned to such an extent that the US Congress is in the process of formulating anti-PRC legislation for PRC's repression in Hong Kong.

In 1984, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Premier Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China worked out the modalities and attempted to fine-tune the actual process relating to the handover of Hong Kong to PRC after the 99-year lease period.

The underlying postulate that determines Hong Kong's political status is fundamentally drawn from China's "one nation two systems" policy and its corollary, Hong Kong's Basic Law. The Basic Law i.e. Hong Kong's Constitutional document, was approved in March 1990 by the National People's Congress of China and the provisions of this Law took effect from 1 July 1997, the date when Great Britain ceded Hong Kong's sovereignty to China. The Basic Law (BL) is a quasi-Constitutional document; it facilitates Hong Kong to have its legislature and a Chief Executive as the head of the government. Through this Law, Hong Kong functions as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic Of China, with a high degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign affairs and defence, in conformity with the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and the Basic Law.

Beijing has historically i.e. from the pre-handover days, been extremely wary of the ill-effects of political turbulence in the Mainland spilling over to Hong Kong and giving rise to anti-PRC sentiments. A classic example relates to the Cultural Revolution (CR). As the CR spread across PRC in 1967, riots and bomb explosions hit Hong Kong. Chinese militiamen, allegedly with Beijing's support, crossed over from the Mainland into Hong Kong shooting five police officers before crossing back to the Mainland. However, locals mostly remained loyal to the Hong Kong government. [5] Beijing conveniently remains silent about the 1967 riots because this could reinforce anti-communist passions among a sizable section of Hongkongers. [6]

According to what was agreed upon and mandated, Hong Kong will continue to retain its political, economic and judicial systems and its unique way of life for at least 50 years after retrocession in 1997 i.e. till 2047.

INDEPENDENT UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

As regards Hong Kong's demand for independent universal suffrage – the fountainhead of any democracy – it may be of interest to note that in principle Article 68 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, the island territory's Constitution, has categorically stated that the ultimate aim is to ensure that the members of Hong Kong's Legislative Council are elected through universal suffrage.

Hong Kong's Legislative Council is a 70-member unicameral Council. 35 members are from geographical constituencies and the remaining 35 members are from functional constituencies. The members from geographical constituencies represent various areas within Hong Kong. Functional Constituencies are composed of members from professional or special interest groups such as finance, labour, social service, medical, teaching, legal, engineering, architecture etc.

A cursory glance at the main functions of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) would erroneously lead one to believe that the Island territory is bestowed with an enormous level of autonomy, without any restrictions whatsoever being imposed by the PRC. For example, the LegCo can enact, amend and repeal laws; examine and approve budgets; can structure taxation and public expenditure; raise questions on how the government functions, and; can debate the policy addresses of the Chief Executive. As regards LegCo's judicial powers, it can endorse the appointment and removal of the judges of the Court of Final Appeal and the Chief Judge of the High Court.

Chris Patten, the 28th and the last British Governor of Hong Kong, before the handover, added a welcome dimension to the electoral process. Members of LegCo returned in 1995 were originally to serve beyond the handover, thereby providing institutional continuity for the transition of Hong Kong to PRC. Beijing had expected that the functional constituencies with limited electorates would be used to elect this Council. However, Governor Patten extended the definition of functional constituencies and thereby every Hong Kong citizen was enabled to vote for the so-called indirect elected members.

PROCESS OF ELECTION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Under the existing system of “one country two systems”, since the Chief Executive is a kind of umbilical cord between Hong Kong and Beijing, it is crucial for Beijing that the post is not merely occupied by a Beijing loyalist, but more importantly, he/she functions according to its dictates.

With the election of C.Y. Leung as Chief Executive in 2012, for all intents democracy ceased to exist thereafter. Students triggered the popular Umbrella Revolution, upset by the continued stalling by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC), of measures that may have provided a way to find an acceptable method for the appointment of the Chief Executive. The NPCSC declared on 31 Aug 2014 that Hong Kong had to accept an electoral system for Chief Executive’s appointment in which three candidates would be pre-approved by the Election Committee – a Beijing loyalist electoral college. This institution had 1200 members in 2017 for the election of the Chief Executive. This mandate by Beijing curtailed the choice for the appointment of the Chief Executive and drew immense flak from the pro-democracy protesters because it restricted the choice of eligible candidates to just three, all of whom had been pre-vetted. This issue became a major bone of contention as it attempted to strangle and choke a free and unfettered choice by the citizens of Hong Kong to elect their Chief Executive.

Interestingly, Ipkwok him, a veteran pro-establishment politician who sits on Hong Kong’s Executive Council – Hong Kong’s top advisory body – says he believes Beijing would like to continue with this formula even post 2047. Of course, much will depend on what political changes unfold by then.

There is a very vocal pro-Beijing lobby that would never want the status quo to be altered. In any case, Article 1 of the Basic Law unequivocally declares that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is an inalienable part of the People’s Republic of China. The Chinese President Xi Jinping was present in Hong Kong in 2017 at the time the

city was marking the 20th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to PRC. Addressing a gathering he struck a warning note saying, “challenging Chinese sovereignty crosses a red line.” [4]

IMPORTANCE OF DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The District Councils are bodies with little power and low budgets – mostly to decide and administer on local and community issues. About 10 per cent of the deputies of the Election Committee for the selection of the Chief Executive belong to the District Councils.

As expected, the Mainland authorities had planned to use the Chinese National Day on 1 Oct 2019 to tighten their grip over Hong Kong. Therefore, Joshua Wong, the leader at the forefront of the pro-democracy protests, was disqualified from contesting the District Council elections. Much to the chagrin of the Mainland authorities, the candidate replacing Wong i.e. Kevin Lam won the election with a huge margin and a 57 per cent vote share.

The District Council elections held in Hong Kong on 24 Nov 2019 will radically transform the political complexion of the city. Out of a total of 452 seats, the pro-democracy camp secured a whopping 347; independents secured 45 (many of them siding with the pro-democracy camp), while the Beijing supported pro-establishment group got a dismal 60. This result has virtually sounded the death knell for Beijing, which is unable to gauge the most effective manner of handling the crisis. In effect, the pro-democracy camp won 17 of the 18 District Councils. In a stunning setback that could drastically restructure Hong Kong’s internal administration, the pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), which fielded 179 candidates won a minuscule 21 seats. This party had 119 seats before the election.

EARLIER PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

Hong Kong citizens were quite agitated in 2003 that Mainland China (PRC) was in the process of bringing out the National Security Act,

which was meant as an enablement legislation to frame charges and arrest, or even arrest for life, citizens on charges of treason, sedition, secession, or subversion. This protest was a political climb-down for PRC leading to the resignation of Hong Kong's pro-Beijing Chief Executive, Tung-Cheehua.

Protesters numbering some 400,000 stormed the main streets of Hong Kong on 1 July 2012. This massive anti-Beijing show of strength was purposely done to synchronize with the 15th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to China. A hardcore Beijing loyalist C.Y. Leung was appointed the Chief-Executive of Hong Kong, bringing in enormous despondency among pro-democracy activists.

The September 2014 protests, popularly referred to as "Occupy Central" or the "Umbrella Movement" began after the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) of the People's Republic of China proposed reforms to Hong Kong's electoral system, which would have been restrictive since it would have authorized the Communist Party of PRC to pre-screen the candidates for the leadership of Hong Kong.

PROTESTS CONTINUE UNABATED

More than six months have elapsed since the present pro-democracy protests began in Hong Kong. The immediate trigger for the protests was the now-withdrawn controversial extradition bill, though the factors underpinning the "popular revolt," if it can be so referred, are numerous – such as a desperate attempt by Mainland China to stifle Hong Kong's freedom in more ways than one. Many issues have irked Hongkongers. Imposition of pro-mainland curriculum in the educational system; detention of booksellers by mainland security agents; censure and expulsion of foreign journalists; the jailing of young activists, of whom Joshua Wong is the most visible; judicial interpretations of Hong Kong laws in a manner to suit mainland China; and depriving Hong Kong of universal suffrage.

The recent street protests by an estimated two million people in Hong Kong, which witnessed the Island's worst outrage in years against a yet

to be legislated extradition bill, was aborted midway before it could be deliberated through the 70-member unicameral assembly. This should be seen not only as a legacy of history but in a wider context of the irritants and challenges for Beijing in the Taiwan Straits and South China Sea.

The most compelling trigger for initiating the controversial extradition bill in the Hong Kong LegCo came about when a Hong Kong man was accused of strangling his pregnant girlfriend and stuffing her body in a suitcase while they were in Taiwan in 2018. The suspect, Chan Tong kai, could not be held to account because Hong Kong does not have an extradition treaty with Taiwan. After committing the crime the culprit did go back to Hong Kong, but in the absence of a legal framework facilitating Hong Kong criminals to be tried in mainland China, the latter appeared helpless in getting back the accused to the mainland to face trial.

Of course, it is another matter that China is well known, not only for its cruel human rights violations against “criminals” through summary trials in contravention of what free society refers to as rule of law, but equally notorious for its abduction of person/s whom it considers to be working against the interests of the State. Many such people have gone missing, or, have been killed.

Never before have protesters dared to rampage the LegCo building and desecrate PRC’s national flag. Even though this could be seen as a symbolic condemnation of Beijing, the current protests foretell the biggest challenge to Beijing’s authority over Hong Kong. Of course, the US-China trade dispute has also played a part to an extent by subduing Beijing’s wiggle room for “neighbourhood intimidation”, along with Mainland China’s other internal challenges.

However, the People’s Republic of China is in no mood to concede to every demand of the pro-democracy protesters, which, by itself could in all possibility put an end to the protests.

The five key demands of pro-democracy protesters are listed below.

1. Withdrawal of the Extradition Bill.
2. Independent probe into the use of force by police against pro-democracy protesters.
3. Amnesty for the arrested protesters.
4. Pro-Democracy protestors are insistent that police does not define the "protests" as "riots"; and
5. Independent universal suffrage.

As regards a), the Extradition Bill – the enactment of which would have implied that those found in violation of the law, especially of those laws detrimental to Beijing, would be extradited and tried for their crimes in Mainland China. It may be noted that citizens of Hong Kong have, on occasions, breached the law in Hong Kong and escaped to Taiwan to forestall the likelihood of their extradition to Mainland China for trial.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive Ms Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor (Carrie Lam) has had to relent and decided to suspend legislating the extradition bill, which has since been withdrawn after President Xi Jinping approved this move. She has also tendered an apology for initiating this measure, but she has not yet met the demands of the protestors that a) she should resign forthwith, b) those involved in the protest should not be treated as rioters and subjected to any criminal charges, and c) that initiating the above bill may never, ever be considered again. She has, however, as expected refused to concede to demands calling for her resignation.

A randomly chosen 130 persons from among the pro-democracy protesters were offered an opportunity to meet Chief Executive Carrie Lam on 26 Sept 2019. "Ordinary Hong Kong citizens took the city's embattled leader at her word about being willing to listen to them in her first town hall dialogue following anti-government protests and violence." The protester's principal demand was an impartial and thorough investigation relating to police atrocities.

The passage of the extradition bill would have led to a situation where a "criminal" instead of being subjected to legal scrutiny or trial in Hong Kong as is the case at present, would have to be sent to Mainland China

where summary judgments are given in contravention of all canons of civilized behaviour, or without providing adequate rights of proper legal defence to the "accused." Further, such a situation lends itself to the possibility that the PRC may make extradition a means for falsely implicating and harassing its political opponents – there is a massive pro-democracy sentiment in Hong Kong with tens and thousands of anti-Beijing activists. Some among them also took part in the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. It should be mentioned that many pro-democracy activists have been abducted by Beijing and have never been seen since.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP SIGNS THE HKHRDA ON 27 Nov 2019

"Beijing should not have it both ways, reaping all the economic benefits of Hong Kong's standing in the world, while eradicating our socio-political identity."

The above statement by Joshua Wong, the pro-democracy crusader and Secretary General of the Demosisto Party, given as a part of witnesses testimony to the US Congressional Executive Commission on China, seeking support for a US legislation aimed at defending the people and their civil rights appears, to this writer, to be an excellent summation of the present unrest in Hong Kong.

Marco Rubio, the Republican Co-Chairman of the above Commission, has not minced words. He says, "China benefits from Hong Kong's Special Status which has made Hong Kong an important financial center, built on the promise China made to the world with regard to Hong Kong, which they seek to break."

Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives also held a news conference with fellow Democrats as well as Joshua Wong, Denise Ho and other Hong Kong pro-democracy activists in support of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act 2019.

The bipartisan support from both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the US Congress ensured the smooth passage of the Hong

Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act 2019 (HKHRDA) on 19 Nov 2019. Beijing's resentment to this legislation was made clear when it summoned the Acting US Charge d' Affairs William Klein to lodge a protest.

HKHRDA mandates an annual review to check if Hong Kong has enough autonomy to justify its special status. US President Trump says he signed the law out of respect for President Xi Jinping. The annual review is an endorsement by the US that the PRC has not eroded Hong Kong's civil liberties and the rule of law as protected by Hong Kong's Basic Law. Hong Kong's special status means it is not affected by US sanctions, or tariffs, placed on the Mainland.

Another legislation has been enacted by the US, which bans the export of crowd control munitions to the police in Hong Kong. HKHRDA's enactment by the US has outraged China and its Foreign Ministry hastened to summon the US ambassador and demanded that Washington stop interfering in China's internal affairs.

President Trump claims PRC's restraint in Hong Kong is only because of US pressure. In a phone interview with Fox & Friends, President Trump's audio-visual Wikipedia, he recently said, "If it weren't for me, Hong Kong would have been obliterated within 14 minutes." This claim of the US President has a great degree of credibility. As things stand, the US is trying to dissuade PRC from initiating any precipitate action, which will result in extreme violence and needless bloodshed, and the US has substantially succeeded in this because it has leveraged its overall trade ties with PRC in pursuance of the above objective. Secondly, PRC at this juncture is biding its time for trade-related differences with the US to get ironed out, which cannot happen unless it is seen to display political maturity and strategic restraint.

In 1982 during bilateral discussions, PRC's leader Deng Xiaoping threatened Prime-Minister Margaret Thatcher that China could seize Hong Kong in a day. Thatcher replied, "PRC could, but this would bring about Hong Kong's collapse." This exchange of comments took place

much before the city's handover to China in September 1982, when the two leaders met at the Great Hall of the People. [8]

The current wave of popular outrage has brought immense revulsion against the PRC. Pro-Beijing posters with pictures of Carrie Lam, Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong were removed and protesters stomped these with their shoes, according to a news report in Washington Post dated 28 Sept 2019. Isn't it high time the PRC sniffs that a lot of trouble is in store for it?

On 1 Oct 2019 the 70th anniversary of PRC, civil disobedience picked up to such a feverish pitch that protesters in Hong Kong were shouting, "May the heavens destroy the Chinese Communist Party and its every member."

The latest information (at the time of writing this article) indicates that the pro-democracy protesters have set fire to Chinese businesses, commercial banks and metro stations. They have vandalized the Hong Kong office of China's official news agency XINHUA. The protesters have also disrupted Carrie Lam's annual address in the assembly on two occasions.

Many protesters, mostly students, sought safe haven within the precincts of Hong Kong's University Polytechnic. The Hong Kong police cordoned off this building thereby preventing those trapped within from escaping. However, some of them besieged in the building did manage to escape. Later, the police from Mainland China entered the building on the pretext of clearing it of petrol bombs and other weapons. This excuse allowed the police to collect forensic evidence that could later incriminate the protestors.

BEIJING CALLS JOSHUA WONG A TRAITOR

Beijing's stance against Joshua Wong and others of his ilk is reflected in its description of Wong as one "among a new generation of traitors" for urging the US Congress to back the Hong Kong Human Rights and Pro-Democracy Act, which would allow the President to penalize

Mainland officials if there are curbs to Hong Kong's autonomy. The level of autonomy will be determined on a year-to-year basis. In other words, the Chinese territory's Special Economic Status, which facilitates trade and economic benefits received by Hong Kong from the US, will be based on whether there is any erosion on the level of autonomy in Hong Kong. In case there is any erosion, sanctions could be imposed.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPATHY FOR PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS

There is not only sympathy but also a sense of deep helplessness among many countries apart from the US, which for one reason or another, are reluctant to lend any pro-active support to the protesters. The European Union and the East and South-East Asian countries are amongst them. The European Union has not minced words by repeatedly stating that democracy in Hong Kong, free and unfettered, can only come about when it is not fashioned on the dictates of PRC. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab condemned China's treatment of Simon Cheng, a former employee of Britain's Hong Kong Consulate.

Joshua Wong recently visited Germany and met with Mr Heiko Maas, the German Foreign Minister. He appealed to Germany, that a) it should initiate legislation for a German version of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act (which, Wong seeks from the US); b) Germany should refrain from taking any commercial or non-commercial initiative that could hamper Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement; and, c) canvass for democracy in Hong Kong. This meeting, as expected, incurred PRC's wrath, which termed it as a "blatant interference in its internal matters."

Britain says it is a legal party to the agreement that transferred Hong Kong to PRC and is, therefore, well within its rights to come in support of the pro-democracy movement. However, at the present juncture, the UK government is itself facing a severe crisis due to political uncertainties related to Brexit, or fears caused by political convulsions due to Britain not exiting the European Union. There is also a fear of a commercial backlash from PRC if the UK were to antagonize PRC by stoking pro-democracy flames in Hong Kong.

Notwithstanding the above, Dominic Raab, the British Foreign Secretary, has recently unequivocally warned Beijing to scrupulously adhere to the obligations it has under its 1984 pact with the UK and to desist from any military intervention in Hong Kong. [3] This has made China tell the UK that such statements are interference in its internal matters and will never be tolerated.

JOSHUA WONG VISITS TAIWAN

Nearer home, Wong visited Taiwan, where he and his fellow crusaders met President Tsai Ing-wen and her ruling party members. To add insult to PRC's injury, just days after a wary Taiwan denied playing a role in Hong Kong's prevailing unrest, the 22-year old Wong, who is the Secretary General of his Demosisto Party, had confabulations with Cho Jung Tai as well as other representatives of the pro-independence New Power Party.

It may be of interest to note that before PRC was constituted, the Nationalists fighting PRC escaped in hordes to Taiwan. Therefore, quite naturally, any talk of Taiwan's independence causes shockwaves in PRC.

It, however, can hardly be gainsaid that the West in general, and the US in particular, have already set themselves on such an inexorable course, that now reversal of their recognition of the "one China policy" is out of the question.

My above argument is further reinforced by the fact that the principal ally of Chiang Kai Shek – then Taiwan's supreme leader – "had little appetite for a nationalist re-conquest of the mainland." Taiwan happened to be the very place where the counter-revolutionaries took refuge after the revolution which installed the PRC.

However, there were anti-PRC sentiments in Taiwan, in response to Xi Jinping's statement on 1 Oct 2019 that "China would promote for the peaceful development of relations with Taiwan and would continue to strive for the motherland's complete re-unification", which were equally caustic. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council categorically reaffirmed "Taiwan would never accept one country two systems." [9]

“Beijing and Taipeh proclaimed what amounted to two competing versions of Chinese national identity. In the nationalist view, Taiwan was not an independent state, it was the home of the Republic of China’s government in exile that had temporarily been displaced by communist usurpers, but would return to resume its rightful place on the mainland.” [7]

PRC’s greatest fears stem from its insecurity because Taiwan, with its very strong pro-independence lobby, may, despite all threats by Beijing, declare itself independent. If that were to happen, it might lead to the floodgates of other vulnerable areas under PRC such as Xinjiang and Tibet to raise their clarion calls for independence – Hong Kong, could also follow suit.

Nations peripheral to PRC are highly suspicious of its nefarious designs; many among them have been forthright in condemning Beijing from time to time. However, Beijing’s immense influence in the region and its financial and military might have been a stumbling block for Beijing’s neighbours to refrain from the discontinuance of nominal diplomatic superficialities, or even severance of ties.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY OF MAINLAND AREAS IN PROXIMITY TO HONG KONG

For Beijing, Hong Kong is an international financial center. Its financial clout and world stature is a feather in Beijing’s cap and PRC is not oblivious of this fact. Otherwise, Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protesters can be crushed by China in no time. Will PRC ever dare to crush the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong? Never, unless it is willing to face international humiliation.

The real estate tycoons of the city have facilitated PRC’s robust stranglehold over Hong Kong for decades. Property developers have, till a few years back, shared their enormous earnings with PRC. Limited available land for property development has led to skyrocketing prices. The ordinary citizen, whose voice can be felt in the pro-democracy protests, has been deprived of his rights to hold land. As was earlier

the practice, the land mafia is no longer in a position to oblige Beijing with a flow of funds, much to the immense consternation of Beijing.

PRC's media has made a forceful plea to Chief Executive Carrie Lam to invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance, which will facilitate the government's takeover of whatever land is available. Democratic Alliance For the Betterment and Progress (DAB), the city's largest pro-Beijing party has initiated moves in this direction.

During this writer's visit to Hong Kong and some of the neighbouring areas in the Mainland, particularly Shenzhen, he found that the rapid industrialization witnessed in these areas has been made possible because business groups from Hong Kong have over decades made large investments in Shenzhen and for which China is offering substantial incentives. Even though a 15 per cent tax is being imposed on enterprises from Hong Kong setting up shop in Shenzhen, all taxes paid in addition to the 15 per cent are entitled to a rebate.

Geographical zones like Macau and Hong Kong, have, without any shadow of doubt, been money-spinners for PRC thus far. The recent developments have encouraged a sustained flow of capital from Hong Kong to countries other than PRC, such as Singapore, for example. How far this trend will continue is anybody's guess. It is for the above reason that Ray Chan, a pro-democracy lawmaker in Hong Kong, has struck a rather cynical note when he said "Hong Kong and Taiwan are both at the frontline of the global fight, to fight Beijing's creeping authoritarianism and control."

The current political unrest has left in its trail a severely economically damaging situation for Hong Kong. Singapore and Hong Kong have always competed with one another as investment destinations in Asia and, during the last few years, Hong Kong has always been better placed. "Hong Kong has 853 individuals, each worth more than US\$ 100 million, just over double the number in Singapore", according to a 2018 report from Credit Suisse. But in the last few months with the flight of capital, this situation would have radically changed.

If undiluted democracy is ensured in Hong Kong, the biggest collateral benefit to all countries will be freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, as well as the East China Sea. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue* in Singapore in May 2019, the French Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly stated that the French Navy would continue to sail in the corridors of the South China Sea more than twice a year. Germany, though very keen to reinforce this idea, is a little wary since it does not want to be seen to be annoying the PRC. [2]

PRC has, over the years, consolidated its stranglehold on the islands located in the South China Sea. British ships sailing close to Paracel Islands have irked PRC. The latter has its strategic presence in this zone for multiple reasons. It wants to justify its sovereignty and ownership claims for the sea wealth and fishing rights and deprive other neighbouring nations of similar claims. But more importantly, it desires to protect this zone so that any threat to either Mainland China, or any military assistance either to Hong Kong or Taiwan from China's detractors, can be easily thwarted. PRC is extremely wary that Taiwan may declare itself independent soon.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE CARRIE LAM GETS A STIFF WARNING FROM BEIJING

Speaking in Kathmandu on 12 Oct 2019 President Xi Jinping, referring to anti-PRC street protests said, "Anyone attempting to split China, in any part of the country will end in crushed bodies and scattered bones."

According to Xinhua, while the Chinese President was on a visit to Shanghai to inaugurate the Second China International Impto-Expo (CIIE), he told Carrie Lam that under her leadership the Hong Kong Special Administration Region government had made great efforts to stabilize and control the situation and improve social unrest. This favourable statement was made by Xi for two reasons. Firstly, to not discourage Lam in a difficult situation and thereby disturb her mental frame. Secondly, any public pronouncement by the Chinese President deriding Lam would have internationally cast Hong Kong's Chief Executive in dim light. But, more importantly, it would have been a

telling commentary on PRC's incapability and incompetence in administering Hong Kong under the "one country two systems" framework.

Just two days after Carrie Lam had met Xi Jinping, Premier Hang Zheng, who is also the State Council Cabinet Member in charge of Hong Kong Affairs and member of Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee, was highly critical of Lam's functioning. Premier Zheng told Lam "that she needed to enact the National Security Law for the territory as per Article 23 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which prohibits any act of treason; recession; sedition and subversion."

The communiqué of the recently concluded Fourth Plenum of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party indicates that President Xi Jinping plans to tighten his grip over Hong Kong, at any cost whatsoever.

The above decision of President Xi Jinping indicates two ominous signs, which are a) Mainland China will control and rule Hong Kong and Macau using all powers vested in it under the constitution of the Basic Law, and b) It will build and improve a legal system and an enforcement mechanism to defend national security in both the Special Administrative Regions. This, in effect, means that PRC has decided to renege upon the "one country two systems" framework enunciated by Deng Xiaoping.

RETALIATION IN RESPONSE TO HKHRDA

During the first week of December 2019, in the aftermath of the US enacting the HKHRDA, China has proscribed the entry of US Navy ships and aircraft to Hong Kong. Many NGO's including those from the US and others are also being stopped from functioning in Hong Kong. A prominent one, for example, is the Human Rights Watch.

It is now manifestly clear that the US is determined to lambast China, completely unmindful of the fact that such a stance could provoke the

latter to initiate some strong retaliation, which, indeed, is on the cards. In the first week of December 2019, the US House of Representatives passed the Uighur Human Rights Policy Act 2019. This legislation seeks to sanction the Chinese government officials, including the Xinjiang Communist Party of China Secretary Chen Quanguo. Though China deliberately conceals its atrocities against the Uighurs, a lot of information relating to maltreatment of this ethnic Muslim minority has come out in the open.

CONCLUSION

With the above legislation, taken together with other measures that the US has adopted, China perceives as hostile to its sovereignty and commercial interests. These measures include the US sanctions relating to Hong Kong and the adverse impact China is facing because of trade policies of the US concerning China. This scenario seems to set the stage for a massive clash between the two global giants.

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**THE SCO MECHANISMS FOR SECURITY
COOPERATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA**

BY

MANBHANJAN MEHER

The SCO has become one of the world's leading political, economic and security organisations. It considers international terrorism, national separatism and religious extremism as the main sources of threat to peace and stability in the region. India would like to utilise the SCO platform to advance its security interests and for boosting its outreach to the Central Asian region through trade and connectivity. Despite a common understanding of the "three evil forces", there remains a wide variance, specifically on cross-border terrorism, amongst SCO members on the one hand and India on the other. In such a situation, the Government of India finds it very difficult to explain to the other SCO member states regarding Pakistan's involvement in the separatist movement in Kashmir. Hence, only sharing of information within the framework of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is possible in the SCO, not a joint struggle against terror.

INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is "becoming a bearing structure for future world order"¹ since the last two decades, playing an important role in maintaining peace and stability, enhancing mutual trust and confidence in the Eurasian theatre. China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan founded the SCO in 2001, and

the membership was expanded in 2017 by including India and Pakistan as full members. Besides this, Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia have observer status while six other countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey are on board as dialogue partners.

Although the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) started as a low-profile "Shanghai Five" group on 26 April 1996, with the primary aim of resolving border disputes between China and the four former Soviet Republics, it later developed into one of the world's most influential organisations. The SCO has undergone an astonishing development process and evolved into a comprehensive regional organisation with vast influence since its inception in 2001. The "Shanghai Spirit" is considered as the secret of success of SCO's strong vitality and momentum of cooperation. The "Shanghai Spirit" is about mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and pursuit of common development among the SCO members.²

With the entry of India and Pakistan, "the SCO has become the largest regional structure in the world, covering 60 per cent of Eurasia's territory having a population of over 3.2 billion people, and SCO member states produce almost a quarter of global GDP."³ With these unique features, the SCO has become one of the world's leading political, economic and security organisations.

The SCO considers international terrorism, national separatism and religious extremism as the main sources of threat to peace, security and stability in the region. These issues concern all countries, irrespective of their level of socio-economic development, civilizational or cultural and religious affiliations. Cooperation in the domain of security has always been a priority area of SCO activity. Significant results have been achieved in the joint struggle against terrorism, separatism, extremism, in countering illegal drugs and weapons trafficking, and trans-boundary organized crime. The underlining goal of this organisation is to maintain peace and stability in the region.

It has been more than two years since India became a full member of SCO and it has made several positive contributions in all its activities. India's Permanent Representative in the UNO, Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin stated, "India values the cooperation in various fields under the SCO framework. Since joining the SCO in June 2017, India has actively engaged in enhancing the role of SCO at the international level."⁴ The first conference of Military Medicine for Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Member States was held in New Delhi on 12-13 September 2019. The conference was the first Military co-operation event hosted by India under the SCO Defence Co-operation Plan 2019-2020, after it became an SCO Member State in 2017.

India also hosted the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue (SCOJTEX)-2019 from 4-7 November 2019. The Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) SCOJTEX-2019 in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion the Home Minister stated, "Earthquakes have taken more than two lakh lives (200,000), which account for two-thirds of disaster-related mortality in SCO countries. In this background, this joint exercise will be very useful for improving collective preparedness and building a common understanding of internationally recognized procedures to co-ordinate post-earthquake responses."⁵ During the exercise, participants from SCO member countries shared preparations, coordination during the disaster and internationally recognized procedures during joint search and rescue exercises in a large urban earthquake environment.⁶ Additionally, the 10th Meeting of Heads of Authorities of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation dealing with prevention and elimination of Emergency Situations was held on 8 November 2019 in Delhi. For the first time after its admission into the grouping in 2017, India will host the 19th Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2020.

This article focuses on the evolution and mechanism of SCO for combating the "three evil forces". It is argued that India would be least benefited from SCO in the security sphere because of the presence of Pakistan, and the divergent perspectives within SCO members regarding

terrorism. This study is based on historical and analytical approaches. Data collected from primary and secondary sources has been used. There are a large number of documents available related to SCO regarding its structure and functioning. For the sake of clarity and better grasp of the material, available documents pertaining to SCO can be divided into two groups. The first group of resource includes documents issued by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The second group of sources include reports and speeches by the Head of Member States, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other reports.

EVOLUTION OF SCO'S APPROACH ON THE "THREE EVIL FORCES"

Over the period of its existence, the SCO has evolved through several stages of development and undergone significant changes. The "Shanghai Five" mechanism was born in April 1996 when the Republic of Kazakhstan, People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyzstan Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan held a summit meeting in Shanghai, China. The parties signed an agreement on strengthening mutual military confidence on border issues – the "Agreement on strengthening military confidence in Border Area" – and a year later, at the Moscow Summit of 1997, another agreement was signed – the "Agreement of Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas". The two inter-related agreements represented a deepening process and have laid a firm legal basis for mutual trust and common security among the five neighboring states.⁷

All members of the "Shanghai Five" have faced Islamic extremism and terrorism in one form or another, which often have links to fundamentalist organizations and separatist movements. Russia has been waging a war for many years against the Chechen separatists. In Tajikistan, radical Islamic opposition had provoked a long civil war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. In China, the extremists campaigning for separating the Xinjiang region from China committed several acts of terrorism causing deaths. Similarly, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are worried over the influx of radical Islamists who often hide among illegal immigrants that came from Chechnya, China's border areas and from Afghanistan.⁸ In August 1999, the "Shanghai Five" held its fourth summit

in Bishkek. The meeting of Head of States of the “Shanghai Five” on 25 August 1999 in Bishkek was a landmark event in the history of SCO. During the summit, they signed the Joint Declaration on Combating National Separatism, Religious Extremism, and Trans-border Crime. The joint declaration stipulated that “to effectively crackdown on international terrorism, illegal dealing in drugs and narcotics trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal immigration and other forms of cross-border crime is of significance. Therefore, the responsible departments of the five countries will adopt measures to launch practical cooperation including consultations and working out a program of joint action during the period of 1999-2000” (Bishkek Declaration, Bishkek, 25 August 1999).⁹

In the region, the forces of terrorism and extremism became increasingly active over time. Accordingly, it was necessary to counter the threat, concentrating on the general possibilities available. The Shanghai Five developed into Six in 2001 with Uzbekistan joining the grouping. Subsequently, the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was announced on 15 June 2001, at a summit of the Heads of States of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

DEFINING THE CONCEPTS OF “THREE EVILS” BY THE SCO

The conceptualisation of the “three evil forces” by the SCO was not accidental. It occurred in response to the changing global reality and its objective was to meet the needs of its members. Cracking down on ethnic separatism, religious extremism and international terrorism, and combating drug trafficking and other transnational crimes provided a new space, agenda and dynamics for the “Shanghai Five” and also gave a new foundation for expanding security cooperation. Anti-terrorism and anti-separatism were the key driving forces behind the establishment of SCO. Two fundamental documents were signed on 15 June 2001 – the declaration and the convention. The second document – the Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism – laid the foundation for cooperation amongst the members. In the 2001 convention, the SCO member states defined the notion

of extremism for the first time. The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism is of special interest because it has defined “the three evils”. For instance, Article 1 of the Convention¹⁰ reads as:

1. For the purposes of this convention, the terms used in it shall have the following meaning:
 - 1) “Terrorism” means:
 - a) Any act recognised as an offence in one of the treaties listed in the Annex to this Convention (hereinafter referred to as “the Annex”) and as defined in this treaty;
 - b) Other acts intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict or to cause major damage to any material facility, as well as to organise, plan, aid, and abet such an act, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, violate public security or to compel public authorities or an international organisation to do or to abstain from doing any act, and prosecuted in accordance with the national laws of the Parties;
 - 2) “Separatism” means any act intended to violate territorial integrity of a State including by annexation of any part of its territory or to disintegrate a State, committed in a violent manner, as well as planning and preparing, and abetting such act, and subject to criminal prosecuting in accordance with the national laws of the Parties;
 - 3) “Extremism” is an act aimed at seizing or keeping power through the use of violence or changing violently the constitutional regime of a State, as well as a violent encroachment upon public security, including organisation, for the above purpose, of illegal armed formations and participation in them, criminally prosecuted in conformity with the national laws of the Parties.
2. This Article shall not affect any international treaty or any national law of the Parties, provides or may provide for a broader application of the term used in this Article.

The terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' are highly contested concepts, having diverse academic and policy definitions. Uzbek scholar Tolipov noted, "Despite the pertinent international conventions, the world community has not coined a commonly accepted definition of terrorism and made it a geopolitical instrument. Today, there are attempts to create an international Convention Combating Terrorism designed to contain a unified definition. In this way, the SCO convention has taken a step forward".¹¹ Adopted less than two months before the events of 11 September 2001, this convention is a document of historic importance. Rejecting all hypocrisy and double standards, the convention categorically declared "Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism" as a "threat to international peace and security". The Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Muraleedharan in September 2019 stated, "We welcome the clarity shown by SCO on terrorism from its inception. We are determined to strengthen cooperation within the SCO framework for comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security."¹² It is important to note that the SCO member states were the first international regional organisation to issue such a document, based on consensus.

ESTABLISHMENT OF RATS

To provide institutional and legal support for its counterterrorism activities and to implement the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism (signed in 2001), the SCO established the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in 2002. Article 8 of the Declaration (2001) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation states that "the SCO sets special store by and makes all necessary efforts to ensure regional security. The member states will cooperate closely to implement the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, including setting up an Anti-terrorist Centre of the SCO in Bishkek. Moreover, relevant multilateral cooperation documents will be formulated to restrain illegal weapons and narcotics smuggling, illegal immigration and other criminal activities" (Declaration on Establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 15 June 2001).¹³

The SCO Charter outlined the basic aims and tasks of the organisation and determined the mechanisms allowing the concerned ministries

and departments to effectively coordinate their work. Two important decisions were made in the Moscow summit of the SCO in May 2003 - on the SCO Secretariat to be set up in Shanghai and on the transfer of RATS Headquarters from Bishkek to Tashkent. Thereafter, during the Tashkent summit in June 2004, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was inaugurated.

RATS is a permanent institutional arrangement to enhance coordination and cooperation of the special services of SCO member countries in fighting terrorism. The then Director of the Executive Committee of RATS SCO, Giyosov D.F noted that "In the format of the SCO RATS, a mechanism has been created and is effectively functioning to monitor and promptly respond to new challenges and threats to the security of SCO member states. Permanent expert groups of competent bodies of the SCO member states have been created, meetings of which are held on a planned basis."¹⁴ The RATS is led by a council composed of officials from anti-terrorist organisations of the member states. Its main tasks and duties are as follows:¹⁵

1. Maintaining working relations with competent institutions of the member states and international organisations tackling issues of fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism;
2. Assistance in interaction among the member states in preparation and staging of counter-terrorism exercises at the request of concerned member states, preparation and conduct of search operations and other activities in the field of fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism;
3. Joint drafting of international legal documents concerning the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism;
4. Gathering and analysis of information coming to the RATS from the member states, formation and filling of RATS data bank;
5. Joint formation of a system of effective response to global challenges and threats;
6. Preparation and holding of scientific conferences and workshops, assistance in sharing experience in the field of fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism.

During the Qingdao summit, SCO member states approved a cooperation program for combating terrorism, separatism and extremism for the period 2019-2021. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) conducts practical work and achieves significant results in its efforts to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism. Terrorist activity on the territory of SCO member states has decreased, which confirms the success of practical efforts in enhancing counterterrorism mechanisms. The SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov, while answering questions of the InfoSHOS portal, quantified that "I can cite statistics that will be more convincing. In 2013-2017, over 600 terrorist crimes were thwarted during the planning phase, over 500 terrorist training camps were liquidated, and the activity of over 2,000 members of international terrorist organisations was disrupted. The authorities confiscated over 1,000 improvised explosive devices, 50 tons of explosives, 10,000 small firearms and over one million rounds of ammunition."¹⁶

It has been proposed to establish the new centre based on the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and include the SCO Anti-Drug Centre in Dushanbe, which is being set up on Tajikistan's initiative, as one of its divisions.¹⁷ The member states believe that illegal cultivation, production, trafficking, sale and distribution of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors pose a serious threat to the stability, security, health and well-being of the people in the region.

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND PEACE MISSION OF SCO

The legal framework for the cooperation of SCO Member States in counteracting extremism was based on two documents – the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of 15 June 2001; and the Concept of Cooperation Between SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of 5 July 2005. The latter stipulated the main goals, objectives, guidelines, areas and forms of cooperation in combating the "three evils." Many years have passed since the adoption of the aforementioned conventions, and the nature and scope of extremism has since changed. Therefore, the 2017

convention, signed during the Astana summit, maintains the continuity of the two previous documents, aims at improving the mechanism to counteract extremism in the SCO space, expands the provisions of the SCO Development Strategy until 2025, and coincides with the main themes and issues covered by the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, headquartered in Tashkent, has been playing an instrumental role in knitting SCO member states together to fight against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism through the exchange of information. Between 2002 and 2017, the SCO launched 14 joint military exercises for combatting the three evil forces. In October 2002, the first bilateral anti-terrorist exercise was held with the participation of China and Kyrgyzstan, within the framework of the SCO, in the Chinese-Kyrgyz border area. Thereafter, these military exercises have been conducted annually.

The SCO Peace Mission 2018 joint military counter-terrorism command post exercise took place on 22-29 August 2019 at the Cherbarkulsky Training Ground in Chelyabinsk Oblast, in the Central Military District on Russia's border with Kazakhstan. The manoeuvres involved military command and control units, ground and air forces of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, India and Pakistan. Observers at the drills represented Uzbekistan. The exercise was aimed at enhancing cooperation between member states to deal with the growing threat of terrorism and extremism. The Indian contingent of 200 personnel was primarily composed of troops from infantry and affiliated arms and services, along with the Indian Air Force. The Indian contingent had been put through a strenuous training schedule, which included firing, heliborne operations, combat conditioning, tactical operations and house intervention drills.¹⁸ The Press Statement released by the Ministry of Defence (India) noted that "India participated for the first time, the focus was on conduct of counter terrorist operations in a multinational joint service environment. The exercise provided an opportunity to armies of all nations for greater cultural understanding, sharing experiences and strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. Overall, SCO Peace Mission Exercise will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and respect amongst SCO member nations in future."¹⁹

Besides this, Uzbekistan's proposal of drawing up a list of banned terrorist, separatist and extremist organisations and lists of persons wanted for specified crimes was acknowledged by other member states through the concrete results of this interaction. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in accordance with the decisions of the RATS SCO Council, approved and activated the unified investigative register of persons declared by the special services and law enforcement agencies of the SCO member states for committing, or suspected of committing crimes of a terrorist, separatist or extremist character (hereinafter called as "Register"). This includes more than 3,000 individuals and a "List" of terrorist, separatist and extremist organisations, comprising more than 100 in number, whose activities are banned on the territories of the SCO member states. These include the "Islamic State", "Jebhat an Nusra", "Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkestan", "Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami", "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan", "Ansarullah", etc (RATS of SCO, 18 August 2017). The List and the Register are systematically updated based on information and decisions of the judicial bodies of the SCO member states adopted by their national legislation.²⁰

To combat regional terrorism and extremism, strong defence cooperation between the SCO member countries is essential. India participated for the first time at the 15th SCO Defence Ministers Meeting on 24 April 2018, held at Beijing, China. The then Defence Minister of India Smt Sitharaman stated, "International terrorism today posed the most serious threat to our peaceful societies. Terrorism threatens to derail our developmental aspirations and create sustained instability both within our countries and across national borders." She called upon the member countries to closely coordinate and adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism. She contended that arguments of political convenience to provide an alibi for terrorist groups or organisations that support terrorism through material support or otherwise are no longer tolerable. Indeed, as the world has now realized, there are no good terrorists.²¹ The Defence Ministers of Russia, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan discussed topical security issues at the meeting, as well as joint measures to consolidate efforts to respond to threats in SCO's area of responsibility.

The Moscow Declaration in 2003 specifically pointed out that SCO countries had decided to cooperate with the Counterterrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Head of the Member States of SCO agreed that recognizing the important role of the UN and UNSC in dealing with major international issues was of fundamental importance. This stated, "The Heads of States note that recognition of the important role of the United Nations and the UN Security Council in addressing major international problems is of fundamental importance."²²

On 30 August 2019, the UN General Assembly approved by consensus a resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation." The resolution was co-authored by the SCO member states including Russia, India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as by Azerbaijan, Qatar, Sudan and Sri Lanka.²³ It also emphasised on the importance of broadening the dialogue, cooperation and coordination between the UN and the SCO.

SECURITY IS INDIA'S TOP PRIORITY

When the "Shanghai Five" converted into SCO in 2001 and set for itself new goals of security and countering terrorism, India had expressed a strong interest in becoming a part of the initiative. India has been a victim of terrorism since the past three decades, and the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir has suffered death and destruction due to cross-border terrorism and religious extremism.²⁴

Combating the "Three Evils" – terrorism, separatism and extremism – has been the core agenda of SCO and which would be very useful in the Indian context. Regular participation in the meetings of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) and joint military exercises might provide a new level of intelligence sharing while enhancing counter-terrorism strategies to fight terror.²⁵ This aspect was further elaborated by the Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary (Eurasia), G V Srinivas during a press conference. He said, "There's little possibility of India

staying out of such an exercise. We hope to benefit from RATS joint exercises against terrorism and also its data bank on terrorists.”²⁶ Correspondingly, the then External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj during the Extraordinary Meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of SCO Member Countries on 21 September 2017 stated, “We are determined to consistently strengthen cooperation within the SCO framework and to work together to seek comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security. In this regard, commitment towards continued discussion on regional security architecture in the region under the framework of the SCO and SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is of great significance. It will contribute to achieving long-term development and common prosperity of the region.”²⁷

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO gives an opportunity to all member countries to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism, which poses a serious threat to all members. The SCO has already banned the Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan) during its meeting in Bishkek in 2007.²⁸ India should also insist on the SCO member states to include Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) in the “List of Banned Organisations in SCO Territory”, which would be more useful for India in fighting terrorism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, India also emphasised for the SCO member states’ commitment to tackle all sources, techniques and channels of terrorist financing. Academician Swaran Singh (Jawaharlal Nehru University) elucidates that “India would like SCO to expand its focus from its current limited bandwidth of just countering terrorists and terrorist actions to also identifying states that provide sanctuaries, support and finance terrorists outfits.”²⁹

It is not yet clear whether India has made any reservations on multilateral agreements signed regarding Kashmir and SCO’s anti-terrorism cooperation at the time of its admission to the group. India’s characterisation of terrorism is different from the definition of RATS under SCO. For other SCO member states, terrorism coincides with regime destabilisation from the “three evil forces”, whereas for India it is related to state-sponsored cross-border terrorism. India considers that Pakistan supports anti-India terrorist groups on its soil. For instance,

on 14 February 2019, Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), an UN-designated terrorist organisation, attacked a bus carrying the Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. The attack killed 40 CRPF officers. The Government of India accused Pakistan of supporting terrorists who allegedly carry out raids on Indian territory from Pakistan-based camps. Pakistan's hostile policy towards India remains unchanged and despite its internal problems, it continues to sponsor terrorism across the border as a state policy.

India and Pakistan have engaged in major conflicts and still have various unresolved issues, including Kashmir. India's traditional position on this matter is that its relationship with Pakistan is a bilateral matter. SCO members aren't allowed to bring their bilateral disputes into this multilateral framework so none of them will probably directly address the Kashmir issue. It would be very difficult for the Indian Government to convince the other SCO member states regarding Pakistan's involvement in the separatist movement in Kashmir. As one of the Russian scholars even suggested that "any direct interference in the Kashmir issue should be avoided from the start."³⁰ He further warned that failing to assist in managing the relationship between India and Pakistan carries a serious risk for the entire SCO project. Similarly, others argue, "Hardly anyone within the SCO would like to see the Kashmir issue being brought to the table. But it is no secret that Pakistan has long been insisting on its internationalization."³¹ India has also clarified from the very beginning that there is no role for third-party mediation in the India-Pakistan conflict.

INDIA TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCO CHARTER

Both India and Pakistan are now part of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure under the SCO. There are apprehensions about the cooperation between India and Pakistan in the field of counter-terrorism because both states have a long tradition of suspicion and rivalry on various issues including Kashmir.

In contrast, by joining the SCO, India and Pakistan have become de-facto partners in the fight against terrorism and bringing peace to the

region. To become a member of the SCO, India has already signed the necessary documents and pledged to follow the SCO charter and convention. One of the most important documents is the "Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation", which was adopted in St Petersburg at the session of the Council of the Heads of the SCO Member States on 7 June 2002. The Charter stipulates many commitments concerning 'maintenance of peace and enhancing security and confidence in the region', and on traditional areas of security collaboration with international organisations including through joint exercises. For instance, *Article 1* of the Charter states that "The main SCO goals and tasks shall be: strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good-neighbourliness between the member States; development of multifaceted cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region and promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order; jointly combating terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, fighting against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of transnational criminal activity, and also illegal migration."³²

The Shanghai Charter specifically spells out a commitment to confidence building in military fields, and statements from the group have mentioned a combined effort to ensure regional peace, including through joint exercises among member states. The SCO then Secretary-General Rashid Alimov, on the occasion of the Academic Symposium dedicated to the 15th Anniversary of adoption of the SCO Charter, held in Beijing, on 24 March 2017 stated that "The Organisation strictly follows the principles outlined in the SCO Charter including the SCO's undirectedness against other states and international organisations; actively develops contacts and cooperation with international and regional organisations, primarily with the UN and its specialized agencies."³³ This indicates that Pakistan and India are expected to mend their ties and uphold the spirit of the SCO.

Moreover, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying in Beijing, on 1 June 2017, said that "We sincerely hope that after their admission, India and Pakistan will act in strict accordance with the SCO Charter and the Treaty on Long-term Good-neighbourliness, Friendship

and Cooperation, work for the shared goal, conduct friendly cooperation, uphold the Shanghai spirit, improve their relations and add fresh impetus to the development of the SCO.”³⁴ Similarly, it was pointed out by Special SCO envoy of the Russian President, Bakhtiyor Khakimov, on 6 June 2017 “If a candidate does not meet at least one requirement, the decision on starting the accession procedure cannot be made. The Policy clearly defines all conditions that candidates have to meet. This is what India and Pakistan have done. In their official documents and applications, New Delhi and Islamabad confirmed that they had timely and unconditionally, without any exceptions, joined the rules of the Organisation mandatory for all member states and also all other documents (there are about 30 of them).”³⁵ Hence, both India and Pakistan will have to act in strict accordance with the SCO Charter and the Treaty on Long-term Good-neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation, work for the shared goal and conduct friendly cooperation among member states.

The unpromising attitude and behaviour between India and Pakistan is a big challenge for the organisation. As per the charter, differences and confrontations should be avoided under the SCO. The SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov, during the news conference at the SCO Secretariat on 20 March 2019, qualified that “One of the vital commitments is to abstain from bringing bilateral contradictions and disputes into the SCO because it does not settle disputed bilateral issues, be they related to borders, water or anything else in relations between individual SCO member states. These issues must and are being resolved through bilateral consultations and dialogue, goodwill and reasonable compromises. Also, the commitment to unconditionally and consistently combat terrorism, separatism and extremism is a major condition for taking part in multifaceted cooperation within the SCO framework. Otherwise, the participation of these two states in SCO activities would be impossible.”³⁶ Hence, the SCO Charter holds special meaning for Pakistan and India because of its unique clauses.

Against this backdrop, India has little to gain in this context because the member states will avoid mediating on bilateral disputes (Kashmir). Consequently, only sharing of information within the framework of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is possible in the SCO but

not a joint struggle against terror. It is still undefined to what extent India will be able to utilise the SCO platform to advance its security and economic interests, in a situation where Chinese influence within the organisation and Beijing's tilt towards Pakistan remains foremost.

PROSPECTS FOR TRADE AND CONNECTIVITY

India has an opportunity for tremendous economic gains by being a part of SCO. The importance of SCO lies in the fact that it can assist and improve India's energy security by building various bilateral and regional transport linkages. Central Asia is an important region for India for its significant reserves of oil and natural gas and its location in the centre of Eurasia. Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin, Permanent Representative of India in UN during an event on "Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline" on 18 July 2018 stated, "India today represents the fastest growing large economy. Our energy requirements are therefore substantial and growing rapidly. It is estimated that our energy consumption is growing by 4.2 per cent annually, the fastest among all major economies of the world. In short, it is estimated that between 2016 and 2040 India will be largest contributor to global demand growth with about 30 per cent of the global energy growth needs stemming from India's requirements."³⁷ The Central Asian Region (CAR) accounts for around 10 per cent of the global oil and energy supplies.

Due to lack of direct geographical access, the imported oil and gas from the CAR has to pass through the territory of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan and the hostility of the Pakistani regime may jeopardise the supply line to India. At the same time, India is also developing an alternate connectivity route involving the Chabahar Port project in Iran, in the hope that it would grant land access to Afghanistan and CAR, bypassing Pakistan. This project has enormous economic and strategic value for India and Iran together, for contributing towards the economic development and political stability of Afghanistan. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, during the Extraordinary Meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of SCO Member on 21 September 2017, highlighted that "Connectivity with SCO countries is India's priority.

We want connectivity to pave the way for cooperation and trust between our societies. For this, respect for sovereignty is essential. Inclusivity, transparency and sustainability are imperative. Our involvement with the International North-South Transport Corridor and the Chabahar Agreement and our decision to join the Ashgabat Agreement are all relevant.”³⁸

On 1 February 2018 the Government of India joined the Ashgabat agreement, which envisages the establishment of an international transport and transit corridor linking Central Asia with the Persian Gulf. Accession to the Agreement would diversify India's connectivity options with Central Asia and have a positive influence on India's trade and commercial ties with the region.³⁹ Connectivity is important for India's Connect Central Asia policy. If these projects are implemented successfully, India would undeniably be benefiting from SCO with its immense potential.

CONCLUSION

India became a full-fledged member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at the Astana Summit on 8-9 June 2017. This admission came at a time when India opposed the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative, mainly because of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), which is a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. Besides India, the other members of the SCO welcomed the Chinese-led One Belt and One Road initiative (OBOR) project.

SCO's role in promoting regional cooperation and coordination in fighting the three evil forces of terrorism, extremism and separatism has won widespread recognition. The SCO provides institutionalized mechanisms for improving counter-terrorism cooperation among member states amidst the rise of religious fundamentalism and infiltration of extremist groups in the Eurasian space. SCO can play an important role because Russia, China and India, the three major powers in the SCO are all victims of terror in one form or the other. SCO also facilitates cooperation in trade, economy, investment and finance within the bloc. However, it

is still uncertain to what extent India will be able to utilise the SCO platform to advance its security and economic interests because of divergent positions between India and the other members.

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BOOK REVIEW: REMINISCING THE BATTLE OF REZANG LA

13 Kumaon became the first pure Ahir Battalion of the Kumaon Regiment prior to the 1962 Sino-Indian War. With no such precedent, there were misgivings in some quarters. However, these were soon laid to rest when the Battalion faced its baptism by fire at Chushul in the 1962 Sino-Indian War and covered itself with glory. The gallant men of C Company of the Battalion under their redoubtable Company Commander, Late Major Shaitan Singh, PVC put up a fight at Rezang La, the like of which was never fought by any Unit in the Indian Army, the nearest example perhaps being 'The Battle of Saragarhi' - both depicting the irony that the greatest acts of chivalry, bravery and sacrifice occur against the heaviest odds. Out of the 124 brave hearts, 120 were martyred, pitched against overwhelming hordes of 4000-5000 Chinese soldiers who had superior weapons and logistic support.

Since the 1962 Sino-Indian War has not been de-classified, many authors' accounts of the 'Battle of Rezang La' are factually incorrect as they lack firsthand knowledge of the troops, the terrain and the conduct of the Battle. Col Bhatia was commissioned into 13 Kumaon, then located at Darbuk - halfway between Leh and Chushul - after the battle of Rezang La. He visited Chushul on the first anniversary of the Battle and interacted with the few survivors. To further authenticate the facts, he also discussed the epic Battle with the Late Lt Gen DD Saklani, PVSM, AVSM who was the Adjutant of 13 Kumaon during the war and Maj (later Brig) Raghunath V Jatar (Retd), who was deployed at Mugger Hill on that fateful night. He had access to the Battalion's War Diary and rare photographs, maps and sketches of that period. According to the author, 'I hope this book written 'straight from the heart' of the soldier, will motivate our armed forces, youth and posterity. Reading the

book will leaving you humming 'Bedu Pako Reminiscing Rezang La' or 'Attarah November Basath Ko' synergizing your thrill while absorbing the soul-stirring inscription on the Chushul Memorial constructed to commemorate the martyrs who fought against heavy odds on 18 November 1962, replicating the remarkable story of a valiant last stand of 12 September 1897 at the Battle of Saragarhi, which would reverberate around forever.

'Will you stand with me?
Fight and die if need be?
Hold against the hordes until the last man falls?
Will you sacrifice all you have gained in life?
Reject your comfort for a greater end?
Stand together never waiver,
Brave in the face of overwhelming odds,
For our future and for freedom,
We unite in liberty, or death'.

~~ From When Myth and History Merged with Mystery
Matti Frost

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The Forum was conceived and will remain dedicated to a better understanding of the multi-dimensional relevance of security on national, regional as well as global issues.

OBJECTIVE

Its main objectives is to create and harmonise the means to carry out a dedicated, rigorous and independent research and analysis of national security policies and strategic issues of relevance to India with a view to providing constructive inputs for policy development, promoting national security and strategic studies as an intellectual discipline, and increase general awareness on issues impinging on formulation and implementation of national security strategies through the following instruments:

- Provide a non-governmental forum to assimilate strategic issues from a wide range of specialist fields and to synthesise comprehensive solutions for a stable security environment in the South Asia-Asia Pacific region.
- Initiate, co-ordinate and promote studies related to national security and strategy and formulation of national security strategies.
- Organise and facilitate the holding of seminars, symposia, lectures on national security policies and strategic issues concerning the region in general and India in particular.
- Assist in the development of post graduate research and teaching on Asia Pacific strategic affairs and national security strategy related issues.
- Promote awareness and informed public debate on strategic and national security issues.
- Publish research papers put together by members and associates of the forum and independent intellectuals. Publication would be in form of a tri-annual journal, research papers and books.
- Provide constructive inputs for policy development to parliamentarians, ministries, public and private sector enterprises and academic institutions on strategic and national security related issues.
- Provide consultancy services to the defence industrial establishment in India and assist them in their marketing drive by organizing periodic defence exhibitions.
- Establish and award stipendiary and non-stipendiary fellowships.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights how cultural differences can influence the interpretation of data and the design of the study. The author emphasizes the need for researchers to be sensitive to these differences and to adapt their methods accordingly.

The second part of the paper focuses on the challenges of conducting research in a multicultural environment. It discusses the difficulties of finding a common ground between different cultural perspectives and the potential for bias in the research process. The author suggests that researchers should strive for transparency and honesty in their reporting of findings.

The third part of the paper explores the role of the researcher in a multicultural setting. It discusses the importance of building trust and rapport with the participants and the need for the researcher to be open to learning from the participants. The author suggests that researchers should view themselves as learners rather than as experts.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the ethical considerations of research in a multicultural environment. It highlights the need for researchers to be aware of the potential for harm to the participants and to take steps to minimize this harm. The author suggests that researchers should consult with the participants and the community to ensure that the research is ethical and respectful.

The fifth part of the paper discusses the implications of the research for practice. It suggests that the findings of the research can be used to inform the development of policies and programs that are more culturally sensitive and effective. The author suggests that researchers should work closely with the community to ensure that the research is relevant and useful.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research and the need for researchers to be sensitive to cultural differences. It suggests that researchers should strive for transparency and honesty in their reporting of findings and that they should view themselves as learners rather than as experts. The paper also discusses the ethical considerations of research in a multicultural environment and the implications of the research for practice.