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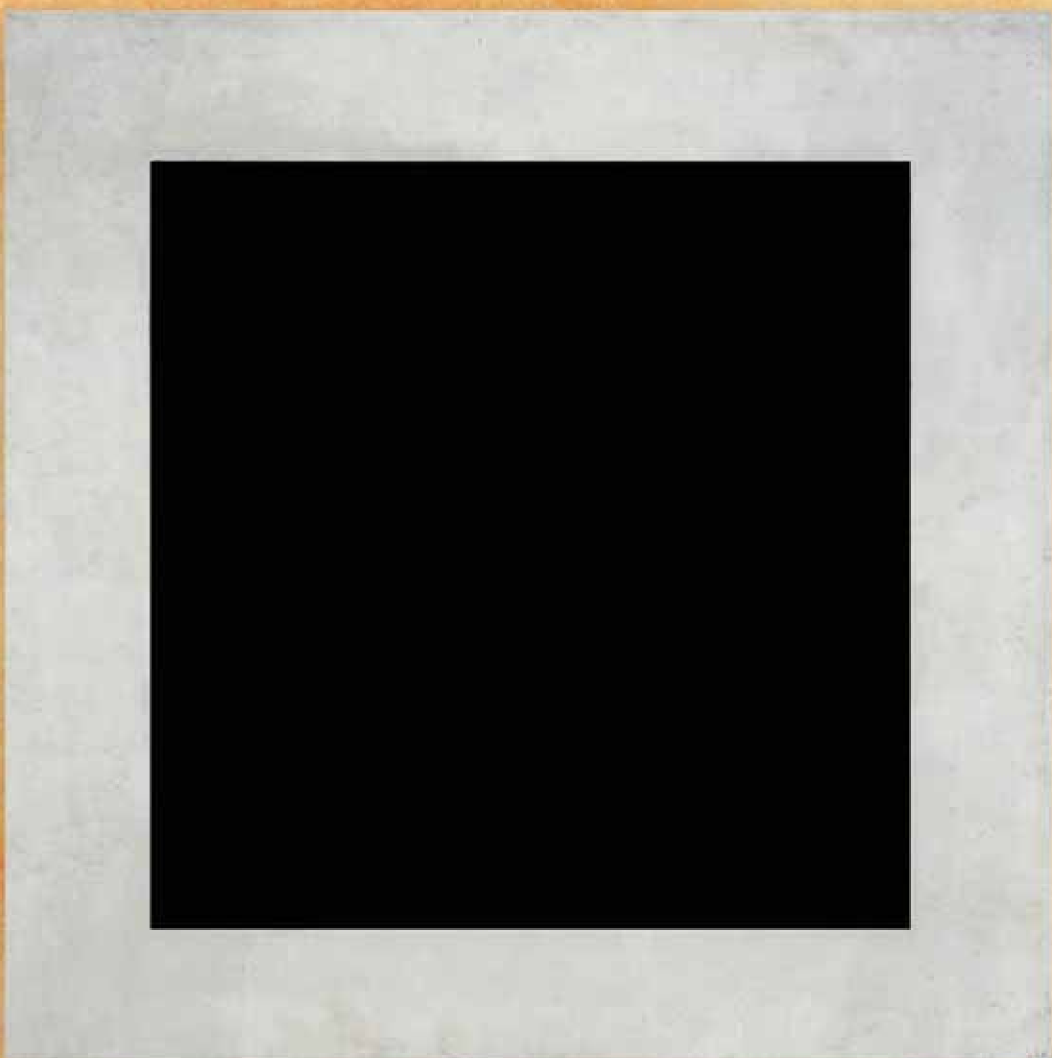
LIVING IN INTERESTING TIMES



VISITOR'S BOOK

FOREIGN MINISTER OF UAE CALLS ON PM MODI

His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates paid an official visit to India from July 7-9, 2019. During the visit, Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah met with the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar on 8 July, 2019, who hosted a dinner in his honour. The UAE Foreign Minister also called on Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 9 July 2019. In talks between EAM and H.H. Sheikh Abdullah, bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest were discussed. The visit of the Foreign Minister of the UAE provided an opportunity to both sides to constructively build on the vision of the comprehensive strategic partnership and to broaden cooperation in various sectors of bilateral relations.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of UAE, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan meeting the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, in New Delhi on July 09, 2019.

VISIT OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER TO MALDIVES

Prime Minister meets Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of Maldives in Male (June 08, 2019)

Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, was on a State Visit to the Maldives from 8 to 9 June 2019, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Maldives H.E. Mr Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. This was PM Modi's first overseas visit after taking oath of office for a second term, on 30 May 2019. After a ceremonial welcome in Malé, President Solih and PM Modi held one-on-one talks followed by delegation level talks on 8 June 2019 in a warm, cordial and friendly atmosphere. The two leaders reiterated their strong commitment to further strengthening and invigorating the traditionally strong and friendly relations between India and the Maldives, nurtured by geographical contiguity, ethnic, historical, socio-economic and cultural ties between the peoples of the two countries. They also reiterated an abiding faith in, and commitment to democracy, development and peaceful co-existence. President Solih expressed, on behalf of the people of Maldives, his deep appreciation at the friendly and special gesture demonstrated by PM Modi in choosing Maldives as his first overseas destination during his second term in office.

Publisher's Note

"Riven with tensions, Europe is in for a stormy and fractious autumn. Angela Merkel has the shakes. Emmanuel Macron has the collywobbles. And still, Europe has no idea who will be in charge as it contemplates a stormy autumn strewn with political booby traps. In Britain, the Brexit deadline of 31 October is the only date that matters. But the EU, fragmented, disputatious and wounded to an extent unusual even by its fractious standards, is taking one day at a time," writes Simon Tisdall - a columnist for The Guardian newspaper.

The trade war between the United States and China has been intensifying with Trump intimidating to raise tariffs on all Chinese imports and declaring a national emergency shutting Huawei out of the U.S. market. Experts say concerns over relations between the United States and China are causing ambiguity for several companies directly or indirectly involved in trade between the world's two largest economies.

France is all geared up for G7. The country took up its Presidency in January 2019 with the key theme of combating inequality. G7 Summit will bring together the Heads of State and Government from the seven countries in Biarritz from 24 to 26 August 2019.

Now, what is the state of the BRICS economies? Brazil has taken the rotating presidency of this group. For the third time, Brazil will host a BRICS Summit which is scheduled for November 13 and 14 in Brasilia. President Jair Bolsonaro wants Brazil to be great as Trump wants America to be great. Even during Bolsonaro's campaign period, he reiterated that his foreign policy would be changed from his precursor.

One cannot overlook the potential of the Quad. In late 2017, the resurgence of a notion over a decade old - the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue - created a flood of debate and anticipation across the world. The Quad, as it is usually mentioned as - or, more specifically, Quad 2.0, as this is its second life - is an informal rendezvous between four of the world's major democracies: the US, Japan, Australia and India. Quad 2.0, like Quad 1.0, is a debatable yet significant idea that has survived the test of time. It's controversial because it's perceived to be a way of containing China, which makes it unpopular among many of those who believe that China can't be controlled.

In the African continent, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and Benin's President Patrice Talon signed a landmark agreement ahead of the accord's official launch at the African Union (AU) summit in Niger. Moussa Faki, AU Commission Chairman dubbed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) deal a "historic" moment. There was spontaneous appreciation as Africa's largest economy Nigeria signed up to a deal that experts say could provide far-reaching benefits.

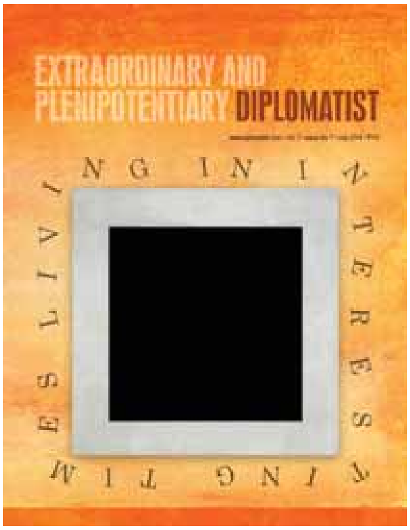
Back home, the Indian Prime Minister returns to power, his victory feels like déjà vu. Narendra Modi's landslide victory in India's general election marks the first time in nearly 50 years that an Indian government has returned to power with an absolute majority and a larger mandate for a second consecutive term.

While the drama and sportsmanship of the Cricket World Cup seized the world's attention for several weeks, the battle of 2019 continues. Globalisation has changed the international business panorama; businesses now function in different nations, deal with multiple authorities, involve in negotiation and face increasing geopolitical risks and pressure. Can diplomacy benefit business? The answer is yes.

I'm pleased to announce that in association with ASSOCHAM – one of India's oldest and apex chamber, a new initiative titled "ASSOCHAM Diplomacy to Business Initiative" will feature in The Diplomatist Magazine.

Robert Frost rightly said, "An idea is a feat of association." Readers will get the best of both worlds.

Linda Brady Hawke
Publisher



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LIVING IN INTER

Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square*, 1915

RESTING TIMES

BY DR. **SUNIL K. SUKUMARAN***

I am glad we are "living in interesting times," courtesy Modi 1.0 and now Modi 2.0. This often used expression of wishing someone to "live in interesting times" purportedly is a translation of some apocryphal Chinese curse; yes! you read that right: a curse! So oft-used it is that perhaps the most influential art exhibition in the world, the Venice Biennale Arte 2019 is themed "May You Live In Interesting Times."

Why a curse you may very well ask? Well, apparently uninteresting times are a time of stability and strength, and peace and harmony. Hence interesting would be the converse. Interestingly, there have been uninteresting times for decades if not centuries during various reigns and regimes of despotism and feudalism when the common folk or the proletariat hung in there; neither gung-ho nor "interesting," yet not content and far from happy. Are those the uninteresting times we should aspire for?

Narendra Modi has made India more interesting. And interesting is good; an uninteresting acceptance of a languid state of ennui is highly undesirable and unacceptable.

I thought the Venice Arte Biennale's title for this year about living in interesting times was at best uninspiring. Of course, art needs to be interesting, but it would thrive more in uninteresting times if we were to believe in the curse. Why would one bother with art in interesting times? Maybe, Ralph Rugoff the current curator of the Exhibition has got it right: interesting times are good and not a curse after all.

Great art needs to inspire awe and be "interesting." Art for shock has also been around for ages: Serrano's *Immersion (Piss Christ)* is regarded among one of the seminal works of "shock art." However, I love my art to inspire awe, not induce shock. Who can ever forget Malevich's *Black Square* when in that decisive, apocalyptic moment with a few brushstrokes on his previously used canvas he obliterated any pictorial illusion whatsoever of three dimensions, thereby banishing recessive spaces and modelled forms of post-Renaissance art, the naturalistic light and colour of Impressionism, and the fleeting glimpses of the objective world. The genius lies not merely in the simplicity or literalness of the black square, but more so in the stupendous discovery that led to its creation, the purgatory; it was cataclysmal. In one astonishing moment of intuition, with that epiphanic masterstroke, Malevich severed all ties with the past; he trashed all values held sacred up till then. Malevich's work was literally and metaphorically the ending and beginning of painting; it sounded the death knell for the old and became the harbinger of the new. The square is not a subconscious form. It is the creation of intuitive reason, the face of the new Art. The square is the *Living*. Malevich called it the "zero point of painting." He had reduced everything to the "zero of form" and transformed himself and emerged from nothing to creation. Modi walks a similar path.

Satiety agitates, placidity cogitates, and art invigorates. Art sows and reaps for the soul and not the body. The body needs to survive while a lifeless soul may need sustenance from an artist or perhaps even God. For civilizations to thrive, survivability is a prerequisite followed by stability in spirit and life; Darwinian though it may sound, it is a given. Those who decry Modi as a parvenu reek of pusillanimity, and need a lesson in art and history: it is fine to be a "chaiwalla" (tea-seller) and yet be anointed as "chowkidar" (guard*ian*). His inalienable right, which no opposition or detractor can expunge or besmirch despite puerile outbursts from the scion, the debutante, and their statesmen. Modi's 2019 mandate is exemplary of that fact. Some of the greatest artists and leaders and thinkers and philosophers that the world has ever known were not lineage-rich. Apathy and tyranny are two sides of a perfidious coin. Revolutions and rebellions are not an outcome of interesting but of uninteresting times: of utter disdain for dynastic regimes with tyrannical apathy for the masses; the uprisings in the resolute belief that the "common" strife would lead to interesting times. Art and Life are ineluctably entwined whether one is a proponent of ancient mimesis or modern anti-mimesis. Malevich chose Black; Modi chose Saffron. Both realised, symbolically, of course, their colours to be the ultimate fullness, their individual colours that would give birth to light and hope in Art and Life, respectively. It is said that change is the only constant. We all seek rapid change, but Modi did state that our great nation is akin to a heavy goods locomotive and not a two wheeled scooter; turning it in the right direction would take time. We live in hope and with faith. Modi 2.0 is a triumphant victory of faith for kind, and a reaffirmation of the indomitable and ever puissant Bharatiya spirit. May Modi's era provide succour for body and mind; the artists can do the rest for the soul. Modi will be the intuitive face of the living and the reason of hope, the very hope we breathe and believe. All Bharatiyas need benevolence and beneficence that we were bereft of in the past from a leader who effects effective governance: I truly am glad that we are "living in interesting times," courtesy Modi 1.0 and now Modi 2.0. ■

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MODI 2.0

BHARATA OVER INDIA

BY **SUDHIR K SINGH***

Posterity may well look upon the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as one which set in motion the transformation of India into Bharat, in right earnest. Though the so called Nehruvian consensus represented by the three pillars of secularism, socialism and non-alignment had long been under siege over the last three decades, the dynastic and effete Congress had somehow managed to keep alive the notion, howsoever tenuous, that it was still the default party of governance. Power may occasionally slip out of hand, but the eventual comeback of the Grand Old Party, heading a coalition or otherwise, was only a matter of time. It is this hypothesis which Narendra Modi's re-election has smashed to smithereens. Permanently.

Emphatic as it was the 2014 victory of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) was widely ascribed to anti-incumbency as much as the Modi wave. It was not an independent phenomenon. Establishing its credibility as a precursor to the onset of "acche din" (good days) was thus imperative for the new regime. Which is why the government's focus in the last five years was confined to ushering seminal economic reforms like the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, and other policy initiatives primarily aimed at attacking systemic corruption at the core.

The crusade against graft topped the agenda, and rightly. The demonetisation shocker firmly drove home the message despite widespread criticism from economists and the commentariat. By Modi's own volition it was done in the national interest. It let loose pent up anger against anti-nationals and other internal enemies since curbing terror financing with fake currency along the border was among the main objectives. The political impact was immediate: the BJP swept to power in Uttar Pradesh in 2017 with a huge majority. The masses were convinced that the corrupt rich had been taken to the cleaners, and that they did not mind the temporary sufferance and disruption caused by the move.

Radical political changes which have long been at the heart of the BJP's ideology were allowed to fester on the back-burner to avoid ruffling too many feathers at once. Long

Ideally the morphing of India into Bharat should have begun immediately after the British left in 1947 having partitioned the country along religious lines.

overdue commitments like ending the special Constitutional status accorded to Jammu & Kashmir, construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, and piloting a Uniform Civil Code will now have to be brought centre-stage. The success of Modi 2.0 in the coming months will largely depend on the sincerity with which pledges made in the manifesto are pursued. Only this time there will be no excuses to hand out given the resounding nature of the people's mandate.

Wiseacres and carping critics counter "but it is the economy, stupid," little realising that facing its challenges is a 24/7 job, especially in times of volatile markets and the gathering clouds of global recession. The electoral impact of an economic downturn or upswing is never certain. Which is why the Congress' desperate effort to make farmer distress and record high unemployment the centrepiece of its campaign did not work. In fact, there has scarcely been an election in which price rise and joblessness have not been issues. But no government has been voted in or out purely on the strength of economic indices. Rising GDP does not necessarily rope in votes or a falling rupee impact the ballot box. It is the larger message of hope that counts.

Ideally the morphing of India into Bharat should have begun immediately after the British left in 1947 having partitioned the country along religious lines. In retrospect Gandhi's blunder in appointing the very British at heart, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the first Prime Minister despite the Congress' unanimous preference for Sardar Vallabhai Patel set the country back by decades. Nehru by his own volition was a reluctant Hindu with a visceral disdain for the "RSS mentality". His obsession with western ideas like socialism and secularism moulded the minds of the urban educated classes over generations. They grew up loathing their own religious icons and cultural traditions.

Fundamentally, the Modi encore showcases the electoral validation for a course correction. Revision of history books incorporating the changed perceptions cannot brook further delay. Reorienting education holds the key to a Bhartiya renaissance based on the universal values of sanatan dharm. Mindsets need to change. This can only be gradual since large swathes of the voting populace still remain wedded to a counterfeit concept of secularism preferred by Nehru and his intellectually challenged bloodline successors.

Donning the clothes of Bharat at a purely political level marks the definite end to decades of vote bank politics. Voting trends of the latest national poll have only reconfirmed that Muslims no longer vote enbloc for any party in particular, least of all the Congress. So the old chestnut that the BJP has to be kept out of power to ensure the safety of Muslims and the underprivileged (Dalits) does not find resonance anymore. Seeds of the fear were willy nilly sown by Nehru in the 1950s to ensure that neither deserted the Congress.

More importantly, in the modernised worldview of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh or RSS (the BJP's godfather), Hindu nationalism does not in any way conflict with the centuries old tradition of tolerance and pluralism as the Nehruvians would have us believe. Unlike Abrahamic religions like Christianity or Islam, Hinduism is not anchored in the God willed certitudes and theological pronouncements of a single prophet or holy book. In fact, it was never a religion in the truest sense. For even an atheist can be Hindu. Seeking, the search for truth, lies at the core of its spiritual heritage and cultural traditions. Fanning doubts on the country's future as a secular republic is a lost cause. Bharat can never be a theocracy.

To sum up Modi 2.0 was a ringing endorsement for a strong leader of sterling integrity who rose from humble beginnings. Someone unapologetic about his Hindu heritage; someone ready to rise to the occasion when dealing with enemies, external or internal. Implicit in the electoral landslide was the maturing of the Indian voter who can be relied upon not to confuse the national interest with bread and butter issues.

The shrill campaign run by the Congress to vilify Modi with the help of a misguided western media out of sync with national realities proved hugely counter productive. The once Grand Old Party stood reduced to a fringe player, with little or no chance of a revival in the near future.

The road ahead may have its share of thorns, but for once it is the right road; a road which remained untraversed since Independence. ■

** Author is a senior journalist who has worked for the Times Of India, Asian Age, Pioneer and Statesman in responsible positions. He can be contacted at sudhirksingh@icloud.com*

MODI 2.0

Nobody expected Congress to win the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, but neither did the nation expect BJP and Modi to surpass their own tally of 2014 too!

BY **SUNIL DANG***

The elections are a done deal now. We have a clear winner in Modi and his party BJP. Whether or not the country or the opposition, to be precise, anticipated anything of the sort that finally emerged on the horizon is of no consequence now; Success has many fathers but failure is an orphan. The opposition indeed looks like an orphan today. But dare I say, that Modi and his machinery helmed by the magician at work Amit Shah, the thousands of Karyakartas (Cadre), the crafty social engineering, aided, abetted & propagated like a blitzkrieg by various forms of media, all this helped the saffron forces to paint the entire landscape from Jammu to Darjeeling and Kutch to Mangalore in its colours. Rest as they say is history.

If one were to critically analyse some of the standout reasons for Modi's win in a highly polarized election of the century, one could then deduce what went behind the scenes.

The most notable reason behind such a decisive mandate has been the ability of BJP and its charismatic leader Modi to appropriate muscular nationalism to its sleeves. If Pulwama was the trigger, Balakot was the perfect elixir doctor had ordered. I have never been this surprised. Not that we did not anticipate a Modi win but the scale and enormity of the mandate has certainly pushed our intellectual and analytical prowess to the tiniest corners of irrelevance. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that he would fall somewhat short of the numbers to cobble up a simple majority, he outdid the 2014 outcome and that to me is the ultimate tribute to his versatility and fatal attractiveness to the Indian electorate.

There is the only plausible explanation that holds good here as to what has caused this swing of 6 percent to 7 percent in favour of the BJP and this is that the first-time voters have voted for him overwhelmingly. They typically tend to side with the BJP, but what they have done this time is just matching it up with some of the data that some of us analysts had seen and some of the anecdotal evidence in our conversations on the road with first-time voters. Politics including looking at things like caste, incumbency, the kind of stuff that we have been used to looking at for the last 25 years is dumped into irrelevance for the time being.

When we also examined certain aspects of such an awestruck audience for Modi, it became clear that most of the people all over across the Hindi Heartland, Bundelkhand, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha felt that Modi was an extremely hard working Prime minister. He works 18 to 20 hours a day. Mehnati hai (hardworking) that is the kind of phases that you hear for him; Imandaar hai (He is honest) which basically is saying that no matter what charges are levelled against him, he is perceived as honest partly because

he is unattached, he is not associated with any family. So, it is hard to pin any sort of corruption charge to someone.

Modi also benefited tremendously from the fallout of a suicide attack in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir that killed 40 Indian soldiers in February 2019. Although responsibility for the attack was claimed by a Pakistani terrorist group, it was carried out by a local Kashmiri. One reading of this could have been that Modi's policies in the Kashmir valley, such as the increase in the use of pellet guns, blinding hundreds and killing at least 14, had led to the attack. But Modi swiftly turned it to his advantage.

Not only did he pursue an aggressive course of action with air-strikes against militants on Pakistani territory, but he also successfully sold it as a huge success, despite some evidence that the fighters had missed their target. The national security narrative took Centre stage in the 2019 election, something that the opposition parties were unable to counter.

No Alternative (TINA factor)

The other notable factor was the Opposition & the Congress campaign. Undoubtedly the party's leader, Rahul Gandhi, has come a long way since his debut in a national election in 2014. But the Congress campaign failed on two fronts. The first was the messaging: it was a mistake to try and attack Modi on allegations of corruption rather than focusing on the economic failures of his first term. Focusing on corruption only served to remind the electorate of the Congress party's involvement in previous (very large) corruption scandals.

Yet, even had Congress focused solely on the economy, this may not have led to a very different result. The BJP swept the board in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh state elections, held only a few months after Modi's disastrous demonetization policy which saw the withdrawal of 86 percent of India's currency. The second failure was the high-handedness with which Congress approached the formation of its own political alliances. The BJP was extremely accommodating of its alliance partners in states such as Bihar and Maharashtra, but Congress did not manage to agree on a deal with its potential partners in Delhi and in Uttar Pradesh.

Modi's Charm Offensive

The third factor was the presidential nature of the campaign. Modi successfully portrayed the campaign as Modi v Rahul. Such a framing benefited Modi – a fantastic campaigner. He built on the national security narrative by framing himself as a Chowkidaar or a watchman, who would protect India. This built on his reputation as someone who would make India great – something that played extremely well in the campaign.

Helpful Media

Modi's profile in India is huge. He takes personal credit for all initiatives, and his picture appears multiple times in the same editions of the daily newspapers when government initiatives are flagged. The BJP has had an extraordinary control of the political narrative during this election, aided by its extremely large war chest which has helped it penetrate even deeper into traditional and social media. While only a quarter of Indians use WhatsApp, still 300m people, the creation of promotional material specifically targeted at different segments of society has played a huge role in advancing a particular political narrative.

In addition, the Election Commission has been criticised for clearing BJP leaders of many alleged election code violations, and only belatedly banning the showing of a biopic about Modi on the eve of the elections. It also allowed the BJP's TV channel, NaMo TV, to run without challenge throughout the campaign. It has now gone off the air.

The BJP has had an extraordinary control of the political narrative during this election, aided by its extremely large war chest which has helped it penetrate even deeper into traditional and social media.

Polarizing campaign

The last nail in opposition's coffin was the exceedingly negative & vicious polarizing campaign by BJP. In 2014, 51 percent of those who responded to India's national election studies said they believed that democracy meant that the will of the majority community should prevail; a steep rise from 2009. This demonstrates a move towards the right and an acceptance of Hindu majoritarianism in Indian politics; a position that questions whether religious minorities, particularly Muslims, should have special rights within India. This trend of Hindu majoritarianism is higher among the young – a growing demographic within India, who have grown up in an era in which the BJP has been a national player. ■

** Author is CEO & Editor-in-Chief at The Day After Magazine*

Sri Lanka
THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

BY **DIPLOMATIST BUREAU**

The deadly blasts in Sri Lanka on April 21, Easter Sunday killed at least 290 people and left hundreds more injured. The day after the deadly attacks, tourists were left struggling to leave the island nation, with hotels bracing for cancellations. Needless to say, Sri Lanka is quite popular with tourists from all over the world. Long haul travellers make up a large portion of visitors. Asia and Europe account for most of Sri Lanka's entrances.

India was the single largest source of visitors last year, with almost 4,25,000, while 2,66,000 came from China, and more than 2,54,000 from old colonial power Britain.

A continued breakdown in tourism following these attacks would deal a severe setback to the island's economy, but Sri Lanka is committed that its tourism sector would recover from the setback.

Back with a Bang

In an effort to rebuild the Sri Lankan tourism, John Amaratunga, Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Christian Religious Affairs visited India to tout his country as a safe destination for tourists.

Speaking on the sidelines of an event in Delhi, the minister not only acknowledged Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's recent visit to Sri Lanka but also said the visit has lifted the potential for the country's tourism sector.

"That was a great deal of support for Sri Lanka. It will specifically help us attract Indian tourists. He came and there was no risk in it. He also visited some of the churches that were damaged and it was a very fruitful visit," said the minister.

India has been the number one source market to Sri Lanka over the past decade and in 2018 recorded over 400,000 visitors to the island.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, President of Sri Lanka Maithripala Sirisena stated that the political process of Sri Lanka will not be intruded by the terror attacks and subsequent social tension. He was one of the BIMSTEC leaders invited to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of Narendra Modi and his Council of Ministers. He further said, "It is with great pleasure that I participated in the swearing-in ceremony. We convey our best wishes to the people of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi." He added, "Prime Minister Modi's visit is very important to us, we are neighbour and friends, and this relationship between India and Sri Lanka dates back over 2600 years. Sri Lankan leader also expressed happiness over PM Modi's victory.

"Sri Lanka is totally safe. I can give you that assurance. I am speaking based on the reports from our military and there is absolute peace in the country."

The minister also discussed tourism incentives for Indians by releasing a package including tickets and hotels at a heavy discount rate of almost 50-60 percent.

Sri Lanka Tourism in collaboration with Sri Lankan Airlines, The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) and inbound tour operators has introduced attractive packages, specifically targeting India, the number one source market, to revive the industry that had a temporary setback due to the recent incident. The package includes discounted airfare, accommodation, transport and more, ranging from 30 percent to 60 percent. This package is unique to India and can be availed across Sri Lankan Airlines' network covering 12 cities in India with 123 weekly flights.

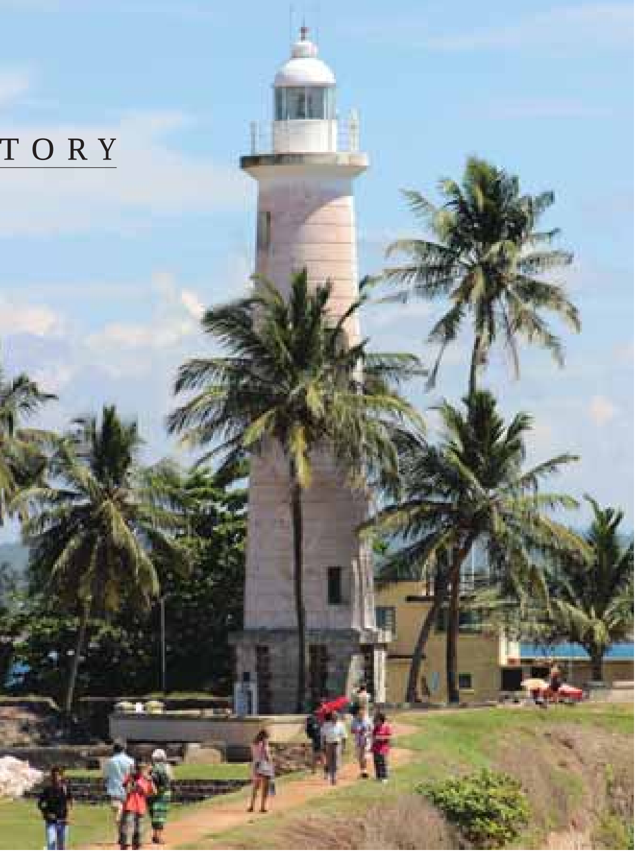
The five tour packages to Sri Lanka range from a combination of stays in Colombo, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Dambulla, Sigiriya and South Coast with multiple options to suit any budget. These offers will be valid for stays from June 10, 2019 to September 30, 2019 and can be availed through the travel agents network in India.

Kishu Gomes, Chairman, Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau described the brand and marketing communication strategy aimed at reviving the industry as well as the growth trajectory that Sri Lanka tourism recorded. Furthermore, Gomes requested Indian tourists to avail of the attractive package while supporting the process of recovery as Sri Lanka's most respected neighbour.

"We want the tourists to come back. It is important to build confidence. Revenue growth will follow and we are not worried about it,' said Kishu Gomes.

As part of its expansion plans for the Indian sub-continent, Sri Lankan Airlines has initiated steps to promote the island nation as a complete tourist destination for leisure and business as well as MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) tourism.

"India has been the number one source market to Sri Lanka over the past decade and in 2018 recorded over 4,00,000 visitors to the island. The national carrier Sri Lankan Airlines operates 123 weekly flights from key Indian cities and we believe such offers are quick to popularize across Indian cities," said Dimuthu Tennakoon, Head of Worldwide Sales and Distribution (HWSD) of Sri Lankan Airlines.



India has accounted for 18.2 percent, which is 4,24,887 arrivals in 2018, an impeccable 10.5 percent hike from last year. In 2017 itself, 3,83,000 Indians visited the destination. In 2018, this number increased to 4,26,000. Sri Lanka aims to progressively promote the destination for weddings and film shoots this year, with leisure being the primary focus.

Sri Lanka tourism is in the process to launch a massive global tourism promotion campaign to attract tourists back to the island country. Over 2 million people in the island country depend on the tourism industry through direct and indirect jobs.

Sri Lanka and India: Cultural and Religious Ties

Speaking on the socio-cultural communication and connections between Sri Lanka and India, John Amaratunga said that both the countries have been part of history through centuries.

"Ramayan has captivated many generations and had an intense impact on art and culture in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Sri Lanka shares an exceptional link with India geographically, spiritually, historically, and culturally and the Ramayan is one such link."

The minister said his country is ready to welcome visitors from all parts of the world. "Sri Lanka has beaches, ancient cities, jungles, and a rich history all coupled with friendly, accommodating people and some of the best food you will eat anywhere on the planet. One should definitely visit this picturesque island nation."

The minister continued that Sri Lanka is an intriguing place to explore for its variety of religions and cultures. Over two-thirds of the population is Buddhist, with a large proportion of the remainder of Hindus, plus an even split between Muslims and Christians.

He also thanked the countries including India that have conveyed their support for Sri Lanka and provided support to his country.

Incredible and Inviting

If pristine beaches, misty mountains, stealthy leopards, rising waves, giant elephants, a royal past, divine tea and warm smiles could sum up a country, that would be Sri Lanka.

Everyone feels the magic of Sri Lanka differently. Some adore the everyday adventures, the flavours, the infinite sunsets, the constant state of celebration. Others are dazzled by the way every moment has the making of a memory. But most, are forever drawn to the way Earth's favourite island calls to you always, to come and be inspired, every day.

The smiles and warmth of Sri Lanka are world renowned and so are its spicy food, exotic fruits and an array of sweetmeats found nowhere in the world. With so many cultures living next to each other life in Sri Lanka continues among a series of festivities throughout the year, a perfect recipe for excitement and relaxation.

It has no shortage of gorgeous awe-inspiring spots, natural, historic and cultural, each more picture perfect than the next.

And, therefore, Sri Lanka has been named as the best country in the world to visit in 2019 by Lonely Planet. ■

G20 SUMMIT

PHOTO-OPS OR REAL HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?

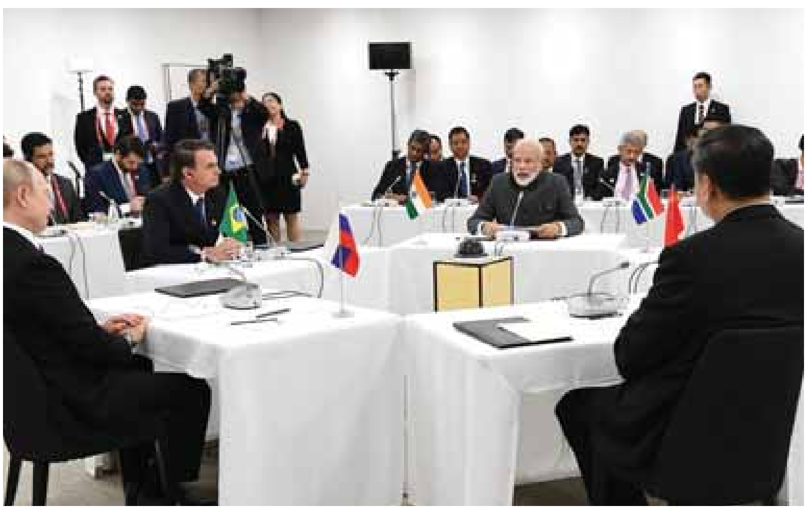
BY **AMBASSADOR K.V. RAJAN**

The recently concluded (June 28-29) G20 Summit at Osaka has been a subject of considerable discussion within the diplomatic and think tank community. For some, it was a lot of theatre and photo-ops with some serious business. For others, there was a conspicuous mismatch between the smiles and handshakes of leaders before the cameras and the obviously unresolved tensions between them on a number of issues including trade and cyber security.

However, it would be fair to say that the Summit was a success in terms of defusing tensions and issuing guidelines for a sustainable future. After all, the world was on tenterhooks on the eve of the Summit, with war clouds gathering over Iran, an all-out Trade War between the USA and China brewing relentlessly, tensions because of USA sanctions against Russia and their implications for countries like India and Turkey, the Middle East in disarray, strains between the USA and its closest allies, and much uncertainty about where the global economy was going.

In the event, the Osaka summit came out with a comprehensive and balanced declaration covering a

Japan-America-India trilateral meeting between Prime Minister, Donald Trump, President of United States and Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan on the sidelines of G20 Summit in Osaka (June 28, 2019)



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi attending the BRICS Meeting, on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit, in Osaka, Japan on June 28, 2019.

wide range of issues, encompassing the environment and climate change, women's empowerment, health, reducing inequalities, energy, development, trade and investment. It undoubtedly offers renewed hope for the recovery of global growth and lowering of tensions on key differences between the USA and the rest of the world...perhaps largely because Trump-the presidential candidate is taking over from Trump the business-politician. Thanks to the restraint and comparative moderation shown by him in one meeting after another (reciprocated by all his interlocutors), differences were very much on display without confrontational rhetoric, and temperatures not only came down, but negotiated solutions seemed achievable—no mean feat on an issue such as USA-China trade or USA-India tensions on the latter's defence contracts with Russia.

As is not unusual, the meetings on the sidelines, especially between President Trump and other world leaders, the trilateral and multilateral between Russia-China-India, USA-India-Japan, BRICS, etc tried to assert their relevance – with varying success, but contributing to the usefulness of G 20 as an invaluable networking opportunity for world leaders. After all, the G 20 represents two-thirds of the world population, 80 percent of world trade and 85 percent of global GDP between its 20 members from the developing to the developed world.

A few questions, however, continue to nag G20 observers, moderating the sense of optimism for the future of the world. The consensual bonhomie is difficult to sustain post-Summit, given that guidelines are non-enforceable and none of the big problems has been resolved even while commitment to further dialogue has been expressed and patience in expecting progress promised. Moreover, a caring world is difficult to envisage when the mighty and powerful insist on being ultra-nationalistic. Finally, solutions to many of the world's problems seem beyond the capacity of governments to resolve—for example, climate change. Unless there are viable partnerships between government and civil society (including business, the media, women and youth) G 20 declarations will be remembered as pious statements of intent.

In 2022, it will be India's turn to host the G 20. India will have to draw upon its cultural and civilizational assets, to address the crying global need to change mindsets and lifestyles, in addition to the usual tradition of papering over differences and ensuring a "positive" outcome in terms of declarations, if a better world is to emerge in the years ahead. ■

THE QUIET AUSTRALIAN
SCOTT MORRISON'S ELECTION VICTORY

BY **DR. BINOY KAMPMARK***

The victory of Scott Morrison in the Australian federal elections in May 2019 will rightly be seen as remarkable. "I have always believed in miracles," he claimed in his victory speech. But even the victors have little reason to gloat. It was a victory that saw a minimal shift of positions on the battlefront: a mere few seats, in real terms. The contesting Australian Labor Party found itself in a position similar to the elections of 2016. But the impact of such constipated moves was devastating. Having been seen as a shoe-in, opposition leader Bill Shorten found himself conceding in stunned disbelief, resigning as leader of his party.

The anger expressed in the aftermath of the Liberal-National victory from Labor supporters was extreme if understandable. The anointed successor never received his crown. He had failed to overcome the handicap of unpopularity hoping that extensive, and detailed policies would win the day. Instead, the combination of an unpopular candidate and a slew of proposals enabled Prime Minister Scott Morrison to sharpen his campaign.

Those familiar with their Australian electoral history might point to the 1993 victory of Labor's Paul Keating against the vast, complex package of what then opposition leader John Hewson called Fight Back. With that came an admixture of the various elements that fed into the victories scored by the Liberal Prime Minister John Howard through his time in office from 1996 to 2007. The Howard generation was averse to "the vision thing" so relentlessly promoted by Keating. Abstractions and broad canvas policies were hard to budget; mortgages and basic, everyday living were. In remorseless and shameless fashion, Howard extolled the aspirational "battler" in his political rhetoric and infected the Australian voter with a self-calculating, self-interested cynicism that has been hard to shake.

Morrison's own touch was a slight adjustment of the same thing: the heralded quiet Australian. Such Australians have dreams "to get a job, to get an apprenticeship, to start a business, to meet someone amazing, to start a family, to buy a home, to work hard and provide the best you can for your kids, to save for your retirement and to ensure that when you are in your retirement you can enjoy it because you have worked hard for it".

Foremost amongst the lessons of 2019 is that Labor must learn to win in Queensland. Its voters are varied, diverse and, it should be noted, drawn from a good number of the southern retiree class that pricked their ears up with suggestions that their share income, or negative gearing arrangements, might be affected. The Liberal MP Tim Wilson's insistence that Labor's franking credit reforms be seen as a "retiree tax" were instrumental. As Fairfax contributor Michael Koziol noted, "The retiree stronghold of Bribie Island was 'on fire' over franking credits. The Coalition threw resources into the area and ultimately won it for Labor with a 4 percent swing."

Forgotten in the swirl of recrimination and despair are those basic if cringe-worthy pursuits Morrison embarked upon in the short time he warmed the Prime Minister's seat. A specific effort worth mentioning was his trip to Queensland last November, a state now being compared, rather clumsily, to some monster variant of middle, white America. In social media, a brushfire had started, suggesting that Queensland be expelled from the Commonwealth. Certain voters were "so unhappy, in fact," noted the broadcaster SBS (May 19, 2019), "that many are cheekily proposing #Quexit – a move which would see Queensland cut loose from the rest of Australia." A lawyer and political commentator Kate Galloway noted in Eureka Street (May 21, 2019), "The disrespecting of regional Queenslanders is [Hillary] Clinton's 'basket of deplorable' all over again." Queenslanders were accused of being a "low IQ" population. Forgotten were the "vagaries of government policies" and the fears about an economy moving from fossil fuels to renewables.

Labor's focus on combating climate change and refocusing the policy drive on energy renewables failed to find a voice in the regional seats of Queensland. The delays, and interminable debate on Adani's proposed Carmichael

Morrison the man of advertising was always in evidence. When it came to the damaging floods in North Queensland, Morrison seemed gauche in his efforts to win favour by donning military colours on his trip to Townsville.

mine in the Galilee Basin bit hard in high unemployment communities. While the Indian mining giant was promising pie-in-the-sky figures of future employment, Labor's lack of clarity on the issue of whether it would stand in the way of the development, should it be approved by the Queensland government, caused uncertainty.

At the time, Morrison's bus journey on the "Scomo Express" seemed fatuous and clownish. When it took place in November last year, it was roundly ridiculed by the Canberra press gallery. That hardly mattered: the new Prime Minister was making an effort to put himself forth as worthy electoral material in a state that would prove significant in any future polls. The message then was made in an electoral register, reassuringly pitched to the sceptical voter: "keeping

Australia on the right track – lower taxes, more jobs, lower electricity prices, economy building and congestion busting infrastructure, AAA balanced budgets."

Seeing the "daggy dad" with baseball cap in action was indigestible, but the populist figure often is. A person who has nothing to lose, not even his dignity, is a dangerous political opponent. He will muck it with the rest of them and unashamedly woo. And so it proved with the advertised platform leading to May 18, streamlined and kept to such slogans and promises as "Building our Economy", "Backing Small Business", "Delivering Tax Relief" and the improbable "Creating 1.25 Million Jobs".

Morrison the man of advertising was always in evidence. When it came to the damaging floods in North Queensland, Morrison seemed gauche in his efforts to win favour by donning military colours on his trip to Townsville. But he was well aware of being in the most marginal seat in Queensland – the seat of Herbert held then by the Labor Party's Cathy O'Toole – and wanted to let people know he could be buffoonish yet reassuring. Topping that were messages about "standing by the people" and making sure that, "Supporting the flood-affected communities and families in North Queensland [remained] a top priority for our Government".

Shorten was made out to be the devil incarnate with dangerously ambitious policies, one best avoided for down-to-earth voters. "Don't roll the dice," went a series of advertisements from the Coalition campaign machine. Under Labor, voters would receive higher taxes: "Australians to pay billions in new taxes." (That this was a grand fudge was beside the point.) Question marks were placed under "More Debt" and "Weaker Economy". "The Bill you can't afford," Morrison threatened, "will just keep rising and rising. If you can't manage money, you can't run the country."

Had the election been one of the matched policies, folder to folder, dossier to the dossier, it is hard to have seen the Liberal-National coalition winning. Such a campaign was always geared towards defeating Malcom "Innovation" Turnbull, the previous leader who was removed in circumstances of much acrimony by a group of plotters led by the current Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton. But the ALP machine waivered, stuttered, and struggled against the one-man "Scomo" Show, cheaply pseudo-presidential, and purposely trimmed of substance. There was a failure to capitalise on the record of a Coalition government dysfunctional, suicidal and regicidal. Instead, it proved markedly positive and "dangerously" visionary. "They did have," reflected the Liberal Party federal president Nick Greiner on Labor, "a very broad vision. We believed our best chance would be to say to people: you don't want more taxes and more government, you want less taxes and less government."

Future Australian political campaigns are bound to shun detail. In the long run, the economist John Maynard Keynes famously remarked, we are all dead; in the meantime, test your costings, explain your budget, and seize the day only after a fair appraisal of the accounts. ■

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INDIA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS AND SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi and the President of the Republic of South Korea, Mr. Moon Jae-in at the delegation level talks, in Seoul, South Korea on February 22, 2019.

BY **SANDIP KUMAR MISHRA***

India and South Korea have emerged as natural partners to each other after the end of the Cold War. In subsequent years, economic, political and strategic relations of both countries have improved substantially. Both countries enjoy their close proximity with the US as well as share anxieties about the nuclear-missile technology exchanges between North Korea and Pakistan. Moreover, India and South Korea have had exceptional convergence of their visions about the region. Both are concerned about the rise of an 'assertive China' but rather than overtly containing China, both would like to engage China in moderating its behaviour. Both countries want an open multipolar Asia in which interstate relations are institutionalized and cooperative security and prosperity are ensured for every country. Actually, on most of the political and security issues of the region, India and South Korea have similar stands and thus there has been a huge potential for cooperation between the two countries.

The current phase of the bilateral relations between India and South Korea began with India adopting its Look East Policy and starting liberalizing its economy in the early 1990s. South Korea, which has followed an export-led growth model, was looking for new destinations of its exports and South Korean businesses showed significant interests in a liberalized Indian market and resources. Thus, the first phase of the contemporary India-South Korea relations was largely dominated by economic cooperation between the two countries. India and South Korea, after exceptional growth in their bilateral economic relations, signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2009 and their bilateral trade increased massively from less than USD1 billion in 1990 to more than USD20 billion in 2012.

India and South Korea also gradually started articulating their common security and strategic concerns and signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement in 2010. There have been frequent high-level visits between India and South Korea and both countries have had several defence and defence production related MoUs in the last few years. Moreover, both the countries have forged a vibrant partnership in various other fields such as education, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Thus, India and South Korea have undoubtedly deepened their relations in the last three decades and it could be evaluated positively. However, it could also be added that by looking from the vantage point of a huge convergence between the two countries, their performance has been less than satisfactory. It's important to note that both the countries have no negative historical baggage and their economic complementaries are exceptional.

The bilateral trade between India and South Korea has gone down after 2012 and it has only recovered to USD20 billion mark in 2017. The CEPA has not been very helpful in improving bilateral trade between the two countries and rather it is being blamed for the trade contraction. India has been too sensitive about its trade deficit which at the time reached almost USD10 billion and complain that South Korean manufacturing companies avoid joint ventures with Indian companies. Similarly, South Korea has been unhappy at the way a proposed investment of USD12 billion by POSCO in Odisha was caught into political and administrative controversies for more than a decade. India and South Korea announced to revise the CEPA in 2015 when the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited South Korea but the process has not yet been completed. Even, in the political and strategic domains, it could be said that even though both countries have enhanced their Strategic Partnership to Special Strategic Partnership, the strategic content in it has been very thin. Apart from joint statements and mutual visits of both the countries in foreign and defence areas, there have not been any specific bilateral goals identified. Actually, India has been dissatisfied that South Korea does not take an open stand on India's claim for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council and the Indo-Pacific strategy. Similarly, South Korea feels that India should have a more open stance on its territorial and historical disputes with Japan.

In recent years, both countries have made a concrete effort to re-energize their relationship and try to confront these issues. India through its Act East Policy and South Korea through its New Southern Policy have been looking to move closer to each other in all possible domains and provide more content to their relationship. It is important to underline that both countries have emphasized people to people and cultural exchanges as the bedrock of their relationship, which would shape their approach towards each other in economic, political and strategic domains. Through the visits of the South Korean President Moon Jae-in July 2018, the first lady of South Korea in November 2018 and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2019, both the countries have been trying to bridge any perception gaps between the two countries and work together on issues of bilateral and regional concerns.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula

India has been invited to play a constructive role on the Korean peninsula by South Korea and the joint statements between the leaders of both the countries in 2014, 2015 and 2018 mention it very clearly. More specifically, South Korea would like India to play an important role in the resolutions of the North Korean nuclear issue. India is one of the few countries which has sustained diplomatic relations with North Korea for decades and it has taken principled neutrality in the inter-Korean relations from the very inception of the two Koreas on the Korean peninsula. Indian goodwill capital might be useful in constructive intervention in the intricate denuclearization issue of North Korea. Actually, unlike previous Park Geun-hye administration of South Korea, Moon Jae-in administration wants to denuclearize North Korea through dialogue and diplomacy. Moon Jae-in is also interested in improving inter-Korean relations through his engagement policy. Incidentally, India's approach towards North Korea has also been the same. India has constantly opposed North Korea's nuclear and missile tests and adhered to the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council. However, India prefers diplomatic solutions for the problem by addressing the threat perception of both parties. South Korea's present ruling dispensation has a similar policy orientation and there are realistic possibilities of cooperation between India and South Korea on the issue. However, it must also be realized that any support and cooperation from India to resolve the nuclear issues of the Korean peninsula must be a low-key affair as an overt involvement of India might enrage China, which considers the Korean peninsula as its own influence zone, and rather than resolving the problem, India's overt activeness might further complicate the issue.

India and South Korea are also on the same page in arguing that along with the denuclearization of North Korea, the inter-Korean relations must also move forward to forge bilateral exchanges in all possible areas. The reunification of Korea is indeed an important goal but it must be pursued in an incremental and phased manner and it must not be threatening to both the regimes of the Korean peninsula. India has promised South Korea during recent high-level political exchanges in recent years that it is willing to use its good offices to facilitate such possibilities. India and South Korea also share the understanding that coordinated and cooperative roles of regional powers of the Northeast Asia, along with the US, are prerequisites to establishing peace, stability and prosperity on the Korean peninsula and it must be articulated sincerely. ■

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RISING US-CHINA TENSION THE IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND JAPAN

BY **DR. SATORU NAGAO***

The most notable aspect of the June 2019 G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, was the US-China summit. The United States and China agreed to a "ceasefire" in their "trade war" and to resume trade talks. However, because the two countries did not agree to end the trade war altogether, the confrontation in this domain continues. Meanwhile, the leaders of India, Japan, and the United States of America held a trilateral summit and promised to hold such a meeting every year.

In December 2017, when the United States published its new National Security Strategy, the stage was set for a confrontation with China. The document explicitly stated that "China and Russia challenge American power." Shortly thereafter, in January 2018, the USA imposed tariffs on China, setting off the so-called trade war. The Chinese retaliated by imposing their own tariffs on the USA, and the trade war escalated. In October 2018, when Vice President, Mike Pence spoke at the Hudson Institute, he said: "Beijing is employing a whole-of-government approach, using political, economic, and military tools, as well as propaganda, to advance its influence and benefit its interests in the United States of America." Therefore, he explained, citing the National Security Strategy, "the United States of America has adopted a new approach to China." Furthermore, in June 2019 the US Department of Defence published its Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, which refers to China as a "revisionist power."

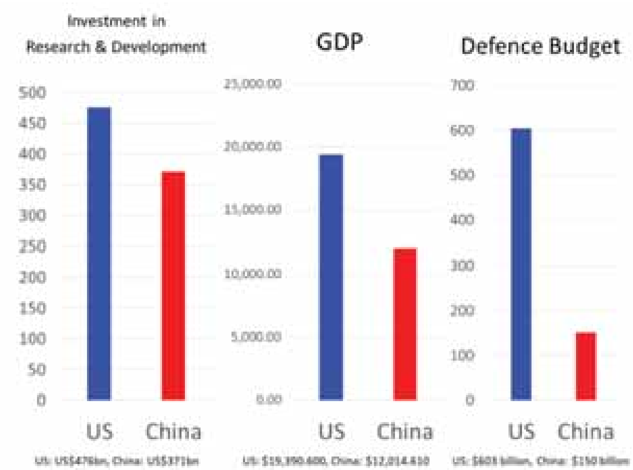
USA-Chinese relations have remained tense since these developments, and countries such as India and Japan have had to adapt to the new circumstances. This raises several questions. In the long run, which side will win, and what are the implications for India and Japan? Why has the USA recently stepped up its actions vis-à-vis China? What should India and Japan expect from the USA's new approach to China, and how should they respond? The United States of America is now the world's only superpower, a status it acquired by defeating Germany and Japan in World War II and then the Soviet Union in the Cold War. If there is a lesson from this history, what is it?

Because of its unfortunate and tragic history of war with the USA, Japan knows not to underestimate the seriousness of the United States of America's strong stance on China. After World War I, the USA developed plans for possible future war scenarios with various countries, including Germany and Japan (such as the "War Plan Orange" the "War Plan Black" or "Rainbow plans"). These plans were not precisely worked out but indicated a general strategic direction. When these plans were declassified in 1974, many were surprised to find that the USA even had a war plan to confront the United Kingdom and Canada (the "War Plan Red"). From a realist perspective, these plans were justifiable, even if some of the potential "enemies" were in fact allies. American strategic thinking is indeed quite realistic, and thus the Japanese take seriously the explicit statements in the National Security Strategy and the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. Japan understands that, there is a high possibility that, the USA currently has a plan for confronting China.

Additional evidence suggests that recent USA actions are part of a long-term strategy. A good example is the so-called high-tech war between the USA and China. Beginning in 2018 and continuing this year, the USA has imposed sanctions against Chinese technology entities, blocking their ability to buy USA software and components. ZTE, for example, was acutely affected by these sanctions. Although this is a policy of the Trump administration, the process behind the policy started several years ago under the Obama administration. In 2012, the USA Congress was already addressing concerns over Huawei and ZTE, issuing an investigative report on the national security issues posed by these two Chinese telecommunication giants. Thus, recent events are part of a long-term strategy stemming from a view of China shared by Republicans and Democrats.

Why has the USA recently toughened its policy toward China? First, China's activities are directly challenging USA interests. But second, the USA recognizes that it might only be able to win if it steps up now. Some simple facts confirm that now is the best time for the USA to pressure China. For example, according to figures published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in July 2018, the United States of America invests USD 476 billion in research and development, compared with China's USD 371 billion. This means that the USA still has a financial advantage in developing new technology. Similarly, the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Database for January 2018 shows that the USA economy is larger than China's, with USA GDP at USD 19.39 trillion, compared with China's USD 12.24 trillion. The USA is also stronger militarily, with the USA defence budget at USD 603 billion, compared with China's at USD 150 billion, according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Comparison of the US and China in Three Areas



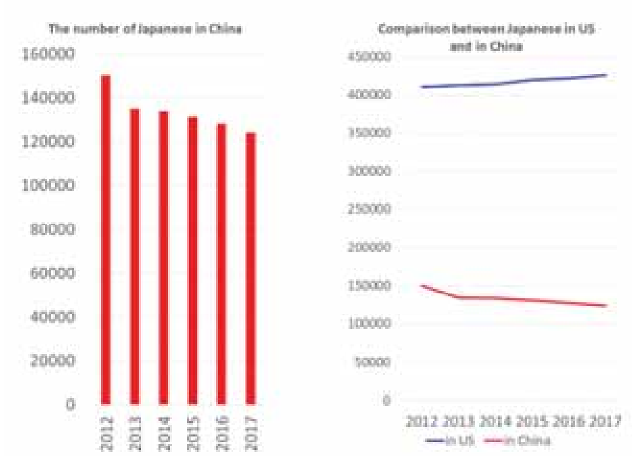
Source: Author.

Thus, given current technology and levels of investment in R&D, the USA is likely to win the high-tech war. Based on economic might, it is likely to win the trade war. And, based on military might, it is likely to deter or win a "hot" war. These likelihoods, in turn, mean that the USA will likely be able to increase pressure on China—first, technologically, second, economically, and finally, militarily—until China stops challenging USA interests.

How should India and Japan respond to USA-China tensions? In the long run, it will be beneficial to India and Japan to cooperate with the United States of America. Why? To put it simply, because the United States of America will win. There are three paths India and Japan should take: First: the two nations should increase investment in high-tech research. The high-tech war between the USA and China has shown that the USA is sensitive regarding protecting itself in the technology realm. India and Japan need their own technology cards to play, as both would benefit from a technological give and take with the USA. In this area, India and Japan can cooperate with each other. Joint development projects on artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-related unmanned ground vehicles (which could possible be used for patrolling the India-China border) are good examples.

Second: India and Japan can maintain cooperation with China for now but should not depend on China economically in the long run. India and Japan must reduce their economic dependence on China if they wish to avoid being damaged by the USA-China confrontation. For both India and Japan, China is the largest trading partner. The two countries should reduce the influence of China's economy on their own. Japan has already begun to do so, ending its official development assistance to China in 2018. In addition, Japanese companies have relocated their factories from China to Southeast Asia or South Asia. As a result, the number of Japanese citizens living in China has decreased every year from 2012 to 2017 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of Japanese in China and in Comparison with the US



Source: Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Annual Report of Statistics on Japanese Nationals Overseas (Japanese)," 2018, based on data as of October 1, 2017.

Third, given the current USA demand to share the security burden presented by China, India and Japan should respond by increasing their own defence capabilities. Indeed, enhancing security in the Indian Ocean region is not only in the United States of America's interest but also in India's own interest. Thus, given that the Indian navy lacks anti-submarine capabilities, it would be beneficial for India to buy P-8 anti-submarine patrol planes and MH-60 anti-submarine helicopters. India can also increase its defence capabilities along its border with China by using USA-made equipment. India has imported USA-made C-17 heavy transport planes, C-130 transport planes, CH-47 heavy lift helicopters, M777 airlift ultralight howitzers, and AH-64 high-altitude attack helicopters to defend the border area. In the case of Japan, that nation is acquiring limited offensive capabilities by importing 100 F-35s stealth fighter jets from the USA.

Now is the time to work toward improved security cooperation among India, Japan, and the United States of America. In a time of USA-China confrontation, India and Japan should strive to transform this confrontation into an opportunity to promote even stronger relations with their American ally. ■

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India and the US post G20

BY **AMBASSADOR K.V. RAJAN**

While India is routinely described as a "strategic partner" of the United States of America, and is moving slowly but surely towards the status of receiving NATO-like treatment without being a member in the USA Congress, frictions had mounted between the Trump administration and Narendra Modi's government over a wide range of issues in recent weeks; growing differences between Washington and New Delhi were clearly threatening to undermine what had been a deepening strategic relationship.

From India's protectionist trade policies to Prime Minister Modi's need to purchase the S-400 air defence system from Moscow and purchase oil from Iran, tensions between Washington and New Delhi had grown significantly over the past few months.

India's conversations with the USA at the highest level at G- 20 were preceded by an important visit to New Delhi by USA Secretary of State, Pompeo. They were also preceded by President Trump's tweeted warning to India that it must lower tariffs for USA exports. The USA had already made it very clear that India's purchase of Russian S-400 missiles was unacceptable and India should look for alternative sources, and India had made it equally clear that its national interest required the Russian deal to go ahead. Similarly, the question of India's energy security required India to depend on Iran for oil; moreover, USA policies on Iran could have extremely serious adverse consequence for peace and stability. But the USA drew a red line on Iran also (along with Venezuela) as a source of oil for India's needs.

Both sides had left little space for compromise by the time the two leaders met in Osaka.

Yet the atmospherics of the discussion that took place were characterized by a certain restraint, moderation and commitment to find mutually acceptable solutions. India and the USA could take some satisfaction at the bonhomie the two leaders exuded, and the postponement of decisions on trade to a future meeting of the two Trade Ministers. India could take genuine satisfaction from the fact that despite the firm and explicit airing of differences on key issues in public by the two leaders, the atmosphere of cordiality and commitment to a longer term view of their strategic ties had not been dented.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the two main adversaries, USA and Iran. The latter has publicly declared its determination to violate the understanding on restrictions on its enrichment of uranium, and the USA response has been on expected lines. The risk of conflict due to a misunderstanding or over reaction is high. So is the danger of serious adverse consequences for countries like India. In that event, India will find it difficult to continue with its tight rope balancing act. Which is why several experts including Vikram Mehta of Brookings have been urging that India should work quietly with other countries in a similar situation, such as China, Turkey, South Korea, Japan, France and Spain to find a diplomatic solution while there is still time.

There has been (somewhat unwarranted) excitement in India at the news that the USA Congress is moving slowly but surely towards the status of giving India NATO-like treatment in terms of access to sensitive arms and technologies without India being a member of the NATO. This is simply the delayed formalisation of the designation of India as a "Major Defence Partner" during the Presidency of Barack Obama in 2016. The USA has already given India Strategic Trade Authorization-1 status, a move that facilitates the exchange of high technology and strengthens defence collaboration, and also designated India as a "Major defence Partner." Former Ambassador T P Sreenivasan suggests that "…the motivation of the Senators and Congressmen in pushing for the new status of India is clear enough. The China haters among them believe that India should be built up as a counter to China and wish to sell more American weapons to India. The anti-Russian lobby naturally want to end Indian dependence on Russian supplies, which cannot be wished away, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told Secretary of State Mike Pompei in New Delhi." ■

WHY IS INDIA EYING BIMSTEC NOW?

BY **DR. PRAMOD JAISWAL***

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the leaders of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) countries during the second term of his swearing-in ceremony. During his first swearing-in ceremony in 2014, he had invited the leaders of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries. It clearly indicates that India will prioritize BIMSTEC over SAARC.

Why this Shift?

The invitation of the heads of the states of SAARC countries, including Pakistan, to the first swearing-in-ceremony in 2014 clarified that he would give priority to his neighbours. He reflected his ‘Neighbourhood First policy’ through action by starting his foreign visits from Bhutan and Nepal. He visited Nepal three times in four years while no Indian Prime Minister had paid any visit in the last 17 years. He made a surprise visit to Pakistan on his way back from Afghanistan. However, there were a series of the cross-border terror attack at Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama. It not only jeopardized India’s ‘Neighbourhood First policy’ but put India-Pakistan relations on freeze. The 19th SAARC summit that was to be held in Islamabad got cancelled as India withdrew from it stating that “talks and terror cannot go together”. Hence, India’s shift from SAARC to BIMSTEC was primarily to isolate Pakistan and pressurize it to stop encouraging and providing sanctuary to terrorists involved in terror attacks in India.

SAARC, SAFTA, (South Asian Free Trade Area) and SAPTA (SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement) have not made much progress in the last three decades. It has failed to tap the benefits due to India-Pakistan rivalry. The volume of bilateral trade between India and Pakistan is very low, ranging between a mere 2 to 3 per cent of each country’s total trade that is also concentrated into a few commodities. The SAARC intra-regional trade stands at just 5 percent of the total share of intra-regional trade of South Asia. Similarly, foreign direct investment is also dismal, which is 4 percent of the total foreign investment. Moreover, India was not happy with the inclusion of China as the observer in SAARC. Thus, India sees BIMSTEC as the best alternative with immense opportunities.

Opportunities

With a combined GDP of USD 2.7 trillion, BIMSTEC member countries bring together one-fifth (22 percent) of the world's population that live in the seven countries around it. The region has vast untapped natural resources, such as hydro-power, oil and gas. Despite economic challenges, all these seven countries have been able to sustain average annual rates of economic growth between 3.4 percent and 7.5 percent from 2012 to 2016. The region is strategically important as around 25 percent of the world's trade happens via the Bay of Bengal. India has already invested in India-Myanmar-Thailand Asian Trilateral Highway, the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement which will transform the movement of goods and vehicles through the member countries.

BIMSTEC, which includes five countries from South Asia and two from ASEAN is a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia and fits best in India's Act East Policy. During the 20th anniversary speech in 2017, Modi said BIMSTEC connects not only South and Southeast Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal. He said that "For India, it is a natural platform to fulfil our key foreign policy priorities of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East'".

Due to its location and size, the Bay of Bengal has tremendous economic and strategic leverage for India and the member countries. It is a crucial avenue for India to project its naval capabilities at the time when China has made a rapid rise in its naval power and is seeking access to the Indian Ocean. It is economically rewarding for India as it can benefit immensely through greater regional connectivity. One-fourth of India's total population inhabit in the four coastal states (Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal) along the Bay of Bengal. Similarly, around 45 million Indians are in landlocked Northeastern states who can experience economic development by establishing connectivity to Bangladesh, Thailand and Myanmar through the Bay of Bengal. The initiative also realizes India's new economic interests and geostrategic ambition to connect beyond immediate neighbours by connecting the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia.

At the time when most of the neighbours of India have been part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for economic development and connectivity around the region, BIMSTEC can be an Indian alternative to BRI. It is significant when SAARC has failed to bring regional cooperation and economic integration due to India-Pakistan rivalry. From the strategic perspective, the Bay of Bengal, a funnel to the Malacca Straits, has emerged a key theatre for China in maintaining its access route to the Indian Ocean Region. China has undertaken a massive drive to finance and develop infrastructure in South and Southeast Asia through the BRI in almost all BIMSTEC countries, except Bhutan and India.

Similarly, BIMSTEC complements India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' as it provides immense opportunities to its neighbours, who are in the grouping. For Bangladesh, the organization provides an ideal platform to position itself in Asian and global order than just a small state in the Bay of Bengal. To an island nation, Sri Lanka, it offers connectivity to Southeast Asia that can provide an opportunity for it to emerge as the subcontinent's hub for the wider Indian Ocean and Pacific regions. Landlocked Nepal and Bhutan can have easy access to the Bay of Bengal region to reap high economic growth rate. Myanmar and Thailand can get access to the rising consumer market of South Asia and at the same time, they can balance Beijing and develop an alternative to China's massive inroads into Southeast Asia.

BIMSTEC complements India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' as it provides immense opportunities to its neighbours, who are in the grouping. For Bangladesh, the organization provides an ideal platform to position itself in Asian and global order than just a small state in the Bay of Bengal.

Challenges

In spite of having tremendous opportunities, the Bay of Bengal region is one of the world's least integrated regions with abysmal levels of trade, connectivity, and cooperation. In fact, it has become less integrated today than they were fifty years ago. Despite its rising economic potential and geostrategic

centrality, the region remains largely on the sidelines of key global developments. Similarly, the member states of BIMSTEC have pursued different political and socio-economic models. For instance, India followed protectionism; Thailand welcomed liberal market reforms and regional integration with its neighbours to the south and east. While New Delhi adopted a non-aligned path and insulated its immediate periphery from Cold War competition, Bangkok chose to ally with the United States and develop under the protective umbrella of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

Similarly, the region is also infected by different complexities like nontraditional security threats, such as trafficking of narcotics, weapons, and people; the illegal exploitation of natural resources; refugee flows; rebel insurgencies and terrorist groups; and natural disasters. Before increasing connectivity, the member countries have to prepare themselves to deal with these problems.

Moreover, like SAARC, the progress of BIMSTEC is also at a snail's pace. It took 17 years for the organization to come with a permanent secretariat, located in Dhaka. Only four summits have been held so far in the last two decades. Most importantly, it has failed to come with a charter.

Way Forward

In order to meet these challenges, there is an immediate need to empower the BIMSTEC secretariat with greater human and financial resources to proactively drive the organization's agenda. This would be possible only when the member countries provide greater autonomy to the organization. Similarly, the Secretariat should work to revive the initial enthusiasm that drove the initiative by holding high-level meetings regularly. In 2017, the ministerial and senior official level meetings were held after the gap of three years. A new secretary general was appointed in August 2017 which added new vigour to the organization. In 2017, the seven member states pledged to work collectively towards making BIMSTEC stronger, more effective, and result oriented. They emphasized that their geographical contiguity, abundant natural and human resources, rich historical linkages and shared cultural heritage provide BIMSTEC with the ideal platform to promote peace, stability and prosperity in our region.

Due to the convergence of the national interest of the member countries of BIMSTEC, there is greater interest in empowering the Bay of Bengal initiative for enhanced trade and connectivity in the region. BIMSTEC should give high priority to enhance connectivity and develop world-class infrastructure for greater regional trade. They should emphasize more on connectivity with Bhutan, Nepal and the Northeastern states of India. India, being a greater beneficiary with greater economic leverage, should play an important role by benevolently contributing more in strengthening the organization without affecting the interests of other member states. The member states should push for multilateral institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). During the Senior Officials Meeting of BIMSTEC member countries held in Kathmandu in August 2018, the member states responded positively on Nepal's proposal of setting up BIMSTEC Development Fund and BIMSTEC Infrastructure Bank to implement various infrastructure projects that can enhance economic cooperation and connectivity. ■

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Greetings to readers of 'The Diplomatist' !

The India of today has attained greater prominence in the world and wields immense influence in the global order. This has been the result of mature and stable political leadership, a robust economy and inclusive growth over the years.

India has emerged as a bright spot in the global economy. It has reached an inflection point wherefrom its ambition and pace of change are guiding global economic dimensions. As an economic power navigating the shifting world trade landscape, India seeks to enhance its scope for manoeuvring, in order to address its unique challenges born of a varied socio-economic fabric.

It thus becomes imperative to infuse greater cohesiveness and synergies between foreign policy and economic interests. This calls for creating a supportive interface at the international level. Our astute diplomats have already ensured that India's energies are directed towards our economic interests as well.

Going forward, there will be challenges and opportunities for India in the form of economic progress, energy security, trade protectionism, disruptive technologies, sustainability and climate change, Industry 4.0, among others. We are proud of the fact that having descended from an ancient civilisation, India's greatness lies in taking up issues beyond itself. It is with this responsibility that we aspire to place Indian industry at a higher pedestal in the world.

With this background, ASSOCHAM, as an apex industry chamber, has commenced the ASSOCHAM Diplomacy to Business Initiative (ADBI) under the leadership of our distinguished Ambassador Mr. K V Rajan, to enhance Indian industry's position and stance in the international trade and political environment. Under this initiative, we have collaborated to have a section in The Diplomatist magazine dedicated to Diplomacy-to-Business issues, which would serve to strengthen our understanding and provide in-depth assessment of international affairs as they impact businesses.

I am confident that this initiative would provide the necessary synergies between diplomacy and business and mould itself into a reliable compass to help expand our worldview.

I wish the new venture every success.

Balkrishan Goenka
President, ASSOCHAM

Ambassador K.V. Rajan,
Chairman, (Diplomacy to Business Initiative)

The objective behind setting up a D2B Initiative (ADBI) in ASSOCHAM is a simple one. There is a great deal of discussion that goes on in Delhi's think tank and diplomatic community as well as the media and on-line exchanges, with regard to the many important foreign policy developments, issues and opportunities that crop up and have a bearing on India's business interests. The attempt is to distil as much of this as is possible and convey it in the hope that both diplomats, as well as the business community, would find it useful — for further study, reflection and discussion as necessary.

When Prime Minister Modi announced his surprise decision to appoint former Foreign Secretary Dr S Jaishankar as his Foreign Minister after his remarkable election victory, there was surprise all around, mixed with a near-general reaction that, given the uncertainties and tensions in the world and the daunting challenges confronting India, this was a bold and positive decision.

That sentiment has been supported by the Prime Minister's sure-footed actions on a very wide array of meetings with world leaders ever since his inauguration. He and the Foreign Minister have indeed hit the ground running, but there has been no trace of hesitancy in stating India's positions, whether it was in regard to Pakistan or the USA pressure tactics on Iran or defence imports from Russia or trade, or in dealings with China. There is little doubt that the world is deeply impressed by India's democracy, by Mr Modi's leadership credentials, and by his capacity- and that of his foreign policy team- to navigate the country through complicated waters in such a way that India's relevance as a constructive force in the global community is enhanced while it seeks to protect its national interests.

India's foreign policy agenda and priorities are clear and are being publicly articulated with refreshing transparency and explicitness even with friendly countries. Its style and substance are attracting understanding and support at home and abroad.

Perhaps so far the only exception has been with regard to South Asia. The "neighbourhood first" objective has been emphatically asserted. But the simultaneous dismissal of SAARC as a viable forum for regional cooperation—for understandable reasons, given Pakistan's policy via a bus terror—dies to create some confusion in the rest of India's neighbourhood. Is India turning its back on South Asia, its civilizational and historical assets, its geographical advantages as an entity, along with SAARC? BIMSTEC offers a route and has more "energy" than SAARC and is hence receiving more attention, but cannot be an alternative—as one South Asian Ambassador was quick to point out.

For some South Asian diplomats, the Prime Minister's vision of *"Sab Ka Saath, Sab Ka Vikas, Sab Ka Vishwas"* (All together, Progress for All, Trust Among All) could extend beyond India's frontiers to include its neighbours— even if Pakistan chooses to be excluded. It is subregional cooperation within South Asia whose time has come, and which will provide the bricks for building SAARC.

A proactive business community which can think beyond borders envisage a Make With India in selected sectors based on comparative advantage and complementarities, and shared prosperity as a regional imperative would now seem to be in India's national interest.

K.V. Rajan

An ADBI Initiative

D2B ON THE GROUND
(ALSO IN THE AIR!)

ASSOCHAM was asked by the Ministry of External Affairs to do an unusual Webinar presentation on "India-SICA Cooperation". SICA (short in Spanish for Central American Integration Area) consists of Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala,Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

This D2B "with difference" saw a late night (IST) live interaction between business representatives and diplomats from both sides, including Indian Ambassadors to SICA countries and their counterparts in New Delhi, participating in a Track 1.5 format with the participation of Foreign Offices of the concerned countries.

ASSOCHAM President Mr. B K Goenka meeting H.E. Dr. Ron Malka, Ambassador of Israel to India

As a result of the Webinar interaction, a number of new areas have been identified for collaboration, including agriculture, education, renewable energy, environment conservation, Information Technology, science and technology, drugs and pharmaceuticals, Small and Medium Enterprises, infrastructure, tourism – to name a few. Specific suggestions included:

- Ties for Organic Farming
- Enhanced Indian Exports to SICA countries.
- Introduction of Indian Nutraceuticals including Indian Traditional Medicines and Therapies of Ayurveda which could be extended to Yoga or AYUSH.
- Promotion of Joint Venture between India and SICA Countries in sectors like Hospitality, Renewable Energy.

ASSOCHAM President Mr. B K Goenka meeting H.E. Sir Dominic Asquith, British High Commissioner to India

ASSOCHAM Vice President Mr. Vineet Agarwal meeting H.E. Ms. Harinder Sidhu, Australian High Commissioner to India

- India can also strengthen its relationship with SICA Countries through "International Solar Alliance".
- Project Exports to SICA Countries.
- More Foreign Direct Investment in sectors like infrastructure, electricity grids, railways, roads and logistics.
- Cultural Programmes.
- Student Exchange Programme
- Entrepreneurship and Start-Up Awards.
- Memorandum of Understanding between Universities / Educational Institutes.
- Agro-Industry and Footwear are the emerging sectors in SICA Countries.
- India should also take benefit of Free Trade Zones in SICA Countries.

With its strategic location and duty free access to the USA and other developed markets, SICA countries are well poised to receive Indian investments and co-production arrangements for mutual benefit. ■

INDIA'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY CHALLENGES

BY **AMBASSADOR K.V. RAJAN**

Indian diplomacy usually comes in for much praise from most quarters at home and abroad—especially "classic" diplomacy involving the management of political challenges, tensions and conflict situations.

Its achievements in other dimensions of diplomacy—economic and cultural in particular—have however traditionally been under-recognized. This is partly because Indian diplomats are not given much credit back home for their achievements in these fields even when there is much recognition and acclaim locally.

The Modi Government has been elected with a huge mandate, in large measure due to the hopes, aspirations and expectations of people that there would be a rapid improvement in their quality of life.

Mr. Modi himself seems to be in a hurry to fulfil these expectations in large measure during his tenure. And there is little doubt that his hopes of India becoming a five trillion economy, of achieving 8 percent annual growth of the Indian economy, etc, in the foreseeable future are dependent in good measure on the private sector—Finance Minister said as much in her maiden budget speech on June 4, 2019.

It is also recognized that the success or otherwise of Indian diplomats in delivering successes in terms of trade expansion, increased investment, technology transfers, solutions to India's problems in agriculture, scientific research, food and energy security, exports, skill development, employment, health and education will play a role in determining the trajectory of the Indian story in the next few years. The government's keenness to open diplomatic missions in most countries around the world is a reflection of this realization, apart from the priority accorded to strengthening links with the Indian diaspora.

Thus, diplomats with strong credentials for economic and commercial work have their work cut out for them.

They must be given space, encouragement and priority when performance assessments are made for their promotions or transfers. This has not always been the case.

They will also need to be re-skilled to the extent necessary from the point of view of India's needs and the host country's potential. For example, a generalist would not be able to work effectively in a country with untapped energy resources unless he understands the intricacies of the particular energy trade involved. They should be encouraged to be less inhibited in supporting and assisting the Indian private

Our diplomats are very restrained when it comes to backing an Indian company's bid in an international tender, fixing up appointments or assisting in negotiations to clinch business or in a trade dispute scenario.

sector in its efforts to penetrate foreign markets. As of now, the quality of support Indian companies receive from missions varies from country to country and Ambassador to Ambassador. Generally, our diplomats are very restrained when it comes to backing an Indian company's bid in an international tender, fixing up appointments or assisting in negotiations to clinch business or in a trade dispute scenario. This Is in sharp contrast to the aggressive way in which many other diplomatic missions support their companies, and must change; Indian Chambers of Commerce also need to change their tendency to simply follow the government when it has high-level visits or reaches agreements with another country. In today's world, a pro-active private sector can set the agenda and even influence trade policies of governments; India is no exception.

Innovative approaches, new technologies and environment- friendly, cost-effective offers are increasingly preferred in deciding on new projects, and smart economic diplomacy will be on the lookout for them rather than routinely working for every Indian bid; Economic Indigenization in critical areas is essential, and often a well prepared diplomat could open the doors to timely intervention at the policy level which would further this objective. Thus, by way of example in the ICT domain, Pavitran Rajans suggests:

> ***"The journey to complete indigenisation is some distance away as India lacks in chip foundries and hardware manufacturing.***
>
> ***What India has, is the largest trained manpower in software and a niche group of companies which have invested in foundational technologies like OS, Chip design, routers, firewalls etc.***
>
> ***We now need to do some nimble and pragmatic business deals wherein these technologies will need to be adopted by Western and Chinese companies globally for access to the Indian market. For example, a smartphone or networking appliance with a Western chipset, Chinese hardware and Indian OS with all source codes examined, compiled and guaranteed by Indian companies for India is the way forward."***

Similarly, the indigenisation of India's huge defence requirements could be greatly assisted by alert and knowledgeable diplomats.

Then there is need to be sharp on multilateral issues as there is a multilateral dimension—and opportunities for India—accompanying almost every bilateral engagement. BIMSTEC, BBIN, BRICS, BSA, EU before and post-BREXIT, ASEAN, regional and sub-regional groupings in Latin America and Africa—an economic diplomat must be a multilateral animal if he is to perform well for his country.

As has been said elsewhere:

Economic diplomacy not only promotes the state's prosperity but also, as occasion demands and opportunity permits, manipulates its foreign commercial and financial relations in support of its foreign policy – as in the case of sanctions against Iran. Accordingly, economic diplomacy is a major theme of the external relations of virtually all countries. At home, economic ministries, trade and investment promotion agencies, chambers of commerce, and of course foreign ministries, are all participants in economic work. Current trends include increasing collaboration between state and non-official agencies, and increased importance given to WTO issues, the negotiation of free trade and preferential trade agreements, and accords covering investments, double taxation avoidance, financial services and the like. Abroad, embassies, consulates, and trade offices handle economic diplomacy. The main focus is on promotion, to attract foreign business, investments, technology and tourists. Economic diplomacy connects closely with political, public and other segments of diplomatic work.

Then there are new issues on the international agenda such as terrorist funding and cyber security. Indian diplomats need to be extremely alert in recognizing and protecting India's national interests even when it is not obvious that they are threatened.

Finally, economic diplomacy today means that government-announced priorities and policies should be repackaged and even adjusted in the interest of augmenting advantages to the country. Thus, "Make In India" should not preclude "Make With India" if that is the way to win the competition from third countries in South Asia or gain duty-free access to markets like the USA from Latin America.

All in all, economic diplomacy gives great opportunities for creative thinking objective judgement, professional proactivism in close consultation with governments and the private sector, as to how the national interest can best be served. Its time has come as India prepares to take off as a major power in the world. ■

SPOTLIGHT

10 MEASURES TO VITALIZE NEPAL-INDIA RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW MODI

BY **BINOJ BASNYAT***

After 17 years PM Modi visited Nepal 4 times as the Head of Government (HOG), which communicates India's pledge and sincerity for enhancing the respectable and cordial relationship with Nepal. Modi visited all the nations in the neighbourhood except Maldives during his first tenure. Present in the first swearing-in ceremony of Modi in 2014 were the HOG of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations in the immediate neighbourhood while the second tenure beholds Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) HOGs, Chair of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) President of Kyrgyz Republic representing Central Asia and PM of Mauritius of the Indian Ocean Region. The re-imagining of neighbourhood initiates Delhi to associate with various nations, sub-regions and regions. PM Oli of Nepal has given an impression of being enthusiastic and prompt to be part of the swearing-in function to be held in Delhi; at the same time, the Nepal Communist Party came into power with anti-India rhetoric. Nepal's five HOG but four PM including Oli visited India during Modi's first tenure. The first visit of PM Modi in Nepal was acknowledged with eagerness and optimism while the fourth one was accepted with dissimilar speculation. Discussion in Kathmandu is predicting to focus on the prospect of Nepal-India relationship, India's "First Neighbourhood Policy" and the Nepal Communist Party's (NCP) endeavour at accomplishing a geopolitical balance, with the increase of major power manoeuvres in the region and Nepal. Academia, politicians and diplomats in Kathmandu have been discussing in various platforms and in social media on what would Narendra Modi mean to Nepal?

The international situation with China and the US's trade war is ongoing and Trump terminating India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under GSP from 5th June. Globalization and multilateral treaties and conventions are less significant.

The diplomacy in Modi first tenure was wide-ranging from "First Neighbourhood Policy" to engagement from almost all the continents. With that determination, Modi will spend more time with the immediate and extended neighbourhood. India is deeply drawn into "Act East Policy" which expresses the importance of BIMSTEC, while SAARC will be on hold till Pakistan expresses seriousness in countering terrorism. At the same time, India will be engaging Pakistan through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The critical platform to securing interests can be distinctly envisaged as BIMSTEC to be the apparatus to the "Act East Policy" while SCO to West and Central Asian Nations and the Indian Ocean Region as part of the Indo-Pacific conception. BRI may not be objectionable other than China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) CPEC, on the contrary, can be made use of for India's key strategic interests by means of regional connectivity. India's "Strategic Balancing Policy" will be at hand focusing more on the immediate and extended neighbourhood with reworked "First Neighbourhood Policy" with major powers expanded interest in the backyard.

India's disinclination to uphold the 2015 constitution of Nepal was the initiating point, where owned impression turned around that led to the imposition of a blockade by India when Oli was the HOG. The imposition impacted the daily lives of the general people severely. Anti India oratory took at large in Nepal especially by the then United Marxist Leninist (UML) and NCP Maoists who unified to participate in the federal and provincial election attaining majority and representing two thirds with the support from the Madhesh Based Parties to govern for a full term after 20 years.

An alternative strategic network was expedited after the unofficial blockade by India when China's intention to move into South Asia and gain a foothold while India's lack of trust in Nepal's policies and the political leaders and their footprints, as well as the course of action in Nepal surely, has a geopolitical and geo-economic significance. The Oli government looked to the northern neighbour for assistance to lessen dependency with India and take economic benefit. Various MOUs including the agreement on Transit Transport and allowing access to the seaports for third country trade used from various six customs points (Tatopani, Kerung, Kimathanka, Korola, Yari and Olangchunggola and three trade routes Olangchunggola, Kimathanka and Korala and join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Nepal - China Trans Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, including the Nepal - China, cross border railway, the gateway to South Asia was reaffirmed during the President of Nepal's visit to China this April in the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Military cooperation with military training, disaster management, medical assistance, equipments for peacemaking operations, establishment of National Defence University are becoming visible. China has been the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal. The agreements focus mainly on seven categories, namely strategic communication connectivity with railways and waterways, energy with hydro projects, power trade, infrastructure development, agriculture, political and diplomatic gestures and security concerns.

Finding a place within China and India will be Nepal's real strategic challenge and vulnerability in the years or even decades to come, while the diplomatic moves and presumed gains are just a sideshow and a temporary issue along the way.

There are four geopolitical and two political trends for Nepal, one, India and China's rapid growth in both economy and political influence in South Asia, two, strategic communication network North to South as part of the BRI project will put up with strategic regional linkages, which will uphold security, diplomatic, economic and political consequences, three, variety of transportation system from air, land, rail to waterways and lastly, new approach for economic development through mega projects and increase in energy plants and Foreign Direct Investments. The internal vibrant is, one, Nepal's political diversification with nationalism is hand and extra-regional and regional influences on national politics and traditional beliefs and two, major transformation to – Federalism, Nationalism, Republicanism and Secularism.

The national security environment is laden with so many complex strategic and tactical issues related to federalism, decentralization, diplomacy, economy, identity, migration, drop in remittance, polarization along political, social, cultural and ethnic lines, politicalization of all institutions, poor governance, impeachment attempts, land disputes, terrorism, energy shortage and dependable trade and transit.

Conclusion

When the new Modi government will be focusing on the immediate neighbourhood as part of the strategic policy; Nepal and India need to work together for regional stability and bilateral economic enhancement, anti-terrorism regional approach, energy security, supply security, disaster management and multilateral strategic connections.

Ten dealings appear to be expressed that will bear geopolitical, geo-economic consequences by: one, protecting the cultural values and religious harmony that both countries enjoy; two, successfully completing the road map for past agreements within a stipulated time; three, detaching the trust shortfall by fulfilling the assurances given by the political leaders and bringing about diplomatic reliability; four, reviewing the 1950 treaty of security and friendship that have been submitted by the EPG that was established in 2016; five, energizing 16 bilateral committees for securing cordial environment in several fields including border disputes; six, dedicated line of supply; seven, effective connectivity by bringing in railways and waterways to Nepali territory; eight, communicating major concerns about comprehensive and strategic issues by Kathmandu-Delhi political engagements and finally a requirement of a core geopolitical mechanism to build sober and reliable intelligence based assessments and forecasts on other key trends of threats to help South Asian nations make informed decisions, identify opportunities and anticipate risks through regional networking including acts of terrorism with bilateral, trilateral and multi-lateral regional associations like the SAARC and BIMSTEC. The need to revitalize the recognition of Indo-Nepal strategic relationship is the need to move into the 21st century, the century for the people of the two countries and the region.

Both the government of Nepal and India must visualize how Nepal will shape and impact India politically, diplomatically, culturally and economically in the next five to ten years so that correct policies and put in order. ■

** Author is a retired Nepali Army Major General and is a political and security analyst*

PEOPLE'S POWER IN TURBULENT MENA

BY **DR. WAIEL AWWAD***

The onset of Arab Spring in 2011 saw people of the Middle East and North African States (MENA), pour out in the streets to topple regimes and seek freedom and better life. The ecstasy was short lived with the alternative to these regimes and the birth of more extremist group which was called the Islamic States of the Levant (ISIL) from the womb of Al Qaeda terrorist organization. The defeat of the IS in Syria and Iraq did not bring relief to the region. It will be a long way to recover from the devastation, slaughtering of innocent people and total destruction of properties and livelihoods. Not to mention the permanent scar in the hearts of the families of the victims of its atrocities. The challenges are tremendous for the people of Syria and Iraq and more so to rehabilitate the mercenaries captured after the elimination of Daesh from the region. There are hundreds of them unwanted by their native country. There are more than 2000 children of unknown fathers and hundreds of widowers. Ironically, the Iraqi government under US and the West need to accommodate them! While many intelligent reports reveal the transportation of the hard core terrorists to other places to use terror as a tool for political objectives by vested interest nations.

The region is in turbulent water once again with rising tension between Israel and Palestinian people under occupation in Gaza strip and West Bank. The proxy war on Syria is far from over with foreign illegal occupation by Turkey, which eyeing parts of Syria, US, French and British troops, with US military bases in the northern eastern frontier and shielding of Kurdish forces to create an autonomous enclave against the will of the people.

In Idlib province, north of Syria, hundreds of terrorists are still taking shelter and are protected by the Erdogan regime. Syria is determined to liberate all its territories from occupied forces by all means and eliminate internationally recognized terrorist organizations: Al Qaeda and ISIS from all over Syria.

In Yemen, the catastrophe of the 21st century is beyond imagination of the human loss, starvation, malnourished children and disease with the Saudi led coalition continuing unabated bombing the life out of the poor Yemeni.

On the other hand, US foreign policy toward regime change in the region by force continues under president Trump who at one stage was strongly opposing to it. Now, USA is stationing its Centre Striking Group and Bomber Task

In Yemen, the catastrophe of the 21st century is beyond imagination of the human loss, starvation, malnourished children and disease with the Saudi led coalition continuing unabated bombing the life out of the poor Yemeni.

Forces in the region under another false flag, like the Iraq scenario, of an imminent attack to its interest in the region by Iranian revolutionary guards, as per Israeli intelligent inputs. National Security Advisor John Bolton, who called once to bomb Iran and leading the orchestra for another US war in the region, warned Iran of dire consequences. In fact, it is Tel Aviv, that keeps pouring the fuel on the fire by increasing the anti Iran sentiment in the US administration ever since president Donald Trump took over. It was the later who pulled out of the nuclear deal that was signed by 5 plus, one in 2015 with Iran after a long series of discussions with all parties and then, imposed economic sanctions against Iran. The prime minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu threatens to stop Iranian oil ships in the sea and prevent them it from selling their oil. All these provocative measures by US and allies against Iran raised the tension once again in an already turbulent region and throw a dark cloud of an imminent war .This US policy toward Iran has poisoned the relations with neighbouring countries to Iran as well as US allies who are opposed to US Unilateralism and Exceptionalism. The world is still limping because of the financial crisis which affected many nations and is leading to social unrest. International world order is in a mess and yet to take shape with emerging powers in a multi polar world. There is rise of nationalism, patriotism and right wing parties in power in many countries. The differences between great powers may deter a war by USA for now. But the military build-up by the later, will keep the tide high and a chance of another false flag will lead John Bolton to convince the President to attack Iran which will lead to total chaos and instability, threatening the world peace and security. The oil crisis will be severe. Countries in South and Southeast Asia will suffer economically with the disruption of oil supply from the region if a war broke out. Though it may not be soon, it will encourage US allies to provoke Iran. It will be again a deviation of the international community from a comprehensive fight against terrorism that plagues every country in the region and beyond. We need to draw lessons from the US and UK invasion of Iraq, Venezuela crisis, North Korea and Libya. Iraq unilateral invasion by USA and UK was the main cause for the world community fight against terrorism. Iraq was totally destroyed and led to sectarian violence which turned out to be breeding ground for terrorism and extremism. Venezuela is blown out of proportion with US intervention and threatening of military action for a regime change. North Korea became more adamant and rejected US pressure and economic sanctions to dismantle its nuclear weapons which will lead to further militarization of the Asia Pacific region. Libya, war torn nation, divided, literally, into three countries is another tragedy of regime change which is now the hub of terrorism, arms, and human trafficking.

The US-Iran tension is more than to meet the eyes. USA under President Trump guided by his son-in-law Kushner and company, is planning to introduce a century deal benefiting Israel as a state only for the Jew and dilute the Palestinian cause and their right for a homeland in their own as a two state solution. What Washington, dictates to Tehran is a long list: first and most important one is to price the Gas export in US Dollars; renegotiation of the civil nuclear deal; stop its ballistic missiles technology; support for Palestinian organization Hezbollah resistance forces in Lebanon; and pull out of Syria and Iraq.

The picture is very grim and depressing. Yet, there are still hopes that the people of the region if left on their own will rise to the occasion and struggle for their freedom, democracy, justice and prosperity in a rich region with abundant wealth and culture.

The second wave of uprising is on from Sudan to Algeria. It is the consistent indigenous people power which is causing a regime change and not military foreign intervention. ■

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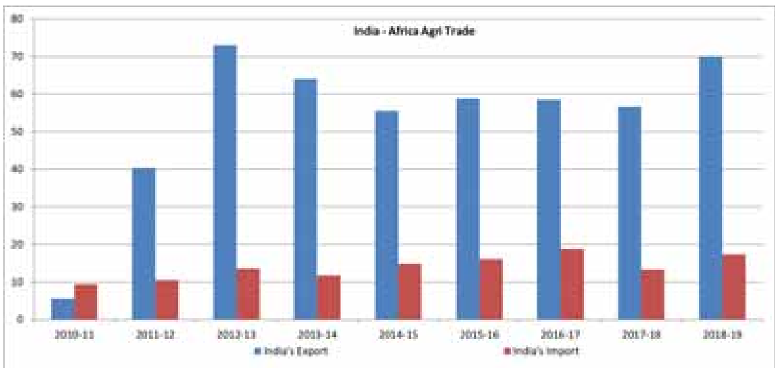
AGRICULTURE TRADE

TO GAIN POSITIVE TRACTIONS WITH ENHANCED COOPERATION

BY DR. HANISH KUMAR SINHA*

India and Africa together constitute about one-third of the world's population and are seen as investment hotspots of the global economy and both have comparable agro-climatic and socio-economic conditions, which create the potential for enhanced cooperation in this sector. The trading relation between India and Africa dates back to over thousands of years when Indian traders first sailed to the east coast of Africa in search of agricultural and animal products, gems and minerals. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world at present and Africa is also experiencing rapid growth. Trade and investment has always been a critical dimension of the India-Africa relationship. India is Africa's third largest trading partner, with over USD 70 billion in trade and over USD 50 billion in investment. Trade between the two regions has grown significantly from 5.63 Lakh MT in 2010-11 to 70.03 Lakh MT in 2018-19. The agricultural sector in Africa has great potential to contribute to this growth, with the continent having almost 60 percent of uncultivated land in the world and currently producing only 10 percent of the global output. India is committed to helping Africa implement its development agenda not only by providing credit facilities, but also through investments and partnerships in varied sectors, with agriculture as a frontrunner.



Africa has changed from a net exporter to a net importer of agricultural products. Up to the early 1990s, sub-Saharan

Africa as a whole was a significant net exporter of agricultural products. With the resumption of growth and the mineral commodity boom in the 2000s, imports have risen sharply to exceed exports by over 30 percent. Agricultural land in Africa is approximately 40.52 percent of the total area. The African economy has been growing at an average rate of 7 percent from 2011–2013 and the agriculture sector contributes 32 percent to the GDP. On the other hand, approximately 60.48 percent of India's total land area is agricultural area and contributes 15 percent to the GDP of the country. India has the maximum percentage (nearly 88 percent) of its agricultural area as arable land. Whereas Africa has only 19 percent of its agricultural area as arable land; its maximum agricultural land (nearly 80 percent) is under permanent meadows and pastures.

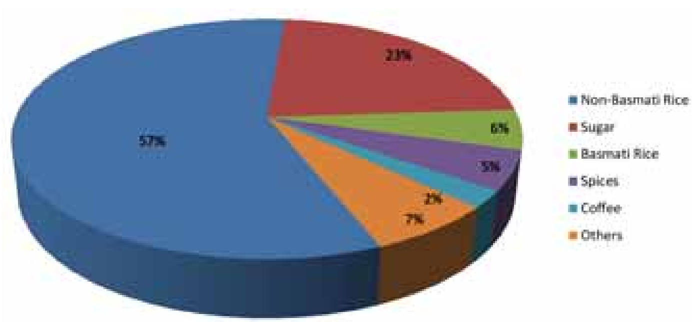
India's Africa policy over the past few decades has oscillated between passive and reluctantly reactive at best. Strategic apathy toward the continent was obvious on many fronts. The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by the government for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has immensely benefited African nations and contributed towards steady increase in the trade figures by extending duty-free access to 98.2 percent of India's total tariff lines. So far, 38 African countries earn the benefits of the DFTP Scheme. In March 2019, the Government of India proposed to Africa to enter a free trade agreement (FTA) or a preferential trade agreement (PTA). The AfCFTA provides an important opportunity for African countries in an increasingly globalised world. The elimination of tariffs in goods and services will help in boosting the economic growth of the African countries, transform their economies and achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). Recently, 47 African leaders have signed a framework establishing Duty Free Tariff Preference the African Continental Free Trade Area, the largest free trade agreement since the creation of the WTO.

Africa has changed from a net exporter to a net importer of agricultural products. Up to the early 1990s, sub-Saharan Africa as a whole was a significant net exporter of agricultural products. With the resumption of growth and the mineral commodity boom in the 2000s, imports have risen sharply to exceed exports by over 30 percent. In terms of commodity categories, cereals (including rice, maize and wheat) and livestock products (dairy and meat) represent more than 50 percent of Africa's total food imports. 'Non-traditional' export products (flowers, semi-processed fruits and vegetables, and textile products), traditional products (coffee, cocoa, tea and spices) and tobacco constitute a major share of Africa's agricultural exports.

India's Export to Africa

Major agricultural commodities imported by Africa include cereals, Pulses, Oils and Spices etc. In terms of value, Africa imported agricultural products worth INR 122.86 thousand crore in FY 2019, wherein exports from India represented a meagre share of 16.34 percent. The year-wise trend for FY 2010 to FY 2019 shows that India's bilateral trade with Africa was limited to five major product categories in these years: cereals, sugar and sugar confectionery, coffee, spices and cereals, followed by sugar and sugar confectionery, being the prominent product categories imported from India. India majorly exported Non-Basmati rice to Africa with the share of 57.00 percent followed by Sugar (23.25 percent), Basmati Rice (6.10 percent), Spices (5.07 percent) and Coffee (2.28 percent). While India's import growth has not been as high as expected, in contrast, the value of agricultural exports has increased rapidly during the years since 2010. Over the entire period, India's major agri commodities export to Africa over total agri export have grown about four fold.

India's Export of major Agri Commodities to Africa

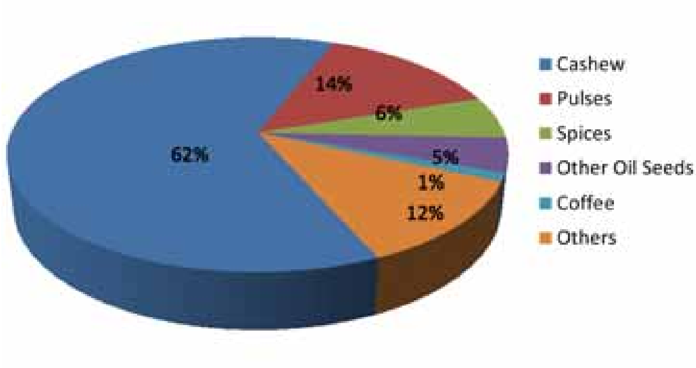


India's Export of major Agri Commodities to Africa								(In Lakh MT)
Product Name	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Non-Basmati Rice	0.28	26.57	48.22	45.23	39.77	41.49	43.65	43.58	45.77
Sugar	2.56	8.34	9.38	10.00	9.68	13.76	10.98	9.25	19.09
Basmati Rice	0.32	0.66	0.78	0.81	1.00	1.16	1.18	1.33	1.47
Spices	0.39	0.54	0.71	0.69	0.63	0.53	0.59	0.64	0.75
Coffee	0.14	0.23	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.15	0.18	0.29	0.20
Others	1.934	3.995	13.837	7.215	4.351	1.716	1.903	1.569	2.765
Total	5.628	40.340	73.051	64.058	55.535	58.803	58.486	56.662	70.039

Africa's exports to India

Major agricultural commodities exported by Africa Cashew, Cotton, Pulses, Spices, Oil Seeds etc. In value terms, on an average exports to India represented the share of 40.55 percent for these major agri commodities exported from Africa. Specifically, there was a general rise in the value of agricultural export from INR 4.30 thousand crore in 2010 to approximately INR 14.93 thousand crore in 2018. The year-wise trend for FY 2010 to FY 2019 shows that India's bilateral trade with Africa was limited to five major product categories in these years: fresh fruits, nuts and melons; fresh vegetables; coffee, tea and spices; cotton; and fertilisers. Further, trends across these five product categories have fluctuated over the years. Almost 90 percent of raw cashews are sourced from Africa, besides other agricultural commodities sourced including pulses, spices, fruit and nuts. Africa's Agri commodities exports to India have increased continuously over the last decade from 27.53 percent to 40.55 percent in 2018-19. The reasons behind this increase in exports include price booms of various commodities over the last decade, the improvement in infrastructure in the continent (mostly transport and telecommunication), economic growth, and more regional and global integration efforts. In terms of value, India imported agricultural products worth INR 36.83 thousand crore in FY 2019, with the share of Africa 40.55 percent. India almost 62 percent of Raw Cashews are imported from Africa besides other agricultural commodities including Pulses (14 percent), Spices (6 percent), Other Oil Seeds (5 percent) and Coffee (1 percent).

India's Import of major Agri Commodities from Africa



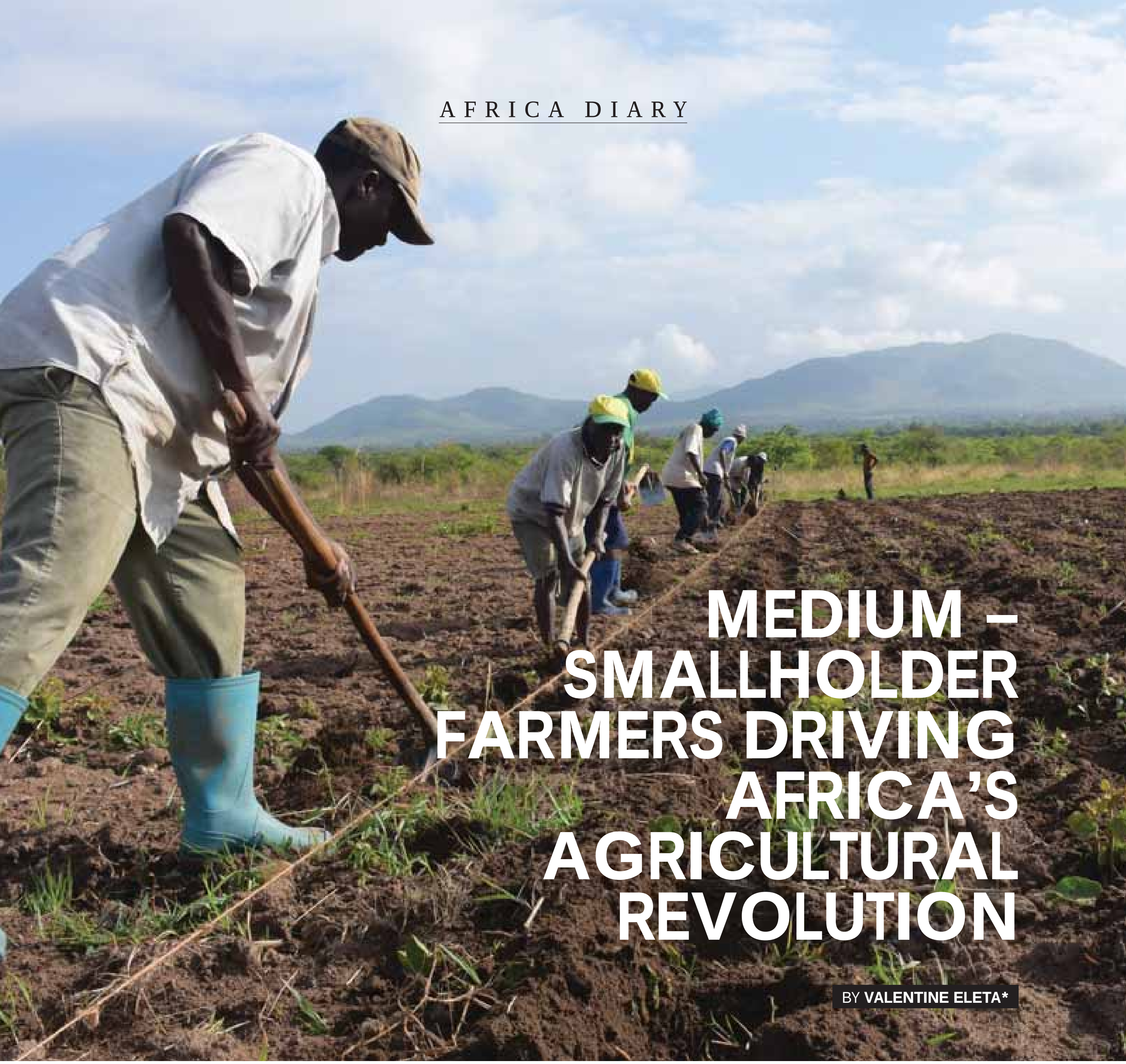
India's Import of major Agri Commodities from Africa (In Lakh MT)

Product Name	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Cashew	5.12	7.50	8.38	7.47	9.28	9.32	7.64	6.36	7.14
Pulses	3.40	2.31	3.50	1.17	3.94	4.17	7.11	3.25	5.56
Spices	0.11	0.15	0.14	0.20	0.22	0.27	0.23	0.29	0.37
Other Oil Seeds	0.40	0.38	0.41	0.50	0.49	0.57	1.12	1.23	2.12
Coffee	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.17	0.16	0.17
Others	0.31	0.08	1.10	2.30	0.79	1.65	2.60	2.04	1.96
Total	9.42	10.50	13.62	11.73	14.83	16.09	18.87	13.33	17.32

In order to foster greater and concerted participation, few of the hindrances need to be worked out judiciously. The first major block is the high transport & logistic cost owing to which Indian exporters prefer to sell their goods on a 'free on-board' basis instead of 'on-delivery'. Indian exporters also cite poor business environment and lack of access to buyers as another major impediment in trade. Firms find it difficult to acquire the necessary visas and permits required to set up operations in Africa. This is particularly important for information technology firms who are looking to partner with and expand operations in the African continent.

Finally, the semblance of the agrarian economy in both India and Africa with the dependency of the majority of the population for livelihood offers a plethora of bilateral growth opportunities. The importance of Africa as a major growth partner of India's economic expansion could be further ascertained by the fact that out of the 10 fastest growing economies at least five are in Africa. The greater socio-economic partnership of India & Africa is expected to significantly strengthen India role in the global economy as Africa provides a consumer market with 1.7 billion people, over USD 6.7 trillion consumer market and investment opportunity of over USD 100 billion a year spread across 55 countries. If proper incentives are provided and key impediments are resolved, India could be a key investor in agriculture, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, textiles, automobiles, banking and financial services, information technology, energy and infrastructure. ■

** Author is Head - R&D at National Bulk Handling Cooperation (NBHC)*



MEDIUM – SMALLHOLDER FARMERS DRIVING AFRICA'S AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

BY **VALENTINE ELETA***

There is an ongoing agricultural revolution in Africa, and medium - smallholder farmers are the Vanguards!

The last few years have seen a welcome paradigm shift in African agricultural systems and outlook, after the lethargy of the previous decades. Rapid population growth, urbanisation and rising incomes have contributed to massive growth in demand for food in Africa. Individuals, governments and non-governmental organisations are beginning to really see the agriculture industry, as a viable, sustainable line of business, with potential for serious profits. This, coupled with an increasing awareness of the need to overcome the continent's over-dependence on extraction and export of mineral resources as primary sources of revenue, has resulted in a renewed interest in agriculture and agribusiness. There have been calls from various governments, for citizens to take up farming, to ensure food sufficiency. Programmes aimed at increasing agricultural capacity and enticing young people back to the farm are being rolled out across the continent. Most of the investments are directed towards medium – smallholder farms, and other parts of the agriculture value chain.

For the purpose of this article, 'Smallholder Farms' are loosely defined as farms with a total landholding of less than 5 hectares (ha). They are mostly driven by human labour, with low external inputs (machinery, irrigation, inorganic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, etc.) and consequently low productivity. Medium farms are those with landholdings from 5 to 50 ha. These medium-scale farms are in-between small-scale, semi-subsistence production and larger-scale, more commercial farms, making use of agricultural machinery, from power tools to tractors and other external inputs. Large-scale farms are thus, those with more than 50 ha landholdings.

In most parts of Africa, official figures indicate that as much as 90 percent of agricultural production is derived from smallholder farmers, where the average farm size is about one hectare. Because they are so small, not many can generate enough income to keep farmers above the poverty line and most of them increasingly rely on other sources of income. Recent national statistics show, however, a rapid increase in the number of medium-scale farmers across Africa. Medium-scale farms are reported to control roughly 20 percent of total farmland in Kenya, 32 percent in Ghana, 39 percent in Tanzania, and over 50 percent in Zambia, and the numbers of such farms are growing fast! Within the past decade, the amount of agricultural produce that these farms contribute to countries' national output has risen rapidly. In some countries, like Tanzania and Zambia, medium-sized farms now account for roughly 40 percent of the country's marketed agricultural produce. Of course, the situation is not the same, across Africa. In densely populated areas with land constraints such as Kenya and Rwanda, smallholder farms still account for most of the agricultural output. Medium-scale farms are on the rise mainly where there is substantial, undeveloped land.

Medium-scale farms help improve access to markets and services for nearby smallholder farms. For example, many medium-scale farms either own tractors and other important farm machinery (ploughs, harrows, harvesters, planters, etc.), or they attract tractor rental providers, who now provide mechanisation services to smallholders. To ensure continuity of supply, large trading firms and food processing companies prefer to set up buying depots and factories in areas where there are many large and medium-scale farms. The smallholder farmers benefit from being around these depots and factories, as they offer ready markets for their produce.

The rapid rise of medium-smallholder farms is due, in part, to an increased interest in agriculture, by urban-based professionals or influential rural dwellers. A few of the medium-scale farmers are successful smallholder farmers, who acquired more land and grew their operations. The majority, however, are 'new' to agriculture. They are middle – high-income individuals, often professionals, entrepreneurs or retired civil servants. Many gathered their savings from non-farm jobs, bought or leased farmlands and became either part-time or full-time farmers. Some retain their jobs in the cities, hire managers to attend to their farms and pay occasional visits. Still, others, are unemployed youths, who choose to take up self-employment in agriculture, to make ends meet. Traditional farming has long been associated with poverty and a sense of inevitable hopelessness. However, a growing number of young, college-educated Africans are fighting the stigma associated with agriculture, by seeking to professionalize farming. They are applying innovative and scientific approaches to increase yields, and show that agriculture can be profitable. They are also making constructive use of social media, to change how young people see farming and agribusiness.

Another major contributory factor to the swift advancement of medium-small farms in Africa, is the ingenious introduction, and subsequent proliferation of innovative agricultural crowd-funding platforms. Faced with the lack of available finance for agricultural businesses from traditional banks, entrepreneurs are turning to digital technology to access investment from the general public. Equity crowd-funding is becoming a hugely popular option to help farmers obtain much-needed capital.

Many young farmers have access to land, which they are currently unable to develop for agricultural production, due to lack of investment capital. Financial institutions are

Farmers who wish to raise significant amount of money to fund the launch or growth of their project may choose to go the equity crowd-funding route. Generally, the investors in a crowd-funding project are passive, limited partners while the landowner is the active partner, making all the decisions to include what to grow when to plant, and where to sell the harvest, or pay a manager to do these things.

generally reluctant to invest in the agriculture sector, as they judge the inherent risks to be too high. Available statistics show that less than 5 percent of loans given out by commercial banks go towards agricultural projects. On the other hand, many individuals, especially employees of private and public institutions, have access to funds, which they could potentially invest in agriculture. Agricultural crowd-funding platforms bring these farmers and prospective investors together, often for a small commission.

Farmers who wish to raise significant amount of money to fund the launch or growth of their project may choose to go the equity crowd-funding route. Generally, the investors in a crowd-funding project are passive, limited partners while the landowner is the active partner, making all the decisions to include what to grow when to plant, and where to sell the harvest, or pay a manager to do these things. The benefits generated are shared among the farmers, entrepreneurs and investors. Generally, the crowd-funding platforms offer returns on investment ranging from 10 – 35 percent per annum, depending on the project and partners. Some of the agricultural crowd-funding players in Africa include: ‘Farmcrowdy’, ‘Growsel’, ‘BaySeddo’, ‘ThriveAgric’, ‘eFarms Nigeria’, and ‘FarmIgnite’.

Blessed with rich, arable lands, Africa yet remains one of the least agriculturally developed regions of the world. With the right attitude and support, Africa’s small and medium scale farmers can feed both the continent and the rest of the world. African Governments must invest in infrastructure that gives smallholder farmers better access to markets, including processing and storage facilities to minimize post-harvest losses. There is also the need for improved road networks between farm and market. Governments must also invest in research and development to give smallholder farmers access to agricultural innovations and technologies.

The story of “the rise of medium – smallholder farms in Africa” is one yet unfolding; we cannot tell exactly how it will end. We, however, are coming to realise the importance of small and medium-scale farms in driving economic growth, job creation, food sufficiency, foreign exchange earnings, and rural transformation across Africa. ■

** Author is a Ph.D Student of ‘Pan African University Institute of Life & Earth Sciences’ (PAULESI), Ibadan and Research Fellow at the ‘International Institute of Tropical Agriculture’ (IITA), Ibadan. Valentine is the Proprietor of ‘Beta-Agro Allied Global Ventures’, a start-up enterprise involved in agribusiness and providing agricultural consultancy services to clients in Nigeria.*

AFRICA IN THE GLOBAL ORDER: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY MICHAEL OQUAYE, HIGH COMMISSIONER OF GHANA TO INDIA, 29TH MAY, 2019

Compliments:

Permit me to begin by thanking the organizers of this programme as part of the 2019 Africa Day celebrations in India.

The topic Africa in the Global Order: African Perspective is very broad for the time allocated. I will, therefore, try my possible best to summarize, with the hope that we can go into details during the discussion segment.

By way of definition –the Global order refers to global issues among States within the international system, including climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Financing a better future, Effective Unites Nations, overcoming inequalities and defending Human Rights, Humanitarian Crises, Trade and Development.

The historical exclusion of a majority of the world, including Africa in designing and upholding global order, is very much on the continent's radar screen. Historically, Africa, as some other parts of the world has been excluded from the design and construction of the global order. Given its historical exclusion, exploitation and oppression, it is vital in terms of global justice for Africa to assert its right to shape the future global order.

Currently, the reality of negotiation processes in the United Nations Security Council perpetuates and reproduces this paternalistic exclusion of the African Continent. More than 60 percent of the issues on the UNSC agenda are focused on Africa, paradoxically, the continent does not have any representation among the Permanent 5. Given the fact that the P5 can veto all manner of decisions before the Council, it is a travesty of justice at its most basic level that African countries can only participate in key deliberations and decision-making processes as individual non-permanent members of the Council. There is, therefore, the need to accelerate the global democratic transformation to enable the societies in the so-called developing regions of the world, including Africa to benefit from the global order.

Africa's participation and engagement in global diplomacy has grown immensely. The continent has played a pivotal role in the fields of world trade, migration, security, climate change, and terrorism. We have been successful in creating new allies and ties with emerging powers, as well as prevailing and strengthening its old relations with our western partners.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

It is in response to this that the African Union (AU) envisions "an integrated, prosperous, equitable and well governed and peaceful United States of Africa effectively managed by its own citizens and representing a creative and dynamic force in the international arena". The last component of this vision establishes the need to cooperate strategically with other regional groupings, international Organizations and states to market Africa's position, attain Africa's objectives, increase Africa's international standing and obtain the global leverage that would enable the continent to maximise the impact on the world scene.

AU.1

Comprised of seven aspirations, Agenda 2063 roadmap was prepared for continental development, setting a number of achievable ambitions. It is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent, pledging a path to growth and sustainable development.

- Aspiration 1: A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- Aspiration 2: An integrated continent; politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.
- Aspiration 3: An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.
- Aspiration 4: A peaceful and secure Africa.
- Aspiration 5: An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.
- Aspiration 6: An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.
- Aspiration 7: Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner.

For the past two decades, Africa's participation and engagement in global diplomacy has grown immensely. The continent has played a pivotal role in the fields of world trade, migration, security, climate change, and terrorism. We have been successful in creating new allies and ties with emerging powers, as well as prevailing and strengthening its old relations with our western partners. The AU has become the most significant regional body in Africa and its role in coordinating common African interests in multilateral organizations brings forth our choice of being more than just a passive receiver.

Consequently a series of ground-breaking partnerships have been launched, including continent to continent partnership – Africa – Europe, Africa- South America and Africa – Asia; Continent to country partnerships - Africa-India, Africa – Turkey, Africa – China, African – Japan, Africa – US through AGOA and Africa-France; Partnership in gestation; Afro –Arab partnership and Afro-Caribbean partnership.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Africa's unique physical, economic and political geography also poses many challenges to economic development and management of shared public assets. It is a matter of fact that political borders are often not aligned with the economic and natural resources and many of the countries of the continent are landlocked. National economies and populations are generally quite small but cover large geographic expanses with poor connective infrastructure.

The issues have prompted African countries to come to the realization that collaborative actions and regional approaches are critical to achieving their goals in development, governance and society. It is in light of this realization that the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa, followed by the 1991 treaty to establish the African Economic Community (popularly referred to as the Abuja Treaty), proposed the creation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the basis for African integration. Consequently, a number of RECs have been established under separate regional treaties and recognised by the African Union.

AU 2

Formation of African Union is the proof that Africa has moved ahead of paternal handholding and has become, strong and mature, to make its priorities known as a Continental Order. New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), AU and many other pivotal regional organization's initiatives represent the pinnacle of this victorious decade for African diplomacy and demand for equal partnership with the world powers.

Now a new player is emerging with the potential to de-fragment Africa and boost the productivity of its economies. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), one of

the Flagship programmes and projects of the African Union Agenda 2063, intended to help in significantly accelerating growth of Intra-Africa trade and to use trade, more effectively, as an engine of growth and sustainable development, through doubling of intra-Africa trade by 2022, strengthen Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations and establish the financial institutions within agreed upon time frames.

Africa's emerging markets offer great opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. With roughly 1.2 billion people, it is the world's second largest and second most populous continent and boasts of natural and human resources which have the potential to power economic development across the continent. Notwithstanding challenges such as high unemployment, according to the World Bank and Focus Economies, Africa is home to seven of the world's fifteen fastest growing economies. This growth rate is expected to boost consumer spending from USD 860 million in 2008 to more than USD 1.3 trillion by 2020, with 128 million households possessing discretionary income.

The AFCFTA will create a single market for goods, services, and movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent. Create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, paving the way for the establishment of Continental Customs Union, etc.

Currently, intra-Africa trade stands at about 16 percent, compared to 19 percent intra-regional trade in Latin America, 51 percent in Asia, 54 percent in North America and 70 percent in Europe. It is estimated that AFCFTA can increase intra – Africa trade by 53 percent through the elimination of import duties and non-tariff barriers. It could also create an African market of over 1.2 billion people with a GDP of USD 2.5 billion, thus making Africa a global competitor in trade negotiations.

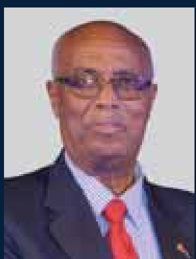
The good news is that, on 29th April 2019, two more African Union Member states deposited their instruments of ratification of the Agreement establishing the AFCFTA. This brings the number of ratification for the AFCFTA Agreement to 22. Thirty days after the 22nd instrument of ratification is deposited the AFCFTA Agreement enters into force. It has been announced that this will happen on the 30th of May 2019.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

The Global order has seen power shifts in these recent years. The rise of nations from the Global South have become ever more evident and prominent. That combined with Multi-polarization of the international system and rise of institutions like the BRICS (BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA, SOUTH AFRICA) and IBSA (INDIA, BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA), have pivoted the re-conceptualization and reinterpretation of changing global order. (This has made South Africa very relevant in the New Global order and Africa Countries can benefit from this example if we follow same to use as leverage in the AU context as well as the GLOBAL SOUTH (South-South Co-operation)

In Conclusion, let me indicate that Africa is fully aware that the asymmetrical distribution of Global political, economic and military power has remained relatively unchanged since the end of the cold war, and there was the need to forge a united front and speak with one voice if the continent is to assume its rightful place in the global order. Africa has embraced integration as a developmental process through the RECs and the African Union, poised to work with other continents and countries such as India to raise the standard of living of its people and for the global good.

I thank you for your kind attention. ■



SPEECH BY H.E. MR. ALEM TSEHAYE WOLDEMARIAM, DEAN OF AFRICA GROUP OF HEADS OF MISSION AND AMBASSADOR OF ERITREA, ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICA DAY - 25TH MAY 2019, TAJ PALACE, NEW DELHI

H.E. Mr. Vijay Gokhale, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India

H.E. Dr. Neena Malhotra, Joint Secretary Eastern and Southern Africa, MEA

All Joint Secretaries from Different Divisions of MEA Present

Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Friends of Africa Present

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the African Heads of Missions in New Delhi, I take this opportunity to welcome you all on this very auspicious celebration of Africa Day. Allow me Chief Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of all African Heads of Missions in Delhi to Congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP party for the overwhelming victory in the Lok-Sabha elections. We are confident that the relations between Africa and India will now move to the next level. We share the Indian people’s excitement in celebrating this victory and we wish you well as you peruse your economic and social goals in the years to come.

As for all of us who are here today, I thank you for taking time to celebrate the occasion of Africa Day with us as well to commemorate the Anniversary of the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 25th May 1963 in Addis Ababa which has evolved into the African Union (AU).

Africa Day 2019 is being celebrated in furtherance of the Africa Union’s Theme. “Year of Refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons: towards durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons in Africa”

Forced displacement remains a major challenge confronting Africa. More than a third of the world’s forcibly displaced people are in Africa including 6.3 million refugees and asylum seekers and 14.5 million internally displaced people.

This occasion presents us with an opportunity to mobilize our efforts and resources to deal with migration. The AU has adopted a migration policy framework and plan of action for the period of 2018 to 2030. It is intended to assist Africa to manage migration with strategic guidelines, clear visions and policies. We hope that with concerted efforts and focused action; this problem will be curbed so that the majority of African people can enjoy stability and productive livelihoods.

Indeed, there is a lot to celebrate on this 56th Anniversary of the liberation of our beautiful continent. This special day offers us both the pleasant opportunity to reignite the values and principles that were the foundation of our continental organization which also follows the path of building a prosperous, peaceful and vibrant Africa which inspires to the African population's thirst for peace, stability and development.

Our organization is in the early years of establishing initiatives of peace, collective security and development that have, in many ways, brought about important changes in the political, social and economic spheres.

In recent years, Africa has achieved a real economic leap; proudly displaying some of the highest growth rates in the world. Africa continues to present itself as the continent of the future as evidenced by the various strategic partnerships that got signed in recent years.

Chief Guest,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa is one of the leading tourist destinations in the world, blessed as it is with the most outstanding flora and fauna. Hence, Tourism is a key economic sector in Africa that contributes to the Gross Domestic Product, Foreign Exchange earnings and employment.

Agriculture remains the backbone of most African economies, providing both direct and indirect employment to more than half of its population. There is a lot of room for investment in the production of agricultural products especially in food processing and value addition. Other areas of potential investment include; Energy, Infrastructure, Health, Housing, Education Capacity building, and Skill development.

The Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean in the world. The sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean are among the most strategically important in the world; carrying more than eighty percent of the world's seaborne trade in oil. The Indian Ocean is also a huge untapped resource in aquaculture, fishing, energy and mineral resources, port facilities, tourism, and biotechnology. This is coupled with the concerted effort to develop: infrastructure in different regions, investments in natural gas and oil, and provide a huge potential for investment; making this an attractive destination for Indian Investors.

Chief Guest,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is worth mentioning that Africa's economic blueprint Agenda 2063's aspirations surround concepts such as: prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, continental integration through Pan-Africanism and Africa's renaissance. Furthermore, it also includes people-driven development relying on the potential of African people especially its women and youth.

The coming into effect of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement after being signed by over 49 of 55 African countries and so far ratified by 22 countries (which brings the Agreement into effect) will create the largest free trade area in the world in terms of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization. The Agreement will come into effect with the launch of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area on 30th May 2019.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates that the agreement will boost intra-Africa trade by 52 percent by 2022. The AfCTA is expected to be one of the World's largest single markets, accounting for USD 4 trillion in spending and investment across the 54 African countries.

Your Excellencies,

Africa is emerging as strong, united and increasingly influential global player and partner. Despite the significant progress that has been made at various levels, Africa continues to face the persistence of conflicts and the proliferation of terrorist activities and violent extremism that impede its development process.

In view of this worrying situation, it is important that the current security responses be coupled with the appropriate development strategies capable of providing sustainable solutions to all these problems. Similarly, with the efforts of the organization in preserving peace on the continent, elucidates the importance of the African Standby Force in preserving peace on the continent and stresses the need for finding home-grown solutions for African problems.

Chief Guest,
Excellences,

Africa commends the cordial Indo-Africa relation that is cemented by common goals and aspirations. For example, Africa and India's goal of seeking representation in all the decision-making organs such as the United Nations, particularly the Security Council where the two countries need no less than three seats with the prerogative and privileges of permanent members with veto powers.

People to people contact and exchange between Africa and India has evolved recently to become a priority for

India and Africa have pursued equal cooperation in a partnership. This union rests on three fundamental principles that include; no conditionality, no prescriptions and no question of sovereignty. all these are in line with Agenda 2063.

Chief Guest,
Excellencies

Africa is ready to work with reliable partners like India who have always been supportive of Africa's Development path. The country has already dovetailed its developmental approach with Africa within the confines of Agenda 2063. We applaud India's engagement and continued support at continental, regional and bilateral levels; as it positively contributes to Africa's development.

India and Africa have pursued equal cooperation in a partnership. This union rests on three fundamental principles that include; no conditionality, no prescriptions and no question of sovereignty. all these are in line with Agenda 2063.

India and Africa's aspirations and challenges are in many ways similar. Therefore, both partners should work on common solutions.

Governments of both sides, which are encouraging contacts between population through cultural, youth and student exchange programs. The beautiful clips shown in the event regarding this are a testament to the journey we have travelled together and more that can be done.

Africa has a new resurgence both politically and economically. Time is ripe for the African people to define and achieve their aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous Continent.

With these remarks, let me conclude by thanking you all for being able to join and celebrate with us. In a special way, I thank our Chief guest, H.E. Mr. Vijay Gokhale, Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India, and the organizers of the beautiful event. ■

Thank you for your attention.
Happy Africa Day
Jai Hind

DIPLOMACY IN TUNE WITH MARTIAL MUSIC

BY **ANIL BHAT***

In the late evening on 09 April 2019, the Vancouver Police Pipe Band visiting India for the first time and the Indian Air Force (IAF) Brass Band invited by the Canadian High Commission, regaled an audience on the lawns of Canada House, Residence of Canada's High Commissioner to India, Mr. Nadir Patel. With the High Commissioner being out of town, Deputy High Commissioner, Ms. Soyoung Park, hosted the event, which began with the Indian Air Force Band playing a series of catchy Indian film tunes.

The heady sound of bagpipes preceded the Vancouver Police Pipe Band as it came marching into the lawns of Canada House playing a grand march, 'Sixth of June'. The band, with its 24 members — the youngest is in their 20s and the oldest almost 75 —thereafter, played their "usual repertoire," as Pipe Major Constable Cal Davis, put it, which included Lord Lovats Lament, Pathfinder, Crescent Beach, Jig Set - Walking the Floor, Donald Willie and his Dog, Ricking the Baby, Battle of the Somme and Heights of Darghai.

Constable Sukhi Sunger with the dhol

Picture by Anil Bhat

Then came a marvellous surprise. Constable Sukhi Sunger, the only turbaned Sikh bandsman -a drummer- unhooked the Scottish drum and took up a colourfully tasselled Punjabi 'dhol'. For over the next few minutes, the summer evening air was filled with Muhammad Iqbal's 'Sare Jahan Se Accha', rendered most melodiously by the Canadian bagpipers to the unmistakable beat of Sunger's dhol.

This was followed by the last four tunes, Caber Feidh, Garb of old Gaul, Scotland the Brave and Sarie.

The band's delegation was headed by Chief Constable Adam Palmer of the Vancouver Police, accompanied by Deputy Chief Constable Steve Rai and Barjinder S Dhahan, member, Vancouver Police Board from Canada. Dhahan informed the gathering about the incorporation of 'dhol' in the Band performing multiple shows in different locations in Amritsar on April 13 and 14, one show in Nawanshahar on April 15 and the final show in Chandigarh on April 16. Their tour of India was timed to straddle the 100th year of the 13 July 1919 massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, which they visited and paid homage at the memorial to the martyrs. They also visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar and the Wagah Border Post.

Known for being ethnically diverse, the Vancouver Police Department has a growing number of Punjabi's in its fold. The department's band performs at various events for the Punjabi diaspora, including the annual Baisakhi Parade in Vancouver. The band had previously toured Britain, China, Switzerland, France, the USA, Mexico, Scotland, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, The Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal.

The Vancouver Police Pipe Band, raised in 1914, is the oldest non-military pipe band in British Columbia and ranks amongst the most senior police pipe bands in the world. Like the


Picture by Anil Bhat

Indian Army's Rajputana Rifles Piper at Delhi War Cemetery

band of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada formed only a few years previously, the Vancouver Police Pipe Band has during its long history occupied a special place in the hearts of Vancouverites. Its stalwart, strapping members have long been regarded in the city with great pride and affection. The pipe band, which is the "Official Band of Vancouver", and its many individual members, have had a distinguished past and shows no sign of letting past tradition fall by the wayside.

Initially, the band performed in their regular police department uniforms. A few years later from 1918 through to 1925, the band wore the Davidson tartan. In 1925 the band's uniform was changed to the one it wears to this day, the Prince Edward Charles Stewart tartan. The full dress uniforms were patterned after those worn by the pipes and drums of the famed Scots Guards. This privilege was officially conferred upon the band fourteen years later by King George VI during a visit to Vancouver.


Picture by Anil Bhat

Scotswoman bagpiper Laura Mennie at Delhi War Cemetery

The Vancouver Police Pipe Band has spent the last 100 years entertaining people around the globe and at the same time acting as ambassadors for their country, province and city. In January 2014, the Mayor awarded Vancouver's highest honour, the Freedom of the City Award, to the men and women of the Band. For the Band's centenary in June 2014, it travelled to England to play for the changing of the guard, at both Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. This was the first time in the 300 years history of the iconic, internationally recognized ceremony that a non–military band was granted the honour.

Another lone non-military bagpiper in Delhi is a Scottish lady, Laura Mennie, who works in the office of the British Defence Attache at the UK High Commission. Dressed in a non-military bagpiper's uniform, she impressed audiences during the Armistice Day Remembrance Ceremony at the Delhi War Cemetery on 11 November and a couple of times at the residence of the British High Commissioner, Mr Dominic Asquith. When the Scottish Deputy First Minister John Swinney attended a reception in his honour at the British High Commissioner's residence in December 2018, he walked to the tune of the bagpipes played by Ms. Mennie.

One wonders as to how many people-both foreigners and Indians are aware of bagpipe music played in the Indian Army. The British, who used bagpipes in their army bands, introduced the instrument to Indian troops in the 19th century. Each infantry battalion of the Indian Army has its own pipes and drums band. While Indian Army bagpipers began with and played mainly Scottish tunes till Independence since then many Indian compositions based on Indian folk music have been added to their repertoire.

If headcount is to be made of the number of pipes and drums bands, considering that every infantry battalion of Indian Army has its integral band, India may well turn out to be leading in the world.

Bagpipe music has caught the fancy of Indians and has become popular in some parts of the country. One of them is in the mountainous region of Garhwal in Uttarakhand, where bagpipers are proud members of civilian bands requisitioned for weddings.

Bagpipes sounds are produced through reeds as are some traditional Indian instruments like the 'shehnai' famously used in Indian classical music and during weddings as well as the 'been', popularly played by snake-charmers.

It will be indeed interesting to match Indian bagpipers with Scottish and those of Commonwealth countries, which also play traditional Scottish tunes.

While Indian military bands have been invited since decades to perform in many countries, India held its first ever military music festival in March 2010, when military bands from six countries cast a spell over audiences in Delhi at the Army Parade Ground, Purana Qila and India Gate. The bands participating were from France, Britain, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India, which was represented by bands from Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. Besides armed forces bands, Kalaripayattu (traditional martial art of Kerala), Bhangra, Ladakhi dance and Maharashtra's Lezim dance performed by soldiers also captivated the audiences. ■

** Author is Lt. Col (Ret'd) Indian Army*

CULTURE CONNECT

TAIPEI ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CENTER IN INDIA

Taiwan's Formosa Circus Arts (FOCA) visited the capital recently to dazzle the hearts of Indians with a series of heart-stopping acrobatic acts, as well as traditional and modern dance performances.

Founded in 2011 by Lin Chih Wei, FOCA takes its name from Formosa, the historical name of Taiwan. The troupe gained traction with their 2012 production, Pursue Our Dreams, which made its international debut at the Festival Pisteurs d' Etoiles in Obernai, France, in 2013.

Since then, FOCA has continuously performed in festivals across the world, being the first Taiwanese circus company to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and France's Festival d'Avignon Off. It is also the first Taiwanese company to hold international tours.

Its ongoing tour, organized by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, sees the troupe stage its 2016 production, The Heart of Asia, in Indonesia and India. The Heart of Asia was previously performed in 14 cities across North America.

At its last cultural visit in New Delhi on July 6, FOCA showcased an approximately 70-minute performance combining traditional Taiwanese culture with Western influences.

Speaking through an interpreter, artistic director Lee Tsung Hsuan says FOCA's performance is different from others as it combines theater, music, magic, dance, and acrobatics into one package.

Meanwhile, FOCA founder Lin, who has amassed at least two decades' worth of experience in performing arts since the age of 10, said that The Heart of Asia is about Taiwan, the country and the culture.

As befitting something inherently tied to a nation's cultural identity, The Heart of Asia opened with the sound of nature, birds chirping and ocean waves crashing onto a beach. Performers entered the stage in solemnness, movements serene as nature while a man's voice sings a tune that seems as old as time.

The performance quickly picks up soon after, with martial arts-inspired moves being the main key in creating a livelier atmosphere.

Acrobatics are very much FOCA's bread and butter, with one of the very first tastes of the performers' expertise being handsprings and somersaults, which elicited gasps from the audience as they were performed over a twirling flag.

When the second session rolled in, dance moves incorporating hats and chairs created a livelier and lighthearted atmosphere invoking simpler times in the countryside.

Upbeat: Artistic director Lee Tsung-Hsuan said that FOCA's performance combines theater, music, magic, dance and acrobatics.

Even though Lin said there would be some acrobatics involving the chairs, the audience certainly did not expect a balancing act so high, it should come with a giant disclaimer saying that it was done by expertly trained professionals. And that's before counting the handstand on top of the stacked chairs.

The third session's deeper storyline brings about a change of pace, telling a tale of wanderlust, regret, and nostalgia.

"[It tells] the story of a young man from the indigenous minority Puyuma tribe as he matures and walks the path of life," Lin explained.

The mood is lighthearted yet contemplative, where body movements transcend cultures and language to bring about a message about one's homeland and memories shared.

One highlight of the part is an act involving Chinese-style yoyos, which is notable for being half juggling act involving throwing the yoyos and deftly catching them with strings. The yoyos are illuminated, which when combined with the darkened stage lighting and the high seating arrangement, create an illusion of the spheres floating in mid-air.

The first three sessions of the performance highlight the traditional side of Taiwan, with its showcases of the tai chi martial art and Hakka tribe's customs like tealeaf picking through dance.

Straight up: For their stop in Indonesia, FOCA brought its 2016 production, "The Heart of Asia", which was performed in 14 cities across North America.

The atmosphere drastically changed as FOCA brought the audience to the modern time of Taiwan in the fourth and final session.

Taiwan's multiculturalism is represented through Western-style clothing and music, such as a number performed in white shirts and black vests set to Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling". Other acts like one set to a dubstep beat are also distinctly modern.

While an act featuring a performer twirling a hollowed-out cube is certainly impressive, the main attraction is in the finale, in which a shirtless performer dances and writhes around while suspended in mid-air with a piece of fabric, evoking sensuality and festivity at the same time. ■

‘THE TRUTH ABOUT US: THE POLITICS OF INFORMATION FROM MANU TO MODI’

BY SANJOY CHAKRAVORTY

AN ESSENTIAL READ FOR EVERY THINKING INDIAN

A PROVOCATIVE AND TOPICAL BOOK ABOUT THE SYSTEMATIC SPREAD OF (MIS)INFORMATION ABOUT INDIAN SOCIETY

‘India…has an information space packed with numerous sources and agents – from politicians and activists to profiteers and extortionists – all competing for attention and legitimacy in a growing information market…Whom does one believe?’

The political manipulation and simplification of information about a dizzyingly complex society have fashioned certain ‘truths’ about India. These truths have resulted in the creation of major religious and caste identities, which have been the defining features of the country’s politics and history for over 200 years.

An unsparing study of how this situation has come about, ”The Truth About Us” explores answers to crucial questions: Is India a homogeneous Hindu nation sprinkled with minorities, or a pluralistic, heterogeneous one? Is our knowledge of the inequalities in our society founded on facts or perceptions? What are the real origin stories of India’s social categories, and how are they being constructed and challenged today?

At a time when India is in the throes of an existential debate, convulsed by contesting claims over identity and history, Hindutva and Dalit consciousness, nationalism and freedom of speech, and the rights and realities of minorities, this deeply provocative book is urgent reading for every thinking Indian. ■

‘Brilliantly argued… Exposes the many flawed assumptions shaping India’s narratives and destiny.’

– Josy Joseph, author of A Feast of Vultures

‘An important book on the making of truth – a book to be read by all those who are interested in preserving India’s democracy from any form of domination.’

– Christophe Jaffrelot, Sciences Po, Paris, and author of Majoritarian State

‘Rarely have we been given so fine an analysis and categorization of India’s inequality and its consequences, let alone one that has such clarity, passion, and timeliness.’

– Philip K. Oldenburg, Columbia University, New York, and author of India, Pakistan, and Democracy

‘Dazzling in the material it presents for analysis, [this book] also provides a brilliant instance of how genuine scholarship can present social complexity inaccessible, rather than simplistic, ways.’

– Sanjay Srivastava, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and author of Entangled Urbanism

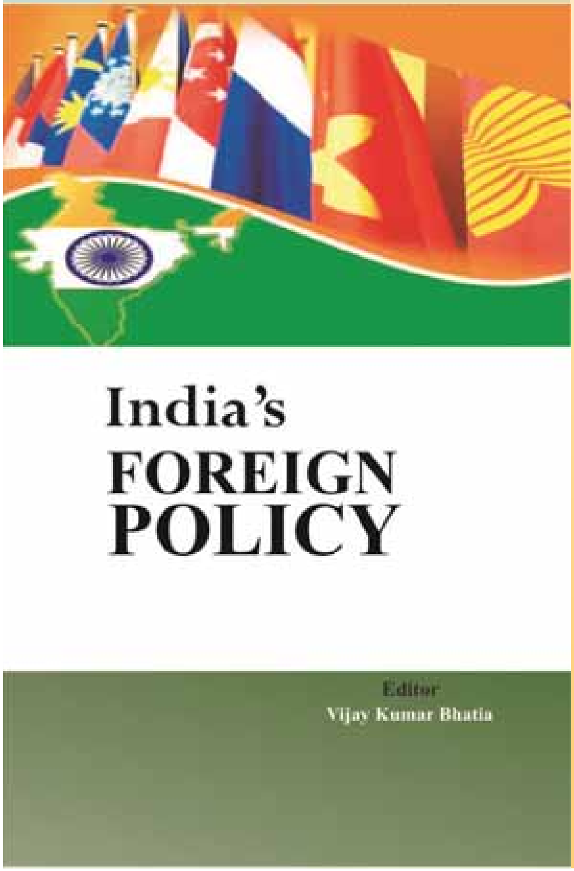
Sanjoy Chakravorty has written several acclaimed books on critical issues. *The Price of Land: Acquisition, Conflict, Consequence* was shortlisted for the Crossword Prize in 2013; *The Other One Percent: Indians in America* was awarded the Choice Outstanding Academic Title in 2017; *Fragments of Inequality and Made in India* are ground-breaking works on vital subjects. He is the author of one novel, *The Promoter,* and is working on two edited collections, on land and Delhi. He teaches at Temple University and splits his time between Philadelphia and Kolkata. For more visit https://sanjoychakravorty.com/

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

BY **DR VIJAY KUMAR BHATIA***

This book deals with the major issues of Indian Foreign Policy. Every sovereign country has a foreign policy. India too has one. Foreign policy refers to the sum total of principles, interests and objectives which a country promotes while interacting with other countries. Even though there are certain basic features of foreign policy it is not a fixed concept. The thrust of foreign policy keeps on changing according to changing international conditions. India's foreign policy is shaped by several factors including its history, culture, geography and economy.

The book deals with the basic issues of domestic sources and the structural constraints on the genesis, evolution and practice of India's foreign policy. It covers the objectives and theoretical and historical framework of Indian Foreign Policy. The endeavour is to highlight integral linkages between the 'domestic' and the 'international' aspects of India's foreign policy by stressing on the shifts in its domestic identity and the corresponding changes at the international level. It further focuses on India's shifting identity as a post-colonial state to the contemporary dynamics of India attempting to carve its identity as an 'aspiring power'. India's evolving relations with the superpowers during the Cold War and after, bargaining strategy and positioning in international climate change negotiations, international economic governance, international terrorism and the United Nations facilitate an understanding of the changing positions and development of India's role as a global player since independence. It highlights the central realities, issues and developments pertaining to India's foreign policy



at the bilateral, regional and global levels. The book imparts an understanding of India's important bilateral relationships and the country's role in global economic and political regimes. It apprises the major security challenges facing the country in the 21st century. The book also analyse in detail the shift in India's Foreign Policy after the coming of Narender Modi as Prime Minister of India. It covers all the major themes such as India and Pakistan relations, India's foreign policy with China, India and Non-Aligned Movement, India's role as a major power, etc. ■

BOOKMARK

DEMOCRATIZATION IN KYRGYZSTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

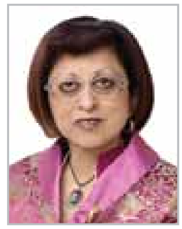
The present book seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of the problems of democratic transformation and human rights of the political system of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, in their transition from a socialist system to a liberal democratic system. The research will focus on the study of post-Communist developments and the problems of democratization in the newly independent states of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

Democratization has been a major global phenomenon. The term democratization refers to political changes moving in a democratic direction. The character of such movement is from less accountable to a more accountable government or less competitive (or non-existent) elections to free and fair competitive elections and from severely restricted to better protected civil and political rights.

Since the disintegration of the former Soviet Union in 1991 the independent republics of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have emerged on the map of the world. After attaining independence, these republics geared up their efforts to establish political regimes according to the wishes of their people. This can be visualized from the fact that in 1992 and 1993 new constitutions were adopted in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. These constitutions provide for a presidential system with separation of powers between executive, legislative and judicial branches. The new Constitutions of these republics also give importance to human rights and profess sovereignty, democracy and secularism as their fundamental principles. However, in practice, these rights and liberties are only on paper and in both these states, the political rights and civil liberties have been denied to their citizens. The elections in these republics are not free and fair but are rigged. The opposition enjoys limited freedom, particularly in Turkmenistan. The judiciary is also controlled by the President. The media in these republics also enjoy limited freedom. Additionally, there are challenges of ethnicity, economic development, Authoritarianism and Islamic fundamentalism, Gender Inequality, etc. The governments of both these republics are not respecting the human rights of people. The situation in Turkmenistan is even more serious. The citizens of these republics like other states of Central Asia are denied their basic human rights. Human rights groups operated in a hostile environment in both these countries and are faced with continuous government pressure to curtail their activities.

Thus, we must keep in mind the fact that it may take sufficient long time for establishing a stable democratic process since these republics got their independence only twenty-five years back which is a very short period for achieving the targeted development of democracy in a country or region of the world. Overall the book is very informative and covers all the major issues of Democratization from institution building to Constitutionalism to Judiciary. ■

** Author is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Ramlal Anand College University of Delhi is a renowned academician and a prolific researcher.*



BREXIT AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR INDIA

Below is the synopsis of the lecture delivered by Amb (Retd.) Bhaswati Mukherjee at the Jadavpur Association of International Relations, Kolkata

Brexit changed everything including the public mood. Brexit is regarded as the classic case study in the context of contemporary challenges that it poses to liberal democracies. There are many factors leading to Brexit, the prolonged and unhappy divorce of the United Kingdom from Europe. May's failure to sell the 'deal' to a sceptical House of Commons resulted in her stepping down. The frontrunner to become PM, Boris Johnson, has vowed to take UK out of the EU by 31st October 2019, with or without a deal.

The EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for around 13% of India's total trade in goods in 2017. India contributes around 2.3% of total EU trade and is the EU's ninth biggest trade partner. With €91 billion worth of India EU trade and €19.4 billion of India UK trade at stake, all partners needed to think through this issue carefully in the business and commercial context. Services are also an important component of EU-India trade.

If in terms of the final Brexit no deal scenario, which seems increasingly likely, Indian business in UK, would be denied access to the EU market, the result would be the flight of Indian business from UK to Europe. The UK has been seen by Indian firms as a gateway to the European Union. A common market has so far ensured these companies barrier-free access to the EU countries.

A hard or no deal Brexit would inevitably impact more than 800 Indian companies in UK in crucial sectors of British economy reportedly generating more than 110,000 jobs as well as flows of tourism and business from India to UK.

Others note that UK's exit from the EU represents a win-win situation for India. They remain of the view that India could fill the trade gap with regard to manufactured goods. In the present context, this does not seem to be likely. The current anti-foreign sentiment in the UK complicates the negotiations.

The Indian Ministry of Commerce confirmed in mid-2017 that India and the UK could work on a FTA only after the latter is officially out of the EU. The Commerce Ministry then commenced an internal 'audit' and analysis of the trade issues with UK in anticipation of the negotiations. The content of a future India UK trade agreement would depend on the kind of deal and terms of exit that UK would negotiate to finalize Brexit. UK cannot sign a trade agreement with India as long as it remains part of the EU. The situation is complex since India would insist on inclusion of Mode 4 (Mode 4 covers the temporary movement of natural persons) in a post Brexit scenario. According to informed sources, India will also refuse to give a separate dispensation to UK in areas within EU's competence.

The continuing impasse over Brexit demonstrates the danger of populism and populist policies impacting international peace and security, be it Northern Ireland or North Korea. Brexit threatens the fragile peace in Northern Ireland. The hardcore of Brexiteers are willing to gamble with the unity of Britain and to risk losing Scotland and Northern Ireland in their quest to be rid of Europe once and for all. As described by a prominent EU politician, Theresa May's efforts to secure a deal is like trying to make an omelette while taking out the egg!

CAN INDIA AND NORWAY TAKE A LEAP INTO THE NEW ERA OF PARTNERSHIP?

When Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg arrived in India at the beginning of this year, it was not only the first time in ten years that the country was visited by a prime minister from Norway, but it was one of the largest delegations from Norway ever to visit India.

Delivering a lecture at India International Centre, H.E. Nils Rangnar Kamsvåg, Ambassador of Norway to India, outlined Norway's India Strategy. Ambassador Kamsvåg said that the strategy is really a formalisation of what has already been happening.

"The focus areas of the strategy are based on Norway's national and global interests, Norway's competitive edge, and the priorities of India. There will be an emphasis on political contact and government-level cooperation, business cooperation, and research cooperation," added Ambassador Kamsvåg.

He also outlined the four priority areas identified in the strategy which are: Democracy and rule-based world order, Ocean, Energy & Climate and Environment.

Chairing the session, Ambassador Ashok Sajjanhar said "There has been a surge in trade, investments, transfer-of-technology and other contacts between the two countries. The present growth in Indo-Norwegian eco-commercial ties has been powered by a common interest. Norway is an important partner to India, where increased trade, investments and economic cooperation with mutual benefits are the highest priority for our two countries."

Conference on

EUROPEAN UNION IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER: PROSPECTS FOR INDIA-EUROPE PARTNERSHIP

The Indian Council of World Affairs conducted a one-day conference on European Union in a Changing World Order: Prospects for India-Europe Partnership on 26 June 2019.

The participants of the conference included former diplomats and scholars from eight universities and two Think Tanks across India. The conference comprised of three sessions namely "Europe in a Changing World Order"; "Europe, India and the BRI" and; "Prospects for Cooperation in India-EU Relations". The opening remarks were delivered by Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan, DG, ICWA, and the Keynote address was delivered by Mr. G. Balasubramanian, Joint Secretary (Europe West), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

The first session was chaired by Amb. Bhaswati Mukherjee, Former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands. The speakers in this session included Prof. Bhaswati Sarkar, Professor, Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof. Neeta Inamdar, Professor and Head of the Department, Department of European Studies, Manipal University and Dr. Ankita Dutta, Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs. The session discussed Europe's integration project which has been under intense pressure beginning with the 2011-eurozone crisis, concerns of migration, terrorism, impending Brexit, and the rise of Euroscepticism and populism. The session discussed in detail how these trends question of the European project itself.

The second session was chaired by Ambassador J.S. Mukul, Dean, Foreign Service Institute. The Speakers at the session included Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva, Professor, Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof. Madhu Bhalla, Former Head and Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi and, Dr. Surabhi Singh, Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs. The session assessed China's aspirations through the implementation of BRI and how this is becoming a catalyst for change in relations between China and Europe. Further, the session also dwelt on India's position with respect to BRI.

The third session was chaired by Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee, Former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands. Speakers at the session included Prof. Jayaraj Amin, Professor, Department of Political Science, Mangalore University, Dr. Saurabh Kumar, Associate Fellow, CUTS-CITEE, Jaipur and, Dr. Chetan B. Singai, Deputy Director, Ramaiah Institute of Public Policy, Bengaluru. The session dwelt on the India-EU partnership in view of the publication of the 2018 EU strategy paper on India. The session discussed the possible impact on trade relations between India and the EU in a post-Brexit world and on the opportunities and challenges in collaboration in the field of higher education and research as a way of enhancing people-to-people contacts.

In the concluding session, the importance of enhancing an understanding of the significance of India-EU relations through deliberations across the country was emphasised.

VIETNAM ELECTED NON-PERMANENT UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER

For the second time in history, Vietnam has become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2020-2021 term. Vietnam secured 192 out of a total of 193 votes, a record high number of votes. Taking a seat on the UN Security Council will make Vietnam more visible and known to the international community. The Embassy of Vietnam in India in collaboration with the South Asian Journalist Club held a ceremony to celebrate this occasion. H.E. Pham Sanh Chau, Ambassador of Vietnam to India, also awarded two Indian journalists with National Award for foreign information. He also introduced Vietnam's first volume car manufacturer, VinFast to the Indian public.

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Gurudev Singh Ahluwalia, MD, KTC (India) receiving National Tourism Award from KJ Alphons, Union Minister for Tourism

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VISITOR'S BOOK

MEETING OF COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE OF SCO, BISHKEK

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi at the delegation level meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit, in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic on June 14, 2019.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi attended the meeting of Council of Heads of State (CHS) of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek (Kyrgyz Republic) on June 13-14, 2019. This was the second CHS meeting after India became a member of SCO. Prime Minister Modi had also attended the last CHS meeting in Qingdao (China) on June 9-10, 2018. India actively took part in the various SCO dialogue mechanisms under the Chairmanship of the Kyrgyz Republic over the past year. The leaders participating in the Summit focused their discussions on the global security situation, multilateral economic cooperation, people-to-people exchanges and also on topical issues of international and regional importance.

VISIT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER TO BHUTAN

External Affairs Minister meets Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bhutan in Thimphu (June 7, 2019)

Bhutan has been a close friend of India and bilateral ties between the two countries are on an upswing in the last few years. Newly appointed External Affairs Minister and former External Affairs Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Bhutan on 7-8 June, 2019. This was his first visit abroad as the foreign External Affairs Minister. External Affairs Minister met Bhutan's top leadership, including Prime Minister Lotay Tshering and discussed important elements of the bilateral ties with emphasis on development partnership and cooperation in the hydropower sector. India and Bhutan share an exceptional and time tested bilateral relationship, characterized by utmost trust, goodwill and mutual understanding. During the visit, the two sides deliberated entire gamut of bilateral relations, including the upcoming high-level exchanges, economic development and hydro-power cooperation. Bhutan was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first overseas visit after assuming charge in 2014.

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