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The Naxalite/Maoist Movement in India: A Review of Recent Literature

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‘More than Maoism: Rural Dislocation in South Asia’ is an ISAS research theme focusing on socio-economic, political and security dimensions of “Maoist movements” in South Asia. The institute conducted a closed-door workshop on the research theme, and the presentations are being put together as a series of ISAS Insights and ISAS Working Papers. This is the sixth paper in this series.

Executive Summary

This paper reviews recent writing by and about India’s Maoists, much of it from the pages of the *Economic and Political Weekly*, which has been the most important forum for informed reporting and commentary. An account is given of the recent history of the Naxalite/Maoist Movement, and of the ideology and tactics of the Communist Party of India (Maoist). Particular attention is paid to the findings, both of the few social scientists who have undertaken field studies and human rights activists who have had direct contact both with party cadres and village people amongst whom they move. These illuminate the relationships between the revolutionary movement and the people of those areas in which the Maoists have a strong presence and

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highlight the contradictions to which their commitment to armed struggle gives rise. It is the tragedy of the politics of armed struggle that it is a response to the appalling structural violence that has been perpetrated historically and that continues to be perpetrated by elites, supported by the state, against landless and poor peasants, Dalits and *adivasis*, and yet it leads to a spiral of violence in which the same people may become trapped.

I am convinced that this is one rebellion which will test the resilience of the Indian state as never before. Precisely, because it is a rebellion in which people are fighting to save their land, forests, water and minerals from being grabbed, and they are convinced that they have an alternative vision.

Gautam Navlakha²

The Naxalite movement is not a movement of landless peasants and tribals seeking to overthrow state power. It is a project defined as such by those who are neither peasants nor workers nor tribals, but who claim to represent their interests.

Dilip Simeon³

The two statements that I have chosen as epigraphs for this paper reflect very well, I think, not only differences in the views of those who have been close observers of the Naxalite movement in India, but also a critical tension within it. The Naxalites – or ‘Maoists’ as they have now come to be described – have the explicit aim of establishing a ‘people’s democratic state under the leadership of the proletariat’, which requires ‘smashing the reactionary autocratic state’. The Party Programme of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) goes on:

This new democratic state will be the people’s democratic dictatorship exercised by the united front comprising the proletariat, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie class under the leadership of the proletariat based upon the worker-peasant alliance. The state will guarantee real democracy for the vast majority of people while exercising dictatorship over the tiny minority of exploiters.⁴

The Maoists argue that the pursuit of parliamentary democracy is an exercise in futility and explain the necessity for armed struggle against the present ‘reactionary autocratic state’ given the strength of its armed machinery. The Party has been ‘compelled to take up arms and not out

² Gautam Navlakha, ‘Days and Nights in the Maoist Heartland’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLV, no.16 (17 April 2010), pp.38-47. Navlakha is an Editorial Consultant to the EPW and a democratic rights activist attached to the People’s Union for Democratic Rights.

³ Dilip Simeon, ‘Permanent spring’, *Seminar*, No.607 (March 2010), www.india-seminar.com. Simeon’s discussion draws on Rabindra Ray, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁴ This and the foregoing quotes from the Party Programme of the CPI (Maoist). Accessed at www.satp.org.

of any romantic notion' according to CPI (Maoist) General Secretary Ganapathy.⁵ The Maoists claim to represent the great majority of the people of India and aim to lead them to establish a new state as the second of the authors whom I have quoted says. They also have a history of supporting common people in struggles over the conditions of their everyday lives and projecting an alternative vision of how society can be organised. The long run aim of establishing the people's democratic state and the immediate tasks of supporting the fight to save 'land, forests, water and minerals from being grabbed' are of course not inherently in contradiction but the practice of the Maoists appears, even to sympathetic observers, to compromise their democratic principles as Dilip Simeon suggests in the second of my epigraphs.

In this paper, I aim to explore these tensions, briefly reviewing the recent history of Naxalism/Maoism in India, the ideology of the Movement and ask in particular, what may be learnt from the few detailed ethnographies that have been written, and from the accounts of those who have observed it closely about the relationships between the Movement and society.⁶ I conclude with some brief remarks about the current responses of the Indian state to the Maoists. I draw mainly on articles published over the last decade in the *Economic and Political Weekly*⁷ and contributions to a recent special issue of the journal *Dialectical Anthropology*,⁸ together with some reference to articles published in *Seminar* in March 2010.

I begin, however, by pointing to the acute problems of knowledge about the Naxalite/Maoist movement. A blogger from Chhattisgarh posted the following comment:

How does the media in Chhattisgarh report the conflict between the Naxalites and the Salwa Judum or the conflict between local communities and corporations?
Quite simply, it doesn't. The pressures on journalists in Chhattisgarh are unique.

⁵ See 'Interview with Ganapathy, General Secretary, CPI(Maoist)', released in April 2007, www.satp.org.

⁶ A qualifier must be entered immediately, about the use of the term 'Movement' in regard to India's Maoists, for it is important to recognise how fragmented they have been, with different organisations pursuing different tactical lines at least until the coming together of the major groups as the Communist Party of India(Maoist) in 2004. See 'Interview with Ganapathy', note 5.

⁷ I have not been able to find much recent writing about the Naxalite/Maoist movement based on substantial research or otherwise on close observation such as that of human rights and civil liberties activists, outside the pages of the *Economic and Political Weekly*. This review does not include consideration of the several (with one exception, older) books about Naxalism including: Sumanta Banerjee, *In the Wake of Naxalbari* (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1980); S. Chakravarti, *Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2007); S. Ghosh, *The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experience* (Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1974); P. Singh, *The Naxalite Movement in India* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co., 1995); S. Sinha, *Maoists in Andhra Pradesh* (Delhi: Gyan, 1989).

⁸ Alpa Shah and Judith Pettigrew (eds.) 'Windows into a Revolution: Ethnographies of Maoism in South Asia' (2009) *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos.3-4 (2009).

They are paid not to report stories that are critical of the powers-that-be, whether they are industrial lobbies or state authorities.⁹

This may, or may not be true.¹⁰ But it is certainly extremely difficult to sift information from disinformation and fact from opinion, as the Lalgarh story shows.

What is Really Going On? The Example of Lalgarh

The Lalgarh area of West Medinapur in West Bengal, came to international attention in June 2009, when a massive police action began there (on 18-19 June 2009). It was recognised that Lalgarh had experienced an insurrection against the Left Front government of the state and the region was described in the *Hindustan Times* on 10 June 2009 as being, in effect, a 'Maoist-run state within the state'. Inevitably, the Government of West Bengal sought to re-establish its authority over the area and called upon the assistance of the paramilitary forces of the central government in order to do so. But, was there 'a Maoist-run state' in Lalgarh? Writing on Lalgarh whilst the police action was going on, two noted left-wing historians, Sumit and Tanika Sarkar, argued that in fact 'Maoists have done incalculable harm' to what had been an independent movement of tribal people. They explained that they had not themselves visited Lalgarh and that they drew on an interview with a friend who is a member of the Lalgarh Sanhati Mancha, described as 'a group of cultural and political activists' who work with the tribal people of the region. It was on this basis that they argued:

(The Maoists') activities and intentions are shrouded in mystery, their secret terror operations express total indifference to human lives, their arms deals lead them, inevitably, into shady transactions with rich and corrupt power brokers at different levels... They come into an already strong and open mass movement, they engage in a killing spree, discrediting the (independent tribal) movement, and then they leave, after giving the state authorities a splendid excuse for crushing it.¹¹

⁹ From the 'Kafila' website. Cited by Alpa Shah, 'India Burning: the Maoist Revolution', Isabelle Clarke-Deces (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Anthropology of India*, forthcoming.

¹⁰ The argument seems entirely reasonable, however, in the light of the information given by Jason Miklian, 'The purification hunt: the Salwa Judum counter-insurgency in Chhattisgarh, India', *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos 3-4 (December 2009), pp.441-459. Miklian reports on how 'Media freedoms have suffered at the individual and institutional levels', p.454.

¹¹ Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, 'Notes on a Dying People', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, nos.26-27 (27 June 2009), pp.10-14. Quote from p.11.

Subsequently another historian, Amit Bhattacharyya, flatly refuted these arguments,¹² making the case: ‘The Maoists have been at the helm of the movement in Lalgarh right from its inception. Even as they organised the resistance to state repression, they put in place an alternative programme of development based on the people’s initiative and their voluntary labour’.¹³ So, what has been going on in Lalgarh?

Lalgarh is a forested, hill area in the Jangal Mahal of West Bengal that extends into the adjacent Jharkhand occupied mainly by Santhal tribal people (*adivasis*). It is an area of small landholdings and of poor, rainfed agriculture. The major source of cash income is said to be from the collection of *saal* leaves (for making leaf-plates) in the forests – an activity carried on by women. According to the report of the All-India Fact Finding Team of April 2009,¹⁴ ‘The area has had a history of neglect and discrimination’, for example, it has just one doctor serving two non-functional primary health care centres. The Sarkars comment more graphically, ‘The landscape of bleak wretchedness is dominated by the bizarre splendour of the party offices of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] and the houses of local party leaders.’¹⁵

It appears that People’s War (PW) – which combined nationally with the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) in September 2004 to form the CPI (Maoist) – has been active in the area and neighbouring parts of Jharkhand for about ten years, though the All-India Fact Finding Team¹⁶ reported that the Santhals of Lalgarh have been more inclined to support the regional parties, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and the Jharkhand Disham Party (JDP). Nonetheless, there is a history reported by the Team, of harassment of *adivasis* by both police and CPI(M) cadres, and of many cases having been brought in, particularly, against women who go into the forests to collect *saal* leaves, on the grounds that they take supplies to Maoist groups.

The recent events in Lalgarh began, however, in November 2008. On 2 November, there was a mine explosion not far from Medinapur town and 30 kilometres away from the *adivasi* tract on the route that was being taken by West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan as they returned from the inauguration of a steel works. The circumstances of the blast remain mysterious, but it was immediately followed by reprisals by

¹² Amit Bhattacharyya, ‘Is Lalgarh Showing the Way?’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLV, no.2 (9 January 2010), pp.17-21.

¹³ Aditya Nigam, ‘The rumour of Maoism’, *Seminar*, No.607 (March 2010), www.india-seminar.com. Nigam has pointed out errors of logic in Bhattacharyya’s own argument and in his rendering of that of the Sarkars’. As he says, Bhattacharyya expects his readers to accept that because MCC and PWG have been active in the area for ten years that they therefore ‘have deep roots’ amongst the people. Bhattacharyya’s argument also implicitly holds that *adivasis* only exercise ‘agency’ if they are supportive of the Maoists.

¹⁴ Manik Bora, Budhadiya Das, ‘The Movement in Lalgarh’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, nos.26-27 (27 June 2009), pp.15-17.

¹⁵ Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p.10.

¹⁶ Bora and Das, *op. cit.*

the state police, often – or so it was reported – accompanied by armed CPI(M) volunteers, targetting villagers in Lalgarh for (supposedly) harbouring Maoists. The police actions were so brutal as to have given rise almost immediately, on 5 November 2008, to a popular movement against them. The *Pulish Santrash Birodhi Janasadharanar Committee* (PSBJC – or People’s Committee Against Police Atrocities [PCAPA]) resolved to keep the police and state administration out of their area. On 6 November 2008, the PSBJC began setting up road blocks and barricades, and thereafter successfully held government forces at bay for six months whilst also implementing livelihood and welfare programmes, including some minor irrigation projects and the establishment of primary healthcare centres (described in some detail by Bhattacharyya: see note 12). The PSBJC’s spokesman and leader, Chhatradhar Mahato, was branded a ‘Maoist’,¹⁷ though he earlier had links with the Trinamul Congress. The PSBJC organised around locally elected village committees, representatives of which elected in turn the 45-member central committee. The movement apparently had a democratic character, and included women.¹⁸

The editorial view of the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*¹⁹ was that the activities of the PSBJC after November 2008 further angered CPI(M) activists and officials, and that ‘The fact that mainstream politics chose to ignore the Lalgarh movement opened the door for the Maoists to voice *adivasi* demands and exercise control of the PSBJC’. Subsequently, the defeats of the CPI(M) in the general elections of May 2009 were said to have encouraged Maoist attacks on its party cadres and it was these actions that led eventually to the state government’s introduction of central paramilitary forces. The end result has been, in the view of the *EPW*, that the people’s movement in Lalgarh has been broken with the alienation of the *adivasis* complete, caught as they now are between the CPI(M), the Maoists and the state. The purpose of the violence perpetrated by the Maoists is unclear, in the editorial view of the *EPW*, and it is as much a matter for regret as are the organisational deficiencies of the CPI(M) and the failures of the state. An alternative view, expressed forcefully by Bhattacharyya,²⁰ is that ‘the Maoists did not fall from the sky’ and played a major part in the PSBJC from the start. ‘Without their active role’, he says, ‘the movement would not have taken such a shape’. The violence in which they have been

¹⁷ Chhatradhar Mahato was taken into custody by police officers disguised as journalists on 25 September 2009 with 22 criminal cases pending against him. The *Frontline* report on his arrest (Vol.26, no.21, 23 October 2009) describes him as ‘the most familiar public face of the Maoists’, though Mahato always staunchly denied this identification. In a later *Frontline* report on an interview with him (Vol.26, no.22), the CPI(Maoist) leader Kishenji says quite specifically that the PSBJC and the Maoist movement are distinct; and the same point has been made by General Secretary Ganapathy according to a report, ‘The Lalgarh Movement, the PCAPA and the CPI(Maoist)’, dated 23 May 2010 that appears on the website <http://sanhati.com>. See also the Letter ‘Fact-Finding on Lalgarh’, signed by Amit Bhaduri and others, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, no.16 (18 April 2009), p.4.

¹⁸ This and the preceding paragraph draw mainly on Bora and Das, *op. cit.*; and on ‘Lalgarh: Questions to the Left’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, nos.26-27 (27 June 2009), p.5.

¹⁹ ‘Lalgarh: Questions to the Left’, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*

involved is understandable in a context in which the common people have been subjected historically to structural violence at the hands of the ruling classes and from the forces of the state. The Maoists have not ‘derailed’ a popular movement but rather have ‘shown it the way’ and have pioneered the alternative path of development with which people in Lalgarh were experimenting before the crackdown. General Secretary Ganapathy argues rather differently: ‘It was the common people [albeit] with the assistance of advanced elements influenced by revolutionary politics who played a crucial role in the formation of tactics. *They formed their own organisation...*’ (emphasis added). According to the writer who cites Ganapathy, however, a movement ‘that had a revolutionary mass character, where people were building up their own organisation... was replaced by what can be loosely termed armed warfare’ (see note 17). A similar view appeared in the news magazine *Frontline*. Its report began, ‘After a reign of terror that lasted close to eight months in and around Lalgarh... the CPI (Maoist) and the Maoist-backed PCAPA are cornered and on the run’, and it went on to argue that ‘The Maoists succeeded in making the unrest in Lalgarh *resemble* a social uprising’²¹ (emphasis added).

The Lalgarh story illustrates, I think, major questions about the Maoist movement. There is no doubt of the connection between the Maoists and the people living in marginal hill and forest areas who have gained little if anything from government programmes and who have often suffered from repressive acts by state functionaries. But how far does the Maoist movement shape popular resistance? Or does it rather take advantage of popular struggles in its bid for state power? How far can its focus be on a constructive programme that addresses people’s needs when such programmes are compromised by violent acts that encourage further state repression? Finally, the Lalgarh story illustrates the difficulty of distinguishing fact from rumour. Were the tribal women who go into the forests to collect *saal* leaves subjected to violence by police and CPI(M) cadres as the All-India Fact Finding Team thought was the case? Alternatively, have they been subjected to harassment by Maoists and most recently by the PSBJC, as the chairperson of the West Bengal State Women’s Commission maintains?²² The influence of party positioning on the judgements of different writers is usually apparent.

²¹ Suhrid Sankar Chattopadhyay, ‘Lalgarh Battle’, *Frontline*, Vol.26, no.14 (2009).

²² Malini Bhattacharya, ‘The Lalgarh Story’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, no.33 (15 August 2009), pp.17-19.

The Origins and the Ideology of the Naxalite/Maoist Movement in India

The history of Naxalism in India is described by Sumanta Banerjee, its most respected chronicler,²³ as ‘tortuous’. A complicated diagram in Bela Bhatia’s study of ‘The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar’²⁴ shows how very fragmented the Movement became before the merger of the two principal groups, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [CPI(M-L) People’s War] and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) in 2004.²⁵ In 1995-96, Bhatia reports, there were as many as 17 different active groups in Bihar. Of these groups, the three most significant were: ‘Liberation’, by that time following the line of participation in parliamentary politics, and recognised by the Election Commissioner as the ‘CPI(ML)’; the Maoist Communist Centre, considered to be ‘extreme left’; and ‘Party Unity’ which stood somewhere in-between. What follows, therefore, is the merest sketch of a complex history.

Drawing on a longer history of Communist-led armed struggle by peasants against landlords, moneylenders and government officials – especially that in Telengana between 1946 and 1951 – Naxalism has its immediate origins in the debates within the Indian communist movement of the 1960s about the ‘correct’ strategic line to be taken in order to establish communism in India’s particular circumstances. The Movement took off in May 1967 and is named after a village in the far north of West Bengal where a group of revolutionaries – who repudiated the approaches of the major communist parties as ‘reformist’ – launched an armed uprising of peasants against local landlords. It spread quite quickly into parts of Bihar, Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh, Koraput in Orissa and some other areas where guerilla squads of poor and landless peasants drove out landlords. In many cases, however, action degenerated into indiscriminate violence following the injunction of Charu Mazumdar who had emerged as the Movement’s leader²⁶ to undertake ‘annihilation of class enemies’. Mazumdar once wrote that the battle-cry of the movement should be: ‘He who has not dipped his hand in the blood of class enemies can

²³ Sumanta Banerjee, *In the wake of Naxalbari: a history of the Naxalite movement in India*, (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1980); ‘Reflections of a one-time Maoist activist’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos.3-4 (2009), pp.253-269.

²⁴ Bela Bhatia, ‘The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XL (9 April 2005), pp.1536-43.

²⁵ A diagram in *Frontline*, Vol.26, no.22 (6 November 2009) shows the following lineage of the CPI(Maoist): CPI(ML) People’s War Group, formed in Andhra Pradesh in 1980 joined in 1998 with CPI(ML) Party Unity, formed in Bihar in 1976 to establish CPI(ML) Peoples War, operating in Andhra, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Maoist Communist Centre, formed in Bihar in 1976, together with the Revolutionary Communist Centre of India (Maoist) of Punjab formed the Maoist Communist Centre of India in 2003, operating in Bihar and Jharkhand. It was the coming together of the latter, MCCI with CPI(ML) People’s War in September 2004, that established the CPI(Maoist). General Secretary Ganapathy describes the same lineage, though with a different date for the formation of the MCC. See ‘In conversation with Ganapathy, General Secretary of CPI(Maoist)’ by Jan Myrdal and Gautam Navlakha, <http://sanhati.com>.

²⁶ Another leader of the Naxalites was Kanu Sanyal, whose death was reported in *The Hindu* (24 March 2010).

hardly be called a communist'.²⁷ Dilip Simeon argues of this that, 'What stands out is the freedom accorded to "petty-bourgeois intellectual comrades" to instigate the murder of anyone they deemed a class enemy', the legitimacy of this being seen as self-evident and derived from 'the assumed superiority of the party's version of Marxism-Leninism'.²⁸

It is Simeon's view, expressed in the second epigraph of this paper, that the Maoist/Naxalite Movement has been intellectually driven from its origins, led by middle-class ideologues who take it upon themselves to lead 'the people' and who claim 'correct knowledge' for themselves. Aditya Nigam argues similarly:

The *adivasis* cannot represent themselves; they must be represented, it would seem. They must be represented either by agents of the state... or by the revolutionaries... (and)... the voice of the revolutionary is almost always that of a Brahman/upper caste Ganapathy or Koteswara Rao or their intellectual spokespersons. So we have a Maoist-aligned intelligentsia vicariously playing out their revolutionary fantasies through the lives of *adivasis*, while the people actually dying in battle are almost all *adivasis*.²⁹

The truth claims made by the Maoist leaders are inherently linked, Dilip Simeon argues to their attachment to armed struggle. This attachment is 'the product of a correct theory' to which party cadres have privileged access. Ultimately, it is struggle for the classless society that defines what is right but the result of this way of thinking is that 'the defining feature of the Maoist agenda' has become 'an insistence on killing'.³⁰ As discussed below, Maoists now strenuously defend themselves against this argument, claiming that 'Annihilation is the last choice'.³¹

Naxalism in the early 1970s met with matching violence from the state and it appeared to have been very largely overcome, even before Mrs Indira Gandhi's Emergency stifled opposition. General Secretary Ganapathy says that two parties, the CPI(M-L) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) were both formed in 1969 and 'failed to form a unified Maoist party at that juncture'. He also says that the party [he seems to refer to the CPI(M-L)] had already started to disintegrate into several groupings by 1971.³² One group, Liberation, later decided to organise mass fronts and eventually participated in parliamentary politics. By the time when Charu

²⁷ Cited by Dilip Simeon, *op. cit* (note 3).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Aditya Nigam, *op. cit.*

³⁰ Dilip Simeon, *op. cit.*

³¹ This statement by a spokesperson of the CPI(Maoist) in Jharkhand was taken by Alpa Shah as the title for her report on an interview, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLX, no.19 (8 May 2010) pp.24-29.

³² See the historical account given by Alpa Shah, forthcoming, *op. cit.*, (see note 9); and Ganapathy's interview with Myrdal and Navlakha (cited at note 25).

Mazumdar died in police custody in 1972, the ‘revolution’ appeared to be over. The revolutionary movement has, however, risen again and again because the factors that lend it credence and give it life persist – most importantly the continuing denial of justice and human dignity to Dalits and tribals across the country.³³

The line of the Movement set out in the 1970 Programme of the CPI(M-L), and largely repeated in that of its eventual successor the CPI(Maoist) in 2004, adopts Mao’s view that in semi-feudal and semi-colonial countries like India ‘under the neo-colonial form of imperialist indirect rule’,³⁴ the immediate task of the communist party is to organise landless labourers, poor peasants and exploited middle peasants in armed struggle against their oppressors. The aim is to foster a democratic revolution:

Whose axis and content is agrarian revolution, rejects the parliamentary path of participation in elections, and pursues the main objective... (of liberating)... the rural areas first and then having expanded the base areas – the centre of democratic power in rural areas – advance towards countrywide victory through encircling and capturing the cities.³⁵

The Later History of the Movement

In the 1980s, which is the second phase in the history of the Movement as conceptualised by Sumanta Banerjee, rethinking took place on the part of some survivors of the first phase who favoured participation in parliamentary politics and trade union activities. Others stuck with the line of armed struggle whilst also encouraging mass mobilisation through the setting up of open fronts. By the end of the decade groups following the latter course, including CPI(M-L) Party Unity in Bihar, and People’s War Group [CPI(M-L) People’s War Group] in Andhra Pradesh had built strong bases in parts of these two states and others in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. It has been from these areas that the Maoists have succeeded over the last twenty years, in spite of both state repression and resistance against them carried on by the militias of dominant groups, in building the ‘red corridor’ stretching from the upper Gangetic plain

³³ On the persistence of Naxalism, see ‘Beyond the “Security-Centric” Approach’, *Editorial in Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLIV, no.8 (21 February 2009), p.6; and on the circumstances of India’s tribal or *adivasi* population see Ramachandra Guha, ‘Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLII, no.32 (11 August 2007), pp.3305-12.

³⁴ See the CPI(Maoist) Party Programme (see note 4).

³⁵ Sumanta Banerjee, ‘Beyond Naxalbari’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI, no.29 (22 July 2006), pp.3159-63. This and Sumanta Banerjee, ‘Reflections of a one time Maoist activist’, *op. cit.*, together with Tilak D.Gupta, ‘Maoism in India: Ideology, Programme and Armed Struggle’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI, no.29 (22 July 2006), pp.3172-76., have supplied much of the material for this and the following section of the paper.

bordering Nepal across plains and through the forested hills that parallel the East Coast of India down as far as northern Tamil Nadu. The corridor is twice the geographical size of the other two insurgency-affected areas of India, in the North East and Kashmir. The Maoists are now believed to operate in over a third of India's districts.³⁶

The Movement is currently, Banerjee thinks, in its third phase following the agreement of leaders and cadres of scattered and divided groups to the creation of the single revolutionary party, the CPI(Maoist) in 2004. The reasons for 'fusion' after decades of fragmentation in the Movement are unclear. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suppose that the Indian activists have been influenced by the example of the Nepali Maoists – even though they may also be critical of the latter for having agreed to join the electoral process. It is probably no accident that the merger in 2004 was partly facilitated by the Nepali leader, Prachanda. Whatever the factors behind the fusion that has taken place, it appears to have brought about a significant regeneration of the Movement, having 'given synergy to the new outfit in terms of strength, capability and resources – for launching attacks on the security forces'. This fusion has also provided a large swathe of the country within which the Maoists are able to move without the problems of coordination that afflict the state police forces. Both the scale and frequency of incidents in which the Maoists have confronted the security forces have increased, culminating most recently in the attack on 6 April 2010 in a forest in eastern Chhattisgarh that left 78 armed policemen dead. This occurred not long after an attack on a police camp at Silda in West Bengal in which 24 policemen were killed.

The CPI(Maoist), as I pointed out earlier, has reaffirmed the programmatic line of the CPI(M-L) of 1970, committing to a people's war for seizure of power whilst also stating that it will wage struggles against the Government of India's plans to set up Special Economic Zones and against the displacement of tribals and forest dwellers by mining and other projects.³⁷ I was informed in March 2010 by the noted human rights activist, Professor G. Haragopal of the University of Hyderabad, that the Maoists are now prioritising mobilisation, especially of tribals against mining and other projects involving displacements of people. Their prime objective has become that of mobilisation against 'imperialism' as reflected in India's economic liberalisation and the effects of globalisation rather than 'anti-feudal' struggles.

³⁶ According to *The Economist* (27 February 2010). Alpa Shah forthcoming, *op. cit.*, refers to 231 out of India's 626 districts and says that there are by now more than 40,000 Maoist cadres (though this is a much higher figure than is given in other sources). Thirty-three districts are identified as 'worst affected' by 'Left Wing Extremism' (Jharkhand has 10, Chhattisgarh 7, Bihar 6, Orissa 5, Maharashtra 2, and Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have one each) as reported by Amitendu Palit, 'Economy of the red corridor', *The Financial Express* (13 March 2010).

³⁷ See 'Interview with Ganapathy', cited at note 5, in which the General Secretary says 'The (Party) Congress has decided to take up struggles against the SEZs which are nothing but neo-colonial enclaves on Indian territory'.

Another human rights activist, K. Balagopal, provides an illuminating history of the Movement in Andhra Pradesh in particular.³⁸ In the 1970s, the Naxalites fought fairly successfully, in spite of police actions against landlordism (including the practice of *begar* or bonded labour) and then encouraged tribals to cut down reserve forests for cultivation. This was by ‘far and away the most successful land struggles of the Naxalites’³⁹ until later in the mid-1990s changing their policy in the light of changed circumstances, they imposed ‘quite a successful ban on the cutting of forests’. In the early period, in the northern Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh, Balagopal says, the Naxalites spread mainly through mass organisations of agricultural labourers, students and youth, but thereafter in this region and elsewhere in the state, heavy repression on the part of government forces brought an increased reliance on armed squads:

The immediate economic and social problems of the masses took a back seat and the battle for supremacy with the state became the central instance of struggle ...This requires a range of acts of violence, which have no direct relation to the immediate realisation of any rights for the masses, though the resulting repression invariably hits at the masses.⁴⁰

Unsurprisingly, this has led to questioning amongst people as to whether they have not been made into ‘guinea pigs of revolution’. New generations, though they may have benefited from the earlier actions of the Maoists, are less sympathetic to them than were people of their parents’ generation, while at the same time the tactics employed by the state in Andhra have seriously weakened them. These tactics included the creation of special police forces – the ‘Greyhounds’ – that live and operate like the Naxalites’ own squads and are ‘bound by no known law, including the Constitution of India’.⁴¹ ‘Today, the state stands as the best example of the success of counter-revolutionary strategies of a government’.⁴² The Movement in Andhra Pradesh has, however, supplied leaders more widely as in Bastar, in neighbouring Chhattisgarh⁴³ and nationally. Kishenji, for example a politburo member, is from Karimnagar.⁴⁴ The Andhra experience, of the shift from mass mobilisation to armed struggle and from tactics that address

³⁸ K. Balagopal, ‘Maoist Movement in Andhra Pradesh’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI, no.29 (22 July 2006), pp.3183-87.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.3184.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.3185.

⁴¹ This account is substantially confirmed in a *Frontline* report, Vol.26, no.22 (6 November 2009), which says, with regard to the first ten years or so, ‘On the whole, a generation reaped the benefits of the Maoist movement’. Thereafter, the movement rather fell apart as a result of the determination of police and politicians to change the conditions in which it had thrived: ‘It is this change in the conditions on the battleground and to some extent the change in the social climate (in the aftermath of India’s economic reforms) that contributed to the downfall of the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh and not just the military capability of the elite commando force – Greyhounds’. This report also comments on the changed perceptions of the Naxalites over generations.

³⁶ *Frontline*, *ibid*

⁴³ Arundhati Roy, account of her travels with the Maoists in Bastar, *Outlook* (29 March 2010).

⁴⁴ See the report of an interview with Koteswar Rao, alias ‘Kishenji’, *Frontline* Vol.26, no.22 (6 November 2009).

people's everyday problems to the remote goal of seizing state power triggered by the proscribing of the mass movements by the state is one that has been repeated more widely – and increasingly so. The CPI(Maoist) was formally banned by the Government of India as a terrorist organisation under Section 41 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act on 22 June 2009. It had previously been declared an 'unlawful association' by a number of states, including Andhra Pradesh.

The Naxalites'/Maoists' Programme

The programme of the CPI(Maoist), once the new people's democratic state is established, however, is one with which 'a large chunk of the Indian political class should have nothing to quarrel about'.⁴⁵ The party proposes to redistribute land to poor peasants and landless labourers according to the slogan 'land to the tillers'; to ensure the land rights of women; 'to ensure all facilities for the growth of agriculture', including ensuring 'remunerative prices' for agricultural products'; to regulate working conditions and ensure that wages are adequate and equal between the sexes; to guarantee the right to work and 'improved living conditions for the people'; and 'to move towards the elimination of regional imbalances'.⁴⁶ Much of this also appears in the Common Minimum Programme with which the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), headed by the Congress Party, set out (also in 2004), while the major established party of the Left, the CPI(M), remains committed to the abolition of landlordism and radical land reforms. Contrary to what is suggested by some commentators, the CPI(Maoist) does have a coherent programme. The Maoists are not just armed bandits, as they are sometimes represented as being (as in the *Frontline* report from Lalgarth) and in spite of the history of attachment to violence that Simeon critiques in the *Seminar* article referred to earlier. They are now seen increasingly as being more or less exclusively an armed movement with no concern for mass mobilisation has come about because state action against them leaves them with little scope for the latter, which has tended to shrink (as we saw from Balagopal's account from Andhra Pradesh outlined earlier) – or at least apparently so (close observers like Navlakha report that organising goes on wherever it is possible for the Party to do so).⁴⁷

The chances of land reform being carried out in India by intervention from above now seem remote. Neither is there significant pressure for such reforms from below in the major agricultural regions of the country. Moreover, the major left parties have chosen not to

⁴⁵ Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.3172.

⁴⁶ See CPI(Maoist) *Party Programme*, cited at note 4.

⁴⁷ Gautam Navlakha, 'Days and Nights in the Maoist Heartland', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLV, no.16 (17 April 2010), pp.38-47. Navlakha reports 'Murali, an activist told me that mass organisations of the party may not be registered but they were there alright and functioned to the extent that these unregistered organisations spearheaded struggles and entered into negotiations...', p.41.

concentrate attention on marginal areas where the land issue still is alive. The Maoist/Naxalite organisations have filled the gap and Gupta argues that ‘the major Naxalite contribution to Indian politics is that they have kept alive the agrarian demands of the rural poor through persistent but not always successful struggles’.⁴⁸ Their emphasis, too, on armed resistance to oppression by bigger landowners and rich farmers who often still subject Dalits and *adivasis* to everyday humiliation has appeal to many of these historically oppressed people. Gupta thinks that it has a large mass following because ‘no other political party in the country has taken up the cause of the rural poor with such single-minded zeal and devotion’. He thinks this even though he questions the priority that the Maoists themselves seem to give to the path of armed revolution, reinforcing the impression that theirs is a guerilla formation rather than a political party. Gupta also believes that their strategic-tactical line is quite inadequate in the context of present day India – as he says, most of India is not Dandekaranya (one of the major tribal-occupied forest areas of Chhattisgarh).⁴⁹ Balagopal, similarly, has argued that ‘the main reason for the wide popularity of the Naxalites in the entire forest region abutting the Godavari river in Telengana, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh is the protection they gave to the forest dwellers for cultivation in reserve forests, the substantial increase they achieved in the payment for picking *tendu* leaf and the end they put to the oppressive domination of the headmen and *patwaris*’.⁵⁰ The massive transfers of forest and agricultural land for infrastructural, mining and industrial projects that are either planned or are now taking place will lend even greater strength to the Naxalites.

Tactics, Mobilisations and Patterns of Support

The few ethnographic studies that there are⁵¹ strongly confirm these general arguments about the extent to which the Naxalites win support amongst, and articulate the needs and aspirations of poor and landless peasants and *adivasis*, and perhaps especially of young men and women

⁴⁸ Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.3173.

⁴⁹ Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.3174.

⁵⁰ K. Balagopal, ‘Physiognomy of Violence’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI (3 June 2006), pp.2183-86. Quote from p.2185. Note that the history of the Naxalite movement in Bastar, recorded by Gautam Navlakha (see note 47) confirms Balagopal’s account here; while the spokesperson from Jharkhand, interviewed by Alpa Shah (see note 31) presents a similar story.

⁵¹ The studies that I have found are those of Bela Bhatia in Central Bihar, *op. cit.*; of George Kunnath, also in Central Bihar, ‘Becoming a Naxalite in Rural Bihar: Class Struggle and its Contradictions’, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol.33, no.1 (January 2006), pp.89-123 and ‘Smouldering Dalit Fires in Bihar, India’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos.3-4 (2009), pp.309-325; of Alpa Shah, in Jharkhand, ‘Markets of Protection: The “Terrorist” Maoist Movement and the State in Jharkhand, India’, *Critique of Anthropology*, Vol.26, no.3 (2006), pp.297-314, and ‘In search of certainty in revolutionary India’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos.3-4 (2009), pp.271-286; of Amit Desai, in Maharashtra, ‘Anti-“anti-witchcraft” and the Maoist insurgency in rural Maharashtra, India’, *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.33, nos.3-4 (2009), pp.423-439; and of Jason Miklian, in Chhattisgarh, *op. cit.* The work of Felix Padel on tribal movements in Central India, some of which is available on line, is also of value, as are reports of enquiry teams from the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and other bodies of this kind.

amongst these groups. This is so even if they actually enter a region through the rural middle class of upper caste elites and educated well-to-do *adivasis*, as has been the case in the part of Jharkhand studied by Alpa Shah.⁵² These studies also, however, highlight the tensions and contradictions in the tactics and actions of the movements. The relationship between the mainly urban, educated middle class leadership and the peasantry is fraught with tensions. There are contradictions between the immediate tactics of the groups, of opposing the dominant landowners, redistributing land, raising wages and generally of changing rural power relations, all of which answers to the problems that their supporters confront and on the other hand, their longer run goals of establishing socialism through the take-over of state power. It seems from the ethnographies that, unsurprisingly, the extent to which the leadership has been able to develop a 'revolutionary consciousness' amongst the poor peasantry is very limited. George Kunnath's research⁵³ in particular, shows how support amongst Dalits for the Maoists in Central Bihar weakened considerably, as the latter sought to bring in men from the middle and upper castes in pursuit of the goal of capturing state power and rewarded the higher caste members of their armed squads (*dastas*) more highly than the Dalits. The tendency on the part of the leadership to romanticise the revolutionary character of the peasantry is sometimes a problem and it is clear that such as this consciousness is, it may well be suppressed when government provides adequately for the most immediate needs of the people.⁵⁴ The other big tension is between mass mobilisation and the necessarily secretive, armed power of the underground movement which is not inherently democratic at all. This relates in turn to the contradiction between the moral basis of the Maoist movement and the violence that it perpetrates. Violence can undermine that moral base and alienate supporters as has happened, according to Balagopal's account – summarised earlier – in Andhra Pradesh. The understandable sense of their persecution amongst Maoist cadres, confronted by the violence of the state, may lead to the indiscriminate use of force and their alienation from the people they claim to fight for. It is clear, too, and also unsurprising that there is but a thin line between the 'revolutionary' and the criminal thug. One of the early leaders in Central Bihar (one of a pair referred to colloquially as 'Marx and Engels') was a Yadav *dacoit* who had served a long prison sentence for the murder of a police constable.⁵⁵

Bhatia and Kunnath provide ethnographic evidence that the social base of the Movement in Central Bihar, when the Movement was strong there, was amongst the landless, small and marginal peasants of lower and intermediate castes, though there were some supporters from amongst higher castes and classes and whose presence was felt in the leadership. These authors show that there was a perception amongst poorer people that Naxalites were 'good people', who

⁵² Shah 2006, *op. cit.*

⁵³ Kunnath 2006, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Sumanta Banerjee argues this in his 2009 article. See note 23.

⁵⁵ Balagopal 2006, *op.cit.*, says with regard to Andhra Pradesh 'strategies of militancy attract unruly types who straddle the border between rebellion and mere rowdy-ism', p.3186.

were opposed to their oppressors and who supported them in a struggle for their basic rights. But according to Bhatia, people understood the objective of the movement as being ‘change’, not ‘revolution’. They supported it because they felt that the Naxalites shared their sense of injustice rather than for any ideological reasons. The appeal of ‘class struggle’ was as a means of securing needs for higher wages, land redistribution and freedom from harassment. Bhatia notes that people petitioned the Maoists for exactly the same things for which they also petitioned government.

Bhatia describes mobilisations by Dalits against Bhumihar landowners in Bhojpur; Kunnath the struggles between Maoist-led landless Dalits and Kurmi landholders in another village in Central Bihar. In both cases, the accounts show that the ‘feudal’ power of the landowners was undermined but at a high cost in terms of human life. In this region, of course, the Maoists began to be opposed in the 1990s by vigilante gangs set up by the landowners, like the Bhumihars’ Ranbeer Sena. Still, the ethnographies show that the Maoist mobilisations delivered some real benefits to landless peasants. They established land rights for some, raised wages in the areas of struggle and perhaps above all, inspired poor people to assert themselves as human beings and to claim their social and political rights. ‘Honour’ or ‘self-respect’ (*izzat*) appears for many to have been their most important achievement from their participation in the mass mobilisations of the Maoists.

In practice, Bhatia argues on the basis of extensive fieldwork in Central Bihar in the mid-1990s, a large part of the Movement’s activities were non-violent (demonstrations, *dharnas* and the like). Still, there were significant differences between Liberation (castigated by General Secretary Ganapathy as having degenerated ‘after a history of glorious struggle’⁵⁶), Party Unity and the MCC over the extent of their commitment to the mass line represented by the open fronts set up by the various groups. Liberation formed the Indian People’s Front (IPF) and the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) in the early 1980s and both flourished. Party Unity set up the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) was banned in 1986 but was later renamed Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Parishad (MKSP).⁵⁷ But underground, armed action was always important. At the outset and again more recently according to other commentators,⁵⁸ the groups relied almost exclusively on armed tactics. These were undertaken by the *dasta* (squads), each with 6-10 members recruited mostly locally from amongst the labouring classes, though they might also include middle class members, some from outside the area. The most important role of the *dasta*, according to Bhatia, was (in the 1990s) to protect the open fronts; open fronts and underground groups were intimately linked. Kunnath records that they were referred to always together as the

⁵⁶ This description appears in ‘Interview with Ganapathy’, see note 5.

⁵⁷ Kunnath 2009, *op. cit.*, analyses the tensions that eventually emerged between Party Unity and the MKSS, and the split in the latter.

⁵⁸ Shah and Pettigrew, *op. cit.*

sanghathan. His account, from fieldwork undertaken more recently than Bhatia's, shows that the squads increasingly included middle class and middle caste members as the Maoists sought to build a wider cross-class movement in the pursuit of the goal of securing state power. His friend Rajubhai, a landless Dalit who had been the leader of a *dasta* and who appears to be an organic intellectual, told him that:

When the *sanghathan* came here, it began among the *mazdoor varg* (working class). The cadres used to sleep and eat in the mud houses of the *mazdoor*. It fought for the issues of the working classes – land and wages, as well as against social abuses, exploitation and sexual abuse of women. But now that the *sanghathan* has got a foothold here, its ambition has grown into one of capturing state power. So they have started taking in people from dominant castes, against whom we fought previously. As a result of the entry of the landowning castes into the *sanghathan*, it is hesitant to raise the issues of land and wages. For the last twenty years, wages have remained the same: three kilos of paddy for a day's work. The working class is no longer a priority for the *sanghathan*.⁵⁹

Rajubhai's disaffection from the *sanghathan* was completed by the fact that landless Dalits in the *dastas*, though they were the ones who died or suffered physically the most, were actually paid less than were the middle caste members. This appears to be a rather shocking denial of the moral claims of the Movement.

A village study from South Bihar by Shashi Bhushan Singh⁶⁰ presents a more complex, even confusing picture, though it also bears out some of the points made by Bhatia and Kunnath. Here it appears that the IPF, the open front of Liberation and the MKSS of Party Unity – though they were both led locally mainly by Yadavs – were a source of support for Dalits in their struggles against higher castes for higher wages and for their dignity. Singh says, 'The biggest contribution of the Naxalites towards the empowerment of the poor has been the taming of the upper castes'.⁶¹ These struggles took place, however, in a context in which the traditional dominance of Rajputs had already been weakened by the effects of economic development. This, in various ways, drew people increasingly out of the village. By the later 1990s, Dalit support for the Naxalites was apparently waning, mainly because of the improvements that had taken place in the Dalits' economic condition and perhaps also because the class contradiction between the landed and landless had by then become less clear-cut: 'The importance of land as a factor of livelihood and dominance is decreasing ... [as] ... the locus of the economy has partially shifted

⁵⁹ Kunnath 2006, *op. cit.*, p.110.

⁶⁰ Singh, 'Limits to Power: Naxalism and Caste Relations in a South Bihar Village', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XL, no.29 (16 July 2005), pp.3167-75.

⁶¹ Singh, *op. cit.*, p.3173.

away from the village’.⁶² The politics of Maoism in this case were greatly influenced by caste and its implications for the wider political realignments that took place in Bihar in the 1990s. The Dalits themselves were divided by class differences (mainly between the Chamars and the rest); many of the Yadavs shifted politically to become supporters of Lalu Prasad Yadav’s Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD); while the MCC had entered the region later than the other groups and through upper caste Bhumihars and Rajputs, and finally became closely associated with the latter when the Bhumihars opposed to Lalu and the RJD; also shifted to become the main opposition to the Maoists through the Ranbeer Sena. In this case, ‘The MCC supported Rajputs and opposed the Scheduled Castes initially in order to gain supremacy vis-à-vis the MKSS and later for survival vis-à-vis the police and Ranvir Sena. An organisation formed to support the Scheduled Castes ended up by supporting the dominant castes’.⁶³ The neatness of class conflict is completely upset in this case – and no doubt, the same is true of many other areas.

While it may be true, as it is according to the close observers of the Movement in Central Bihar whose work has been referred to here, that revolutionary violence can appeal to these who have been subjected to violence by their social ‘superiors’ over generations, Bhatia particularly – like Banerjee – is clearly deeply concerned about the way in which violence corrupts the Movement.⁶⁴ Her conclusion – with which, I believe, Kunnath’s arguments are in sympathy – is worth quoting in full:

The Naxalite movement will thrive only to the extent that its vision resonates with the people. The wider the gap between the two, the higher the chances the movement will fizzle out. The present formula is a *mélange* of convenience between the leaders who dream of Maoist revolution and people who aspire for practical change. In order to bring about a genuine people’s movement, the Naxalite leaders have to be ready to walk at the pace of the people and let their concerns guide the vision of the movement.⁶⁵

The story of the Movement in Andhra Pradesh according to Balagopal, as recounted earlier, is salutary. There, he argues, the gap between the visions of leadership and masses has seriously weakened the Movement. The leadership has the commitment to ‘armed struggle’ that is explained in the Party Programme (see note 4), while the Maoists are also subjected to such violence by the state that both sides have become locked into armed conflict. Then the

⁶² Singh, *op. cit.*, p.3173.

⁶³ Singh, *op. cit.*, p.3173.

⁶⁴ Bela Bhatia, ‘On Armed Resistance’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI, no.29 (22 July 2006), pp.3179-83; and Sumanta Banerjee 2006, *op.cit.* Bhatia writes ‘...the use of violence has taken a heavy toll. The downside of violence has been so wide-ranging that it may well end up negating what the Naxalites stand for’, *op. cit.*, p.3182.

experiences, for notable example, of the attempts in Andhra Pradesh to reach a negotiated settlement have shown just how difficult this is to achieve given the legitimate suspicions of the Maoists of the government and vice versa.⁶⁶

Thus far there are no ethnographic studies of the Movement in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh to compare with those for Central Bihar, though Nandini Sundar who has carried on substantial ethnographic research in the region – if not in the Maoist dominated areas, as she says – has written on it, drawing on interviews conducted as part of a Citizens' Initiative visit there in May 2006. Her information about the activities of Salwa Judum (discussed below) is substantiated by interviews and observations in the field reported by Jason Miklian.⁶⁷ Sundar records that the Maoists 'claim to include 60 lakh (6,000,000) people in the "organisational sweep" of their Dandakaranya "guerilla zone"', where they have established mass organisations – the most important of which are the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghathan (DAKMS) and the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghathan (KAMS) – that are colloquially called *sanghams*. The Maoists claim, also, to have carried on a great deal of developmental work, including the establishment of 135 people's clinics, educational facilities and a large number of minor irrigation works.⁶⁸ Sundar comments that while these efforts – assuming that the Maoists' claims are accurate – are not equivalent to what the government might have achieved, they do show much greater commitment to people's development. The KAMS is said to have taken up women's issues⁶⁹ and the Maoists have consciously promoted Gondi language and literature. These positive efforts, however, are compromised by other Maoist activities when they have 'resisted even genuine government initiatives'. For example, 'While recognising that traders cheat *adivasis* over minor forest produce, (the Maoists) have defended them against government attempts to introduce cooperatives to buy tamarind and *tendu*'.⁷⁰ Miklian, too, comments that most villagers 'are upset at Naxal opposition to government programmes and efforts to block participatory elections'.⁷¹ More significant still, than this, has been the 'brute force' that has accompanied their work. Sundar argues, 'Their supporters need to debate whether armed struggle was necessary to their positive work and whether peaceful mass mobilisation would not work

⁶⁵ Bela Bhatia 2005, *op. cit.*, p.1547.

⁶⁶ On the Andhra peace talks see K. Balagopal, 'People's War and the Government: did the police have the last laugh?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XXXVIII (8 February 2003), pp.513-519; and 'Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh: Have We Heard the Last of the Peace Talks?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLV (26 March 2005), pp.1323-29.

⁶⁷ Nandini Sundar, 'Bastar, Maoism and Salwa Judum', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLI, no.29 (22 July 2006), pp.3187-92; and Miklian 2009, *op.cit.* See also Arundhati Roy's account, *op. cit.* and Sundar's contribution, 'Pleading for justice', *Seminar*, March 2010.

⁶⁸ Sundar, *Ibid*, p.3189. Arundhati Roy, *op. cit.*, also gives some account of the developmental work undertaken by the Maoists; and see Balagopal 2006, *op. cit.* (note 50), on the reasons for the mass support that the Maoists have attracted.

⁶⁹ Arundhati Roy, *op. cit.*, describes activities of the KAMS.

⁷⁰ Sundar, *op. cit.*, p.3190.

⁷¹ Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.454.

better. Certainly, the attempt to defend their guerilla zone seems now to have overtaken people's needs...'.⁷² Her conclusion then is exactly like Bhatia's from Bihar or Balagopal's from Andhra.

Gautam Navlakha gives a somewhat more sympathetic account of the Maoists in Bastar from the journey he made in their 'base area' there, where they run their *Jantanam Sarkar* or 'people's government' in January 2010 (see note 47). He, like Arundathi Roy (see note 43), was evidently very impressed by the self-discipline of the young cadres amongst whom he observed remarkable gender equality. He notes the large numbers of women and that many platoons of the People's Liberation Guerilla Army have women commanders. He says 'It is significant that women comprise by far and away the most articulate members of the movement' and records its work to encourage (not 'decree') the emancipation of women as also to develop education, healthcare and agricultural production. According to Navlakha's account, the Maoists are very concerned indeed to explain and defend their policy in regard to violence. They point to the violence that is carried on against the people quite routinely by police and private militia of the Salwa Judum and strongly assert that only 'enemies of the people' were killed by them. This defence was also articulated forcefully by General Secretary Ganapathy in his interview with Myrdal and Navlakha (see note 25), and by the Jharkhand leader Gopalji, interviewed by Alpa Shah (note 31). But it is clear that there is a great deal of sensitivity amongst the Maoist leadership about undisciplined violence. Navlakha says, 'I pointed out that each time the party committed a mistake and apologised, it could not help advance the movement forward. Did not this raise issues about discipline?' This line of questioning clearly discomfited those with whom he spoke. There can be no doubt that there is a spiral of violence as Bhatia and others show. At the same time, the police who are set against the Maoists come from what Human Rights Watch has described as a 'broken system':

'A dangerous anachronism, the police have largely failed to evolve from the ruler-supportive, repressive forces they were designed to be under Britain's colonial rule ... Instead of policing through public consent and participation, the police use abuse and threats as a primary crime investigation and law enforcement tactic. The institutional culture of police practically discourages officers from acting otherwise, failing to give them the resources, training, ethical environment and encouragement to develop professional police tactics. Many officers even told Human Rights Watch that they were ordered or expected to commit abuses'.⁷³

⁷² Sundar, *op. cit.*, p.3191.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *Broken System: Dysfunction, Abuse and Impunity in the Indian Police* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009).

There are some other points that emerge from the few ethnographies. One interesting finding is that of Amit Desai from his fieldwork in one of the two Naxalite affected districts of Maharashtra.⁷⁴ Here the presence of the Maoists has had the effect of bringing the police, moved into ‘advanced bases’, closer to village people. Aware as they now are of the need to ‘win hearts and minds’, the police sometimes provide support for villagers in their interactions with other bodies of the state. But they are also convinced that ‘social backwardness’ is a major reason why people may support the Maoists. With this mindset, the police have attempted at a kind of social reform by trying to regulate local religious practice and such activities as witch-detecting and ghost-finding. This has had the consequence, in this case, of pushing people into closer involvement with the alternative religious practice offered by a particular Hindu sect that is aligned with the Hindu right. The Maoists have generally been silent in regard to the increasing influence that Hindu nationalists have sought to build amongst tribals. Sumanta Banerjee writes that ‘their major failure has been their powerlessness in putting up an effective resistance to the Hindu religious fascist forces which have imposed a reign of terror over members of the Muslim and Christian religious minorities. The indifference of the Maoist leaders to these major flashpoints of popular grievances and resistance indicates to some extent the alienation they are prone to’.⁷⁵

Responses of State, the Role of Capital, and ‘Durable Disorder’⁷⁶

Here I discuss, in particular, the responses of the state to the Maoists in Chhattisgarh though I believe the key points made are ones that are of general significance. The efforts made by the Government of Chhattisgarh to tackle the Naxalites/Maoists in the state, until 2005, had proven largely ineffectual. It was said by Ajai Sahni, Executive Director of the Institute of Conflict Management, Delhi, ‘Chhattisgarh forces still lag behind other Indian states in both quantitative and qualitative terms’.⁷⁷ It has been in this context that the policy of recruiting ‘Special Police Officers’ from amongst local people was adopted by the Central Reserve Police Force in 2006 as

⁷⁴ Desai, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ Banerjee 2009, *op.cit.*; and see Simeon, *op.cit.* for further discussion of the Maoists’ failure to confront communalism.

⁷⁶ I take the idea of ‘durable disorder’ as has Bert Suykens’ in the article cited here, from the title of a book on India’s North East by Sanjib Baruah and use it to refer to the ways in which the persistence of conflict may serve different interests.

⁷⁷ Miklian, *op.cit.*, p.443. See also Ajai Sahni, ‘The dreamscapes of “solutions”’, *Seminar* (March 2010) for extended discussion of the severe limitations that affect the actions of the security forces. Kumawat, in the same issue of *Seminar*, points out that ‘There has been (*sic*) decades of neglect of the state police forces in the states’ worst affected...The police-population ratios of the affected states are very low. As against the international norms of 250 policemen per 100,000 and national average of 143, Bihar is a low 79, Jharkhand 164, Chhattisgarh 143, Uttar Pradesh 94 and Orissa 100. Policemen in these states operate under abysmal working conditions with little technical support, antiquated weapons and hardly any training in jungle warfare’. See also the Human Rights Watch report (note 73).

a way of increasing manpower cheaply. Sundar records that many of those recruited were minors and they and others ‘were attracted by the promise of Rs. 1,500 per month, the machismo of weapons and the hope of getting permanent employment in the police force’.⁷⁸

The Bastar region of Chhattisgarh has also been the site of the activities of the Salwa Judum (meaning ‘purification hunt’). This militia was set up with the approval of the government in 2005, at the instigation of a sometime Communist, later Congress MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), Mahendra Karma. This was framed by Karma – who has been charged for his involvement in a conspiracy over the theft of forest rights – as a popular and ‘Gandhian’ movement of tribal people against the Naxalites. In practice, there is strong evidence of the responsibility of the Salwa Judum, with Special Police Officers, for the use of considerable violence in forcing large-scale displacements of people to roadside camps: Sundar gives the figure of 46,000, Miklian figures of 60,000 according to government or 40,000 according to independent estimates.⁷⁹ Large areas have effectively been laid waste. Many villages have been destroyed. The actions of the Salwa Judum have given rise to warlordism with some of warlords being outsiders from North India, who are supporters of Hindu fundamentalism. The Movement rapidly ceased to be under the control either of Karma or the police. Miklian notes, for instance, that in September 2007, ‘Access to Dornapal Police HQ is controlled by Kuhwal (one of these warlords from North India) as the police chief of Dornapal needs to ask his permission to allow visitors or make tactical decisions’.⁸⁰ There is a very long catalogue of human rights violations in Chhattisgarh, as Miklian reports.⁸¹ Even the *Frontline* report, more sympathetic to Salwa Judum than others records, ‘Though Salwa Judum was well-intentioned, (a point that would certainly be challenged by Sundar and Miklian) it soon degenerated into yet another instrument of harassment, extortion and torture’.⁸² It is seen, nonetheless, as a model to be emulated in other states (Jharkhand and Maharashtra, according to Miklian).⁸³ Chhattisgarh illustrates very starkly the spiral of violence associated with Maoism. It also illustrates the interconnections of politicians, private companies and both Maoists and anti-Maoist forces that lead to the reproduction of conflict, because so many powerful actors benefit from it.

As a way of defeating the Maoists, the Salwa Judum has not proven successful – indeed there are reports that its actions have encouraged fresh recruitment to them⁸⁴ – but Salwa Judum ‘is in many ways a complete success, operating exactly as its founders intended, as a land and power

⁷⁸ Sundar, *op. cit.*, p.3187.

⁷⁹ Sundar, *op. cit.*; Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.452.

⁸⁰ Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.450.

⁸¹ Miklian, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-5.

⁸² *Frontline*, Vol.26, no.22 (2 November 2009).

⁸³ Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.457.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Navlakha, *op. cit.* (note 47).

grab masquerading as local uprising'.⁸⁵ Miklian proceeds to argue that finding a solution to the security problem that is presented in Bastar is 'problematised by the fact that every major actor (in Chhattisgarh) gains more from continued conflict than peace'.⁸⁶ In the Dantewara area of Bastar, it is iron that generates the funding to supply all sides in the conflict.⁸⁷ There is a publicly owned iron ore processing plant and both Essar and Tata Steel are active. Mine officials, both public and private, pay off both Salwa Judum and the Maoists. In this case, as in other parts of the 'red corridor', it appears that the existence of important natural resources is a major factor amongst the causes of enduring conflict. There is some debate amongst those who have undertaken large-*n* cross country analyses of the determinants of insurgency and civil wars on the significance of natural resources, with the principal protagonists being Collier and his co-authors from Oxford who think that there is a significant relationship, while Fearon and Laitin from Stanford University find that there may not be.⁸⁸ In the 'red corridor', the presence of natural resources appears unquestionably to be a factor, though probably one that is less significant than the fact that insurgency is favoured in forested, hill areas – a point that also comes out strongly from the large-*n* studies.⁸⁹

But it is not only the extremely valuable mineral resources of the region – such as Orissa's high quality bauxite⁹⁰ – that give the key actors material interests in the continuation of conflict. Bert Suykens has analysed what he describes as a 'relatively stable joint extraction regime' operates in the trade in *tendu* leaves, used in making *beedi* cigarettes, in the tribal areas of the Telengana region of Andhra. 'This low profile, lootable resource' provides the single most important source of income both for tribals in North Telengana (during the summer season) and the Maoists. Both the state and the Naxalites hold some degree of public authority and exercise it, in effect jointly, to control the trade and extract resources from it. The analysis shows how:

Naxalite authority has been able to extend its influence over the wages of [*tendu* leaf] collectors, the appointment of *khalledars* [purchase agents], the earning of revenue and to a lesser extent, certain aspects of the *beedi* manufacturing industry. In this role of public authority, the Naxalites do not conform to their popular image as either weapon-wielding terrorists or the vanguard of social-activism. At the same time, the Indian state does not seem to be able to prevent the Naxalites

⁸⁵ Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.456.

⁸⁶ Miklian, *op. cit.*, p.457.

⁸⁷ See also Sundar, *op. cit.*, p.3189.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Paul Collier *et al.*, 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War', *Oxford Economic Papers* (January 2009); James Fearon and David Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.97, no.1 (2003), pp.75-90.

⁸⁹ See also Felix Padel and Samarendra Das, 'Anthropology of a Genocide: Tribal Movements in Central India Against Over-Industrialisation' (2006), www.freewebs.com/epgorissa/FelixPadel-SamarendraDas.pdf.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

from taking up this role. Although the state clearly has the overall advantage, both in manpower and money, and provides the framework for the trade in *beedi*, the Naxalites seem to have a comparative advantage in controlling the day-to-day working of the trade.⁹¹

Alpa Shah, with regard to a region of Jharkhand, has argued that the Naxalites there became very much like the state, selling protection in return for support. They call it ‘taxation’ and the income from their levies on the *tendu* leaf trade or on the building of roads, bridges and dams, are a crucial source of income for their operations⁹². Navlakha records that the annual budget of an Area Revolutionary People’s Committee in the territory of the *Jantanam Sarkar* in Bastar was ‘made up of Rs. 360,000 in taxes on contractors, Rs. 500,000 allotted by the Jantanam Sarkar [origins of these funds not specified] and Rs. 250,000 collected through work days or *shram daan* by households in the area’.⁹³ He subsequently describes the revenues of the Party as follows:

‘Most of the money was now collected in the form of royalty on *tendu* patta, bamboo, tamarind and other forest produce. Revenue from looting banks or confiscating wealth was far less. They did tax some of the companies and contractors who operated in what they describe as the guerilla zone. In any case their sources were indigenous and not external, which even the government was forced to concede’.⁹⁴

‘Operation Green Hunt’

The Maoist insurgency has gathered strength since the formation of the CPI(Maoist) in 2004. In response to this gathering momentum in November 2009, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced a ‘concerted and coordinated initiative against Maoists’, framed by the principles of counter-insurgency that are summed up in the words ‘clear, hold and build’. As an official explained, ‘It is a comprehensive operational strategy that would first seek to clear an area of Maoists, occupy it militarily and follow up with socio-economic development activity’.⁹⁵ This

⁹¹ Bert Suykens, ‘Diffuse Authority in the *Beedi* Commodity Chain: Naxalite and State Governance in Tribal Telengana, India’, *Development and Change*, Vol.41, no.1 (2010), pp.153-178. Quote from p.171.

⁹² Alpa Shah 2006, *op.cit.* See also Arindam Sen, ‘Anarchism or Revolutionary Marxism?’, *Seminar* (March 2010), who notes that the Maoists’ brand of politics ‘runs, and can only run, on the strength of guns and a vast network of extortion economics. A huge ‘levy’ is regularly collected from contractors and brick kiln owners, *tendu* leaf merchants, other industrialists and businessmen, illegal forest produce dealers and coal and iron ore miners, corporate houses and bureaucrats’.

⁹³ Navlakha, *op. cit.* (note 47), p.45.

⁹⁴ Navlakha, *ibid*, p.47.

⁹⁵ *Frontline* (6 November 2009).

strategy has come to be known as ‘Operation Green Hunt’. Security experts like Ajai Sahni, some of whose statements have been referred to earlier, cast doubt on whether the central government and the most concerned states have the forces, intelligence or coordination and organisation to make this strategy work. With the sparse deployment of forces, they argued, ‘area domination’ exercises (the ‘clear and hold’ operations) would be unlikely to work. The validity of this reasoning seemed to be borne out by events over the first four months of 2010, culminating in the killing of 78 men of the Central Reserve Police Force at Chintalnad in Dantewada District of Chhattisgarh on 6 April.⁹⁶

Subsequently, the Minister of Home Affairs P. Chidambaram and Home Secretary G. K. Pillai have announced enhanced measures, including the recruitment of many more policemen,⁹⁷ while pressures have been building for the deployment of air power against the Maoists. The government has also introduced curbs on the freedom of speech, warning members of civil society organisations in a statement on 6 May 2010 that anyone in contact with the Maoists might be imprisoned for up to ten years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.⁹⁸ The Congress Party is not united, however, on the appropriate line of action. Minister Chidambaram continues to pursue a (conventional) security-centric approach.⁹⁹ Other senior leaders such as former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Digvijay Singh and former Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, on the other hand, argue that the focus should be on issues of livelihood and governance.¹⁰⁰ The question, ‘when will the revolt of the Maoists force the power structure to abandon its ‘security-centric’ approach and begin to deal with the causes of the rebellion?’, posed editorially by the *Economic and Political Weekly* (see note 33), remains at issue.

Conclusion

The Naxalite/Maoist Movement of India has a history extending back to 1967. For most of this time, it has been politically and organisationally fragmented and confined to relatively small pockets – though within them, as in parts of Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring Chhattisgarh and some parts of Bihar/Jharkhand, different groups established a strong presence. Different groups have given varying emphasis to mass organisation and armed struggle, and though the two forms of action have been mutually supportive, there have also been tensions between them. Mass organisation has been made increasingly difficult as governments have sought to proscribe the Maoist groups. The particular patterns of mobilisation of support have evidently varied

⁹⁶ See Cover Story ‘Flawed Operation’, *Frontline* (7 May 2010).

⁹⁷ See report ‘Deep rooted Maoists will take time to go: Home Secretary’, *The Hindu* (21 May 2010).

⁹⁸ See the Human Rights Watch statement of 7 May 2010, criticising this move.

⁹⁹ The ‘security-centric approach’ is the term of an *EPW* Editorial, *op. cit.*, note 33

¹⁰⁰ On these divisions in Congress, see Siddharth Varadarajan, ‘A Year of Living Indecisively’, *The Hindu* (23 May 2010).

considerably from case to case, both because of these variations of organisational emphasis and in view of the determination of the Maoists to build an alliance between the proletariat, peasantry, petty-bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. They have been influenced both by caste and local politics. There are instances where one or other Naxalite group has entered an area through winning the support of members of upper castes and the rural middle classes. The pattern of support may shift over time as in Central Bihar according to Kunnath's account. Revolutionary groups there have sought to win over powerful upper castes in their quest to secure state power, losing support amongst Dalits and others in the process. The lines of class conflict may be blurred by these factors.

The coming together of the major groups to form the CPI(Maoist) in 2004 marked a turning point and the Movement is now recognised as constituting the most serious challenge to its authority that the Indian state has ever confronted. The Maoists have gained strength from the failures of the state in regard to large numbers of poor people. There have been extensive failures of omission relating to the delivery of public services and social security, and failures of commission having to do with the abuses to which people have been subjected at the hands of the police, the forest department and other officials. Close observers have found that ordinary people in areas where the Maoists are well-organised have more faith in them than they do in the state. Actual or threatened displacement of large numbers especially of tribal people to make way for mining, power generation or other projects has given rise to resistance movements with which the Maoists have often been associated, if they have not actually organised them. Rents derived from natural resources such as the minerals of Bastar and Orissa or trade such as *tendu* leaves in northern Telengana or from supplying protection provide the funds for carrying on administration in the areas that the Maoists now control and for supporting armed struggle. These rents may make for incentives to keep conflict going. The essential reason, however, for the strength of the Maoists in the hilly, forested tracts of eastern and central India is that this terrain, in India as elsewhere in the world, most favours guerilla insurgency.

Though it has been argued that 'there are hardly any reliable empirical studies to measure the level of support or to weigh the reasons for the common people to join the movement',¹⁰¹ the ethnographic studies and some other reports cited in this review, clearly show that the Naxalites/Maoists have won support from amongst landless and poor peasants, Dalits and *adivasis* – and probably particularly amongst young men and women who have limited opportunities. They also show that the Maoists have had some positive impacts upon the lives and livelihoods of such people in many places. At best, they have changed rural power relations; more generally, they have enhanced the self-respect of poor people. Political leaders such as Digvijay Singh and others argue that it will only be when the state effectively addresses these

¹⁰¹ This statement by S.K. Jha is quoted by Suykens, *op. cit.*, p.157.

problems that it will win people back. In their view, the Maoists cannot be defeated by sheer force. Gautam Navlakha, in the first of the epigraphs to this paper, based on his experiences in Bastar concurs: ‘this is one rebellion which will test the resilience of the Indian state as never before. Precisely because it is a rebellion in which people are fighting to save their land, forests, water and minerals from being grabbed and they are convinced that they have an alternative vision’. The actions of state security forces and especially of those that are allowed to operate outside the law (such as Salwa Judum), often in support of private capital invested in mining and other projects in tribal areas that are likely not to benefit local people, continually provide reasons for such people to support the Maoists. The very uncertainty that is created in people’s everyday lives in these conflict situations may very well prompt some people to join the Maoists as a way of trying to find ‘certainty’ for themselves as Shah has argued.¹⁰²

At the same time, even sympathetic observers like Balagopal, Banerjee and Bhatia think that the violence that is inevitably a part of the Maoists’ activity – given their commitment to armed struggle, which they see as necessary and unavoidable – leads to disconnection between the Maoist leadership and followers. This is what Balagopal observed in the differences in the attitudes towards the Maoists of people from different generations in Andhra Pradesh and what Bhatia feared had happened in Central Bihar. This lends credence, of course, to the views of those like Simeon – quoted in the second epigraph and Nigam who see in Maoism a middle-class/upper caste intelligentsia ‘playing out revolutionary fantasies’. Those few scholars and activists who have undertaken studies in areas in which the Maoists are strong report the pragmatism in the attitudes of many ordinary people. The Maoists often seem regarded as being more trustworthy than the representatives of the state but this faith in them does not extend to support for their ideology or their methods.¹⁰³ It is the tragedy of the politics of armed struggle that it is a response to the appalling structural violence that has been perpetrated historically and that continues to be perpetrated by elites, supported by the state, against landless and poor peasants, Dalits and *adivasis*, and yet it leads to a spiral of violence in which the same people may become trapped. As Ramachandra Guha has said:

There is a double tragedy at work... The first tragedy is that the state has treated its *adivasi* [and other poor and marginalised] citizens with contempt and condescension. The second tragedy is that their presumed protectors, the Naxalites, offer no long-term solution either.¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰² Alpa Shah 2009, *op. cit.*

¹⁰³ See, for example, Bhatia, *op. cit.*, (note 24) and Smita Gupta, ‘Searching for a Third Way in Dantewada’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLV, no.16 (17 April 2010), pp.12-14.

¹⁰⁴ Guha, *op. cit.*, p.3311.

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South Asia's Economic Future With or Without Economic Integration

Shahid Javed Burki ¹

Abstract

South Asia has reached the point in its economic and political development from where it can make sustained and steady progress. This will help the region achieve the rates of economic growth that have brought about fundamental changes in the eastern part of Asia. For that to occur, intra-regional trade needs to play a significant role. This paper uses a simple econometric model to estimate the benefits that can accrue to the countries in the region if more trade were directed towards Asian destinations, in particular towards South Asia.

Introduction

Disregarding the current problems in Europe, the fact remains that regional integration helps countries achieve rates of economic growth that would not be possible if they acted alone. Size matters in both trade and economics – a conclusion reached by Adam Smith two centuries ago. This is also the case in South Asia where economic progress, India's remarkable performance in the last couple of decades notwithstanding, is being held back by intra-regional conflict.

This is where the European experience also becomes relevant. The initial European dream was to create a political structure with strong economic foundations. Such an organisational structure will make future conflict practically impossible. The dream was realised. Although

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some historians feel that scholars should ‘never say never’, it does seem unlikely that Europe will ever see a conflict on its soil of the type that twice devastated the continent in the last century. Economic union has played a large role in realising this level of comfort.

This was also the dream that drove Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh’s second president, to convince the heads of states in the South Asian region a quarter century ago to work towards greater regional cooperation. His was the spirit behind the creation of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The potential of SAARC is yet to be realised partly because the countries in the region are not convinced that this is the way to go. Sometimes, however, simple mathematics helps to clear the mind and this is what is attempted here. The purpose is to develop a simple econometric model to make the case that there are significant economic rewards available by improving trade and economic links among the eight countries of the SAARC region.

Before providing the results of the model, the paper makes a detour. This is for providing a quick overview of the current economic situations in India and Pakistan; indicating how the global economy is evolving and what could be South Asia’s role in it; and suggesting what India and Pakistan can do to take advantage of the opportunities in the global economy. This detour sets the stage for the main part of the analysis which is focused on the gains to be made by increasing trade among South Asian neighbours.

The Future of Indian and Pakistani Economies

After a slight slowdown in economic growth as a result of the Great Recession of 2008-09, the Indian economy has gone back to its growth trajectory of the last decade and a half. The quick recovery was the consequence of two factors. One, the country’s economy is less integrated with the West than that of most East Asian economies. In the case of the latter, the impact of the global slowdown was much more severe. Two, the government was effective in stimulating the economy by judicious use of fiscal stimulus aimed at reducing the impact of the slowdown on the level of employment.

India, today, is the fastest growing economy in South Asia with rates of growth close to those achieved by the ‘miracle economies’ of East Asia in the quarter century between 1975 and 2000. Those growth rates structurally transformed those economies. From essentially rural economies they became industrial powerhouses. The incidence of poverty was also dramatically reduced and the quality of human resource markedly improved. Even though India is now achieving comparable rates of GDP growth, the social and economic transformation is expected to be slower for several reasons. Among them, the more important ones are the size of the population, concentration of high growth areas in a few parts of the country, and the contribution of a few economic sectors to overall growth. In other words, the Indian model of growth is less inclusive than those in East Asia.

Trade, other than the exports from IT and now healthcare services, has been less of a contributing factor in India's growth than was the case for the miracle economies of East Asia. Trade will need to play a more vital role if India is to sustain a high rate of growth. But the emphasis on trade should include refocusing it on the countries in the immediate neighbourhood. Regional integration could play an important part in pushing the sustainable rate of growth even higher. But for that to happen, Pakistan, the second largest economy in South Asia, will need to pull out of its current economic slump.

Pakistan today is passing through an extremely difficult period because of a storm that has gathered around it. The country is dealing with extremism and terrorism that have persisted stubbornly and continue to take a heavy toll on the economy and society. Several shortages have developed in delivery of vital public services such as electricity, natural gas and water that are hurting industrial and agricultural output. The quality of governance has deteriorated to the point where people have lost faith in the state's ability to provide even for the most basic needs². All these developments have affected the performance of the economy. Last year the GDP growth rate was only 1.2 percent; this year it will probably not be more than 4.0 percent. These rates are about a third to one-half of the rates of growth being currently recorded by India. But that has not always been the case. From 1947 to 1988, a period of 41 years, Pakistan's GDP increased at an average rate of 5.5 percent year, one and a half percentage points more than that of India's. As economist Surjit Bhalla estimates in an essay contributed to a volume honouring Montek Singh Ahluwalia³, the annual average industrial growth rate in Pakistan during 1965-2005, a period of 40 years, was 6.5 per cent compared with 5.3 per cent in India. Pakistan achieved a maximum of 10.4 per cent increase in industrial output during this period. India's maximum was only 6.9 per cent. The point of making these comparisons is that nations and economies have their respective crest and troughs in long-run economic performances; there is nothing permanent about the trends that they exhibit at any given time.

If Pakistan manages to navigate out of the storm that it is in, it could see acceleration in its rate of growth to 8.0 per cent by 2025 provided it can settle its relations with India. Peace with India and strong economic ties with the large neighbour can add almost US\$200 billion to Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP), increasing it from US\$375 billion in 2007 to US\$571 billion a year. This translates into an increase of US\$850 in per capita income by 2025. India's GDP, on the other hand, can increase by US\$1.5 trillion and its per capita GDP by US\$1,140 (Table 1, page 6).

² For an analysis of Pakistan's current economic situation see Institute of Public Policy, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, *State of the Economy: Pulling Back from the Abyss*, Lahore, 2010.

³ Surjit Bhalla, 'Indian Economic Growth, 1950-2008: Facts and Beliefs, Puzzles and Policies', in Shankar Acharya and Rakesh Mohan, *India's Economy: Performance and Challenges* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010).

Pakistan has potential in many areas. It has a large and young population, which can be an economic asset rather than a social and political liability depending upon the choices made by those who make public policies. A large population can deliver considerable benefits in a world which is seeing rapid aging of populations. The large and well endowed agriculture sector is working way below its considerable potential. It is not always recognised that Pakistan has the largest contiguous irrigated area in the world, which can produce significant amounts of high value added exports if right public policies are in place with respect to efficient use of water, development of marketing infrastructure and development of appropriate technologies.

Pakistan also has some well-honed skills that can be used for producing machinery parts and components for the large industrial sectors of China and India. Finally, Pakistan's geographic location can turn the country into a hub of international commerce provided relations improve with some of the neighbours, particularly India and Afghanistan. This potential can be realised if South Asia begins to work as a cohesive regional economy.

Global Economic Changes

Analysing ongoing changes in the global economy is a subject on which much has been said and written. The world is passing through another period of what economic historians call the 'catching-up' phenomenon. Asia is catching up with the more advanced regions of the world. The centre of gravity of the global economy is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific.⁴ China is in the lead in this change; it has been able to improve its position in the global economy by taking the right set of decisions to deal with the situation created by the Great Recession of 2008-09. China's lead in the global economy is partly the result of the active role it has played in developing the new structure of industrial production, which builds on the Japanese 'just in time' system, but has been taken much beyond the original design. In producing finished products China imports parts and components mostly from the countries in its neighbourhood. Large Japanese manufacturers such as Toyota Motors relied mostly on smaller domestic producers for parts and components. China's different approach has meant developing strong trading and economic relations with the countries in which the suppliers are located. South Asia does not have such a system of production but it can well develop so if its economies become integrated.

The other major change occurring in the global economy is related to demography. Populations in developed countries are ageing rapidly; their demand for services is increasing. These have to be supplied by mostly younger people. Over time, these countries will begin to rely heavily on the more populous parts of the world. Some of these are in South Asia. India has already carved out a niche for itself in the service sector, while Bangladesh

⁴ The author developed this argument in some detail in a two-part working paper published by ISAS in April and May 2010. See Shahid Javed Burki, 'Asia in "Catch-Up Game", Part 1', Working Paper 106, 9 April 2010 and 'Asia in the "Catch-Up" Game: Part 2', ISAS Working Paper 107, 10 May 2010.

has done so in readymade garments. Other countries of South Asia can follow these examples.

The Roles India and Pakistan can play in the Changing World Economy

In indicating the roles India and Pakistan can play in the changing world economy, focus should be on two aspects. First, Pakistan has to change its stance from being a competitor of India to becoming a collaborator with its large neighbour in many fields. Economics, particularly trade, is one of the more important areas in which it should be prepared to work with India. It has to recognise that India is South Asia's anchor economy which, at this time, accounts for 82.0 per cent of the total regional product (Table 1). At the same time, India must also realise that it can gain the status of an economic superpower only if it works closely with the countries in its immediate neighbourhood. It should not overlook neighbours and focus only on extra-South Asian groupings groups such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU). No large economy has succeeded without first developing strong regional associations. This is as true for the United States, China, and South Africa as it is for India.

If India and Pakistan can work together in economics and trade, they will see considerable and palpable impacts on the structures of their economies. This will be more true for Pakistan than India, which is expected, since the size of the former's economy is only one-eighth of that of the latter's. Some fundamental changes in the structures of both agriculture and industry in Pakistan can be expected as these two sectors begin supplying the larger and rapidly growing Indian markets. The Pakistani motorway system, currently more advanced than that of India's, will get integrated with India's planned system of highways such as the 'Golden Quadrilateral'. The respective national electrical grids will get connected with trade in power becoming an integral part of inter-state commerce. The two countries may finally be able to build the gas pipelines connecting them to the Middle East and Central Asia.

Benefits from Regional Association in Commerce

In spite of the efforts made over the last quarter century to bring about more meaningful economic integration of the South Asian region, not much has been achieved. Intra-regional trade, as a proportion of the total trade of the region with the rest of the world has increased a little, but compared to other world regions, it remains almost insignificant. How much is the area losing out by not focusing sufficient amount of political attention to integration and cooperation? One way of answering this question is to use trade as the driving force for accelerating economic development. Using trade as the basis and historical GDP-trade elasticities for making projections, it is possible to develop some scenarios for the future. This is done purely for illustrative purposes in this paper, not for establishing firm targets. The three scenarios presented here are based on assumptions about the extent of integration

as well as the degree of reorientation of trade with significantly more trade moving to Asia in general (Table 2; Scenario II) and South Asia in particular (Table 3; Scenario III).

Table 1: Scenario I (The Base Case)

	GDP (US\$ Billion)		Population (Million)		Per capita income (US\$)	
	2007	2025	2007	2025	2007	2025
Bangladesh	68	195	159	195	431	1000
India	1177	3978	1125	1382	1046	2878
Nepal	10	24	28	38	357	632
Pakistan	143	375	162	230	883	1630
Sri Lanka	32	78	20	22	1600	3545
Total	1430	4650	1494	1867	957	2491

Notes : (a) The base case assumes the following GDP growth rates: Bangladesh 6.0%; India 7.0%; Nepal - 4.8%; Pakistan - 5.5%; and Sri Lanka – 5.0%.
(b) 2007 is the base year.

Source : The author's calculation based on the data for 2007 from The World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, The United Nations *World Population Prospects*. Same sources are used for Tables 2 and 3.

According to Table 1, the countries in the region continue to focus the direction of international trade and its content on distant trading partners. This is the assumption behind the base case. For India, the United States and the European Union remain the most important markets for its exports and the most important sources of its imports. The same is true for Pakistan. Even though China-India trade is likely to grow at a faster rate than India's overall trade thereby increasing Beijing's share in New Delhi's international trade, India does not become a partner in the China centered system of production that is taking shape. According to this scenario, the growth of India's GDP is sustained at the rate of 7.0 per cent a year in the 18-year period between 2007 and 2025. This is well below the 10.0 per cent growth target Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee set for the country in his budget for the year 2010-11. The size of the Indian GDP increases more than threefold and income per capita grows 2.75 times. India's share in the combined GDP of the region increases from 82.0 to 86.0 per cent. Bangladesh will be the second most rapidly expanding economy according to this scenario with the rate of increase in GDP averaging 6.0 per cent a year. Nepal performs the least with the rate of growth at 4.8 per cent. Pakistan's performance is between those of India and Nepal. Growing at 5.5 per cent a year, the size of its GDP increases 2.6 times, but its share in the South Asian total output declines from 10.0 per cent in 2007 to only 8.0 per cent in 2025 (Table 1).

The second scenario is based on the assumption that the South Asian countries take greater cognizance of the importance of international trade as a contributor to growth and also of the move in the center of gravity of the global economy to the Pacific from the Atlantic. What

this means is that the countries pay greater attention to the changing structure of the global production system. This will be largely centered on China. New Delhi's policy-makers, taking note of this, are already deeply engaged in building better economic relations with the ASEAN group of countries. They are also participating in the East Asia Summit (EAS), an arrangement that includes ten countries of the ASEAN region as well as Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. This change in strategy adds to the rate of growth of all South Asian countries. India's GDP is 12.0 per cent higher compared to the base case scenario but its share in the regional GDP in 2025 remains the same at about 86.0 per cent (see Table 2).

Table 2: Scenario II

	GDP (US\$ Billion)		Population (Million)		Per capita income (US\$)	
	2007	2025	2007	2025	2007	2025
Bangladesh	68	202	159	195	431	1034
India	1177	4473	1125	1382	1046	3236
Nepal	10	25	28	38	357	658
Pakistan	143	445	162	230	883	1927
Sri Lanka	32	82	20	22	1600	3696
Total	1430	5227	1494	1867	957	2800

Notes : (a) The scenario II assumes the following GDP growth rates: Bangladesh - 6.2%; India - 7.7%; Nepal - 5.0%; Pakistan - 6.5%; and Sri Lanka - 5.3%.
(b) 2007 is the base year.

Source : See Table 1.

The third case builds on the second by assuming that South Asia manages to develop stronger economic contacts among the countries in the area. Compared to the status quo situation in the first scenario, the combined GDP of the region is considerably larger as is income per head of the population— both by as much as 40.0 per cent. The incidence of poverty declines significantly and better services are provided to the citizenry. South Asia is also better integrated with the rest of Asia.

Table 3: Scenario III

	GDP (US\$ Billion)		Population (Million)		Per capita income (US\$)	
	2007	2025	2007	2025	2007	2025
Bangladesh	68	239	159	195	431	1223
India	1177	5551	1125	1382	1046	4016
Nepal	10	26	28	38	357	692
Pakistan	143	571	162	230	883	2479
Sri Lanka	32	88	20	22	1600	3957
Total	1430	6475	1494	1867	957	3468

Notes : (a) the scenario IV assumes the following GDP growth rates: Bangladesh - 7.2%; India - 9.0%; Nepal - 5.3%; Pakistan - 8.0%; and Sri Lanka - 5.7%.
 (b) 2007 is the base year.

Source : See Table 1.

The impact on poverty and quality of life will be pronounced if the third scenario plays out. This is for the reason that economic structures will be profoundly different in this case, particularly in the countries on India's borders. Pakistan, for instance, will be able to develop its agriculture for taking advantage of the huge Indian market. This would have happened had the countries not severed their trade relations soon after gaining independence from the British rule. At that time, close to two-thirds of Pakistan's imports came from India and about the same proportion of its exports went to that country. These proportions declined to about 5.0 per cent when the two countries declared a trade war in 1949 on the issue of the rate of exchange between their currencies. The proportions in trade have remained static in spite of the launch of the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in January 2004. With the rebuilding of economic and trade contacts, other sectors can also get aligned. Pakistan can become an important supplier of auto parts to the rapidly developing Indian automobile industry, while India will become the main provider of iron ore to the steel industry in Pakistan. Both countries would buy chemicals from one another such as India procuring urea from Pakistan and Pakistan buying pesticides from India. Bangladesh could get integrated in the much larger textile sectors of the two larger economies, India and Pakistan, taking advantage of their better developed fashion industries. However, to realise the third scenario there will have to be exercise of considerable political will, which has been in short supply for many decades.

Footnotes to Tables 1-3 provide GDP growth estimates based on these three scenarios for the five larger countries of South Asia. These represent, of course, some major assumptions; that is why it is so important to emphasise the illustrative nature of this exercise. These rates are presented in Table 4 below. In terms of the rates of growth, the largest gainer is Pakistan followed by India. Pakistan's GDP growth according to the third scenario is 2.4 percentage points higher compared to the first scenario, while India's is two percentage points better. In

the case of Pakistan, income per capita of the population in the third scenario is 52.0 per cent higher while that of India is 40.0 per cent more.

Table 4: GDP growth rates: 2007-2025, (per cent per year)

2007			
SCENARIOS	I	II	III
Bangladesh	6.0	6.2	7.2
India	7.0	7.7	9.0
Nepal	4.8	5.0	5.3
Pakistan	5.6	6.5	8.0
Sri Lanka	5.0	5.3	5.7

Source : Earlier Tables

It is also essential to underscore that in identifying the determinants of growth for any economy, it is important to include a number of variables – to undertake what economists call multivariate analysis. The scenarios built for this exercise use only one variable as the driver of growth: international trade. Historical elasticities were used to gauge the quantitative impact on growth rates. But even if trade emerges to be the most important determinant, for it to play that role it needs to be supported by a whole host of other factors. Trade economists now emphasise that given the general lowering of tariffs across the globe, ‘trade facilitation’ is a much more important contributor to growth than tariffs. Trade facilitation includes well-functioning physical infrastructure – roads, railways and ports – that takes goods from the points of production to the points of shipping. Even today, in spite of the development of air cargo, 90.0 per cent of trade moves by ships. Producers participating in trade must have a steady and reliable supply of water, electricity and other sources of energy. They must have access to capital at reasonable rates to expand their supplies; availability of human skills in order to be able to compete in international markets; labour laws that do not interfere with the hiring and firing of workers; and availability of information about the markets the producers and exporters target to reach. There must also be good governance so that the rent-seeking behaviour on the part of those whose assistance is needed by traders does not eat into the profits they are hoping to make. To achieve all this means an active and well-intentioned state.

All this notwithstanding, some analysts have argued that of the many determinants of growth in the emerging markets that still have large agriculture sectors (eg. South Asian economies), weather may be a critical variable. Surjit Bhalla points out that ‘surprisingly, rainfall (lagged plus current) alone explains as much as 60 per cent of the variation in the growth of agricultural output...The model for GDP growth also works well: 40 per cent of the variation

of GDP growth is explained by rainfall alone.’⁵ He goes on to suggest that the levels of rates of interest as administered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the country’s central bank, and the rate of inflation, are much more important determinants of growth of the Indian economy than capital accumulation or movement of workers from less to more productive parts of the economy.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding all the caveats mentioned above, easing of tensions among the countries of South Asia, especially between India and Pakistan, will have many positive consequences for the region. The simple model developed for this paper shows that trade alone will add about two percentage points to the rate of growth of the region. As the Europeans have discovered, easing trade restrictions produces a number of other beneficial consequences such as increased tourism and cultural contacts. They also contribute to knowledge accumulation as networking increases among the researchers working in various laboratories and research institutions. Some of the positive outcomes cannot be fully appreciated *ex ante*. That said three of these are worth reflecting on.

Greater intra-regional trade in South Asia will have a significant impact on the structure of the economies of the smaller countries in the region as they develop linkages with large enterprises in India. This would lead to more labour-intensive activities as producers in Pakistan begin to supply parts and components to India’s large industries or as textile producers in Bangladesh get to work for India’s (and Pakistan’s) fast-developing fashion industries. Second, the grant of transit rights by both Bangladesh and Pakistan to India will develop some segments of the service industry. These include warehousing, servicing of vehicles, hotel business, insurance and other related activities needed to move goods and commodities over long distances. Third, by linking the various infrastructural networks such as electricity grids and gas pipelines, the countries in the region should be able to meet one another’s occasional deficits while creating markets for electricity, gas and possibly water. The positive economic consequences of opening up to one another will be enormously significant. There will also be positive outcomes on the political side as well. That, however, is an entirely different subject which those with greater competence in this area should analyse.

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⁵ Same as in 3, p. 42.

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The Maoist Insurgency of Nepal: Origin and Evolution

S. D. Muni¹

‘More than Maoism: Rural Dislocation in South Asia’ is an ISAS research theme focusing on socio-economic, political and security dimensions of ‘Maoist movements’ in South Asia. The institute conducted a closed-door workshop on the research theme, and the presentations are being put together as a series of ISAS Insights and ISAS Working Papers. This is the seventh paper in this series.

Abstract

Nepalese revolutions, both at the apex and the grassroots, have been characterised by violence. The paper examines the rise of Maoism in Nepal, which was influenced by India’s Naxal movement of the 1960s. In Nepal’s eastern Terai region of Jhapa, sections of communists experimented with the Maoist concept of ‘people’s war’ by unsuccessfully taking up arms in May 1971. The end of the cultural revolution and the demise of Mao Tse-tung resulted in a split between the Maoists, echoes of which can still be heard. Although the decade long ‘people’s war’ fought by the Maoists brought about the downfall of the monarchy in 2006, a clear vision for making their revolution a success still eludes them. The paper examines factors that have fuelled the Maoist insurgency, including poverty, illiteracy, scarce economic opportunities and increasing economic disparities.

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Introduction

Violence has played a significant role in Nepal's political history. Both the bloody struggle for power at the apex level and violent resistance against the state at the grassroots level have given decisive turns to Nepali politics. Two of the landmark events smeared in blood at the apex level were: (i) in 1846, the Kot massacre led to the establishment of the Rana dynasty that ruled Nepal as hereditary prime ministers for more than a 100 years, reducing monarchy into a decorated paralysed institution, and (ii) in June 2001, the Narayanhiti (Royal Palace) massacre changed the character of monarchy and led to its eventual elimination in 2008.

At the grassroots level, there is a long history of peasant revolts in Nepal. They date back to the early 1770s when the Gorkha conquests were still in the process of consolidation. The Rais, the Murmis and the Limbus of the eastern Nepal fought against the Gorkhali forces and later even joined the Chinese in this fight.²

Subsequently, the Murmis, Rais, Gurungs, Magars and Kiratis rose in revolt against the Nepali state for over 150 years between 1793 and 1950.³ In 1951, King Tribhuvan of Nepal himself led a movement against the autocratic Ranacracy, wherein he was supported by the armed revolt of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal. This movement laid down the foundations of a democratic polity under constitutional monarchy in Nepal, but the armed revolts against the state did not come to an end. Soon after the end of the Ranacracy, during 1951-53, the ousted extremist Ranas who had formed *Gorkha Dal* revolted against the new government, followed by the group of Nepali Congress militants and peasants who took up arms under the leadership of Dr K.I. Singh and Bhim Dutta Pant.⁴

The experiment to build a constitutional monarchy came to an end in December 1960 when the then King Mahendra in a coup dismissed an elected Nepali Congress government and the parliament to establish his direct control over the polity. The Nepali Congress took up arms against the King's rule during the early 1960s. This resistance was suppressed, but armed protests by the Nepali Congress continued to erupt as part of their long struggle for democracy until the end of the King-dominated *Panchayat* system in 1991. In this struggle, the Nepali Congress had procured arms through their clandestine sources in India where they also sought refuge and shelter to escape the King's repression, using the open border operating between India and Nepal under the Treaty of 1950.

² M.C. Regmi, *Imperial Gorkha* (New Delhi: Adroit Publications, 1999), p.11.

³ Harka Gurung, 'Rastriyata re rajniti' (nationality and politics), in May des Chene and Pratyoush Onta (eds), *Nepal ko Sandarbha ma Samaj Shastriya Chintan (Social Science thoughts in the context of Nepal)* (Lalitpur, Nepal: Himal Books, 2004).

⁴ For some details see Deepak Thapa, 'Tackling Insurgency: The Nepal Case', in S.D. Muni (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006).

The foundations of the communist movement in Nepal were established in 1947 with the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal. It had joined hands with the Nepali Congress in fighting the Ranacracy, but could not build its strength until the beginning of the 1970s. The ideological division in the international communist movement during the 1960s (the Sino-Soviet split) and the polarisation of Monarchy versus Nepali Congress conflict within Nepal kept the communists divided and fragmented. There were nearly 20 big and small communist groups in Nepal by the 1980s.⁵ No major armed struggle was launched by these communist factions except for the Maoists. In a lighter vein, many of these communist groups were termed in Nepal as the King's communists.

Rise of the Maoists

Maoism in Nepal was inspired by India's Naxalite movement (northeast Naxalbari district area) that emerged during the late 1960s in the context of Cultural Revolution in China. Some of the radical groups among the communists decided to experiment with the Maoist concept of 'people's war' by taking up arms in Nepal's eastern Terai region of Jhapa in May 1971. This is popularly known as the Jhapali revolt in Nepal's political history. The revolt was soon suppressed by ruthless police action. The failure of the revolt, which was followed by the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Mao Tse-Tung's death in 1976 led to serious ideological churning among the radical communists of Nepal, particularly among leaders like Pushpa Lal Shrestha (who had established the Communist Party of Nepal in 1947) and relatively younger leaders like Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama. While Pushpa Lal remained committed to the traditional communist line willing to fight against the monarchy through communist unity and in collaboration with other parliamentary parties like Nepali Congress, Singh and Lama remained committed to armed struggle. But they split up in 1983-84 when Lama accepted the line of China's post-Mao leadership (i.e. Deng Xiaoping) while Singh continued to stick to the Maoists' methods. The young radical members of the Mohan Bikram Singh group included Baburam Bhattarai, Mohan Vaidya and Pushpa Kamal Dahal. These are the leaders of the present Communist party of Nepal (Maoists), as it was named in 1994 after their break from Singh through a series of splits and mergers.⁶

The ideological issues of mass struggle in Nepal were at the root of numerous splits and mergers among the Maoists. They were oscillating between the methods of radical mass movement and

⁵ Narayan Khadka, 'Factionalism in the Communist Movement in Nepal', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.68, no.1 (Spring 1995), pp.55-76.

⁶ See S.L.Mikesell, *Class, State and Struggle in Nepal* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1999); Arjun Karki and David Seddon, 'The People's War in Historical Context', in Arjun Karki and David Seddon (eds.), *The Peoples War in Nepal: Left Perspectives* (Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2003).

Mao's 'people's war'. During both the students' struggle of 1979-80, which led to referendum on the *Panchayat* system and the first *Jan Andolan* (people's movement) of 1989-90, the Maoists of Nepal joined the Nepali Congress and the parliamentary communist groups to advance the 'mass struggle'. They, however, did not fully endorse the outcome of the first *Jan Andolan* which demolished the *Panchayat* system and the absolute monarchy and restored constitutional monarchy with a multi-party democracy. Their constant ideological emphasis was on securing an elected Constituent Assembly to craft a people's democratic order for Nepal. Accordingly, they decided to pursue a dual strategy of playing the parliamentary game, while also preparing for the 'people's war'.⁷ The Maoists fought a fierce people's war for a decade from 1996-2006 that eventually led to the elimination of monarchy, but there has never been a final and lasting ideological resolution among them on the most appropriate strategy for the success of their revolution.

The Maoist insurgency of Nepal has been a product of its socio-economic and political context. Economically, Nepal is one of the poorest countries in South Asia. At the end of Rana rule, 85 per cent of employment and income were dependent on agriculture and less than 25 per cent of the population was literate. The monarchy was using the state for *rentier* purposes without initiating any development. For thirty years from the King's takeover in 1960 to the success of the first *Jan Andolan* in 1990, Nepal's GDP (gross domestic product) grew at an average of 1.5 per cent per annum.⁸ Two of its major resources, the hydropower potential and tourism, remained unharnessed for political considerations. Land ownership remained archaic to reinforce feudal dominance. People migrated to India and other countries for livelihood providing a political cushion to monarchy.⁹ Hope was generated in 1990 with the success of the first *Jan Andolan*. But, the dominance of politics without concern for development and the disappointing role of the democratic leadership as well as monarchy soon frustrated these hopes. Socially, a deep divide exists between the dominant castes (Brahmins, Chhetries and Newars) and the marginalised nationalities.¹⁰ Another cleavage between the dominant *Paharis* (hill people) and the *Madeshi/Terians* (lower flat-land people) has operated for decades. Madeshi people claimed

⁷ Michael Hutt (ed.), *Himalayan People's War: Nepal Maoist Rebellion* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2004). (Specially see the Chapters by Michael Hutt, *Monarchy, Democracy and Maoism in Nepal*, Deepak Thapa, *Radicalism and Emergence of the Maoists* and Sudheer Sharma, *The Maoist movement: An Evolutionary perspective*. Also see Mahendra Lawoti and Anup Kumar Pahari (eds), *The Maoist Insurgency In Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-first Century* (UK: Routledge Oxon, 2009).

⁸ Sujeev Shakya, *Unleashing Nepal: Past, Present and Future of the Economy* (India: Penguin Books, 2009), p.50.

⁹ Dr Baburam Bhattarai, who is now the second ranking Maoist leader, has been making this argument since the late 1970s. For his analysis of Nepal's developmental dilemma, see Baburam Bhattarai, *The Nature of Underdevelopment and Regional structure of Nepal: A Marxist Analysis* (New Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2003).

¹⁰ Harka Gurung, *op.cit.* Also see Pitamber Sharma, *Unravelling The Mosaic: Spatial aspects of ethnicity in Nepal* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Himal Books, 2008).

that though they constitute nearly 50 per cent of Nepal's population, their share in administration, army, business and governance is negligible.¹¹

The socio-economic and political context of Nepal created conditions for the Maoists insurgency to emerge, but the causal relationship between the two becomes clear only when we look at the anatomy of this insurgency closely. The Maoists' 'people's war' was launched in February 1996 in Nepal's mid-west region constituted by Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan and Gorkha districts of the Rapti Zone. The Maoists also included Sindhuli district in the mid-east region in this launch. The mid-west region is a typical representative of Nepal's socio-economic context where the Maoists established the base of the 'people's war' in Rolpa and Rukum districts. These two districts have been a traditional stronghold of the communist since 1950 in Nepal. These districts have remained one of the most under-developed parts of Nepal. The first road was laid in this region in 2003. Only 10 per cent of the land in these districts is arable. *Hashish*, which grew in abundance in this area formed an important source of livelihood, besides migration and recruitment in Indian and British armies. But, in 1976, the government banned 'production, distribution and sale' of *hashish* leading to considerable economic hardships for the inhabitants.¹²

The objective conditions of economic hardships were fuelled by additional factors to generate a strong sense of deprivation and neglect among the people of this area. Two of the royal princesses, the sisters of King Birendra and Gyanendra, were married to the feudal lords of Rukum and Rolpa. The regional royal families prospered on Kathmandu's patronage and lived in comfortable urban environs without ever paying any attention to the development of this region. A US\$50 million Rapti Integrated Development Project run by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which otherwise benefitted many in the neighbouring districts, had no impact on Rolpa and Rukum. The development project could not reach these districts due to total absence of transport and communication access.¹³ The result of this was a creeping sense of inequality and discrimination among the people of Rolpa and Rukum. It is this sense of inequality, which had more to do with the rise of insurgency than simply the poor level of development.¹⁴ If seen only in terms of the level of development, the far flung districts of

¹¹ Fredrick H. Gaige, *Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); International Crisis Group 'Nepal's Troubled Terai Region', *Asia Report #1* (July 2007); Jason Malik, 'Nepal's Terai: Constructing An Ethnic Conflict', *South Asia Briefing paper #1* (Peace Research Institute of Oslo, 2009).

¹² Robert Gersony, 'Western Nepal Conflict Assessment: History & Dynamics of the Maoist Revolt', *Mercy Corps: Be the Change*, (September 2003), www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/file1137793491.pdf 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Fran Moore, 'A Spatial Analysis of the Causal Factors of Nepal's Maoist Insurgency', *ES 103-Spatial Analysis of Social and Environmental Systems* (May 2006), www.docstoc.com/docs/2413244/A-Spatial-Analysis-of-the-Causal-Factots-of-Nepal%EF%BF%BDS-Maoist. Also see M. Mansood Murshid and Scott Gates, 'Spatial-Horizontal Inequality and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal', *Review of Development Economics*, Vol.9, no.1 (February 2005), pp.121-134.

Karnali Zone could be a better theatre for the initial burst of the insurgency. In fact the people in Rolpa and Rukum had their days of comfortable, if not prosperous living, when they had freedom to grow and sell *hashish*. The drift in their economic prospects after the ban on this vocation, added to by years of indifference on the part of the Nepali state, stirred among them a resolve to revolt.

The economic deprivation and inequality of the people of mid-west was reinforced by their social marginalisation. Most of the inhabitants of the districts were Magars, who constituted seven per cent of Nepal's population, the largest single minority. Being in a remote and inaccessible part of the Kingdom, they were not integrated into the mainstream national life and the state never really governed them. The Magars living here speak Kham, which is distinct from the Magar mainstream language. Even during the creation of modern Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Magars did not get fully subjugated, nursing in their subconscious mind, an aspiration for autonomy, if not sovereign independence.¹⁵ Rolpa and Rukum also had exposure to Christianity. They believe in their own form of 'animism' and did not quite feel identified with the Hindu character of Nepal's Monarchical State.¹⁶

These economic and social factors, added to political isolation and marginalisation, had facilitated strong communist activities in this part of Nepal. The Maoists had carefully studied the political economy as well as topography of mid-western Nepal, while deciding to launch their 'people's war' and make it a base of their 'revolutionary' operations. The party documents adopted at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee in March 1995, describing the 'strategy and tactics of armed struggle in Nepal', clearly took note of the 'conscious peasant class struggle developed in the western hill districts, particularly Rolpa and Rukum. It represents the high level of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle. That struggle has given birth to some new tendencies in the Nepali communist movement, which have inspired us to be more serious about the business of armed struggle'.¹⁷ Later in an interview to Li Onesto of 'Revolutionary Worker' in 1999, the Maoist chief Prachanda said:

The west is historically, geographically and culturally the core of the revolution. It is the main starting point for the revolution – the people here are more oppressed by the ruling classes and the government in Kathmandu is very far from here...

¹⁵ Mercy Corps report, *op.cit.*, pp.26-30.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Some scholars have also identified alienation of the tribal groups from Hindu State as a factor in the rise of Maoists in Nepal. Philippe Ramirez, 'Pour une anthropologie religieuse du maoïsme népalais' (In French) *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, Vol.42, no.99 (July-September 1997), pp.47-68.

¹⁷ As cited in Karki and Seddon, no.5, p.18.

*...masses of the Western region were not so much under the control of the ruling government, and they did not care what the government did or did not do...in Western Nepal, there are the Mongoloid ethnic groups... These nationalities are so sincere and such brave fighters – historically they have had this kind of culture. Upper caste chauvinism and feudal ties do not prevail among these nationalities.*¹⁸

Beyond Rolpa and Rukum

The significance of Rukum and Rolpa in the launching of the Maoists 'people's war' should be seen in the larger context of economic underdevelopment, socio-cultural marginalisation and political exclusion of a large number of social groups in the whole of Nepal. Besides Magars, who inhabited Rolpa and Rukum, there were a number of other ethnic minorities like Tamangs, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, Kirats, Tharus and marginalised caste groups like Dalits (untouchables), scattered all over Nepal, in the hills as well as in Terai. The yearnings of these people for a respectable place in the country's social, economic and political system were gaining momentum gradually with the rise of awareness, identity consciousness and aspirations for better life. These excluded groups, including the Madheshis, constituted more than 70 per cent of Nepal's population. These excluded people have been asking for their rights and accommodation over the years as reflected in the political turbulence and agitation for democracy since the 1930s. It was the failure of monarchy and of the democratic leadership, which created conditions for the rise of the Maoists as leaders of a new struggle for change. Writing in 2003 on the 'political economy of the People's War', the Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai said:

*The process of the People's War is a link in a chain of just such a continuous revolution in Nepal to solve its current economic and social problems. The principal objective and rationale of the people's war in Nepal is, thus to develop the social productive forces and create a higher form of society through a continuous revolution of the base and the super structure by putting 'politics in command'.*¹⁹

Accordingly, the Maoists' agenda for Nepal's socio-economic transformation was not devoid of the goal of assuming power and changing its political structure.

The question may be raised here of the timing of the 'people's war' in 1996, though the Maoist groups have been involved in political processes since the 1970s. The factors that triggered the insurgency may be taken note of. It has been mentioned earlier that the Maoists did not accept the outcome of the 1989-90 *Jan Andolan-I* ('people's movement'). But, they decided to contest

¹⁸ The full text of the interview can be found in www.mcs.net/-rwor/a/v21/1040-049/1043/interv.htm.

¹⁹ See his Chapter in Karki and Seddon, *op.cit.*, p.164.

the 1991 parliamentary elections and managed to secure a noticeable presence in the democratically elected parliament with nine seats and the status as the third largest party, though way behind the two mainstream parties, i.e. the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (ML) (later renamed as United Marxist Leninist - UML). They mobilised civil servants and other professional groups to agitate for their demands against the government, but these agitations were put down strongly and both the dominant parties got almost united in treating the Maoists shabbily in and outside the parliament.²⁰ Then came the fall of the government in 1994 and announcement of new elections. The Maoist groups got split on the question of elections, with one group led by Prachanda and Baburam, denied recognition by the Election Commission. This group contested its de-recognition and eventually won their case in Nepal courts, but by then elections were over. This group having been treated ruthlessly by the state was in any case not for participating in the election, but the Election Commission's unsustainable denial of recognition added to their alienation from parliamentary politics.

It is true that the Maoists had entered parliament as a part of their 'two line struggle' of working for revolution and yet participating in the parliamentary processes at the same time. Their participation in parliament, being a cover for their 'revolutionary' zeal and strategy, was no indication of their lack of commitment to the 'people's war'. But, if the Maoists could be encouraged and accommodated in their parliamentary politics by the other mainstream parties and treated as legitimate partners in political dynamics in the interest of constructive democratic evolution and consolidation in Nepal, their recourse to the 'people's war' in 1996 could have at least been delayed, and in the long run, perhaps gradually weakened. There was a constant debate within the Maoist groups on strategy and tactics as well as also on the timing of the 'people's war'. This debate could have been deepened and those pleading for a people's struggle within the framework of peaceful parliamentary politics strengthened if the Maoists' agitational politics and mobilisation could be spared strong-arm methods. It may not be far off the mark to say that ruthless police operations during 1994-95, particularly the operation code named as 'Romeo' in 1995, not only reinforced the Maoists' resolve to launch the 'people's war', but also enabled them to swell their ranks by recruiting young cadres and gaining sympathies of large sections of people all over Nepal. The Human Rights Year Book of Nepal for 1995 listed the gory details of the police oppression.²¹ Commenting on the 'Operation Romeo' in Rolpa, the Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai said in a press interview in December 1995:

Around 1,500 policemen...have been deployed to let loose a reign of terror against the poor peasants...there has been indiscriminate ransacking and looting of properties of common people by the ruling party hoodlums under the protection of the police force.

²⁰ Deepak Thapa, 'The Maoist of Nepal', in K.M. Dixit and S. Ramachandran (eds), *State of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2002).

²¹ *Ibid.*

*More than 10,000 rural youth, out of a population of 200,000 for the whole district, have been forced to flee their homes and take shelter in remote jungles.*²²

This repression led the Maoists to submit a charter of 40 demands to the government in February 1996 giving 10 days to respond. But even before the expiry of the deadline, the ‘people’s war’ was launched. Yet, another ruthless police operation on an extended scale covering 18 Maoist infested districts in 1998, code named ‘Kilo Sierra-2’, further facilitated the Maoists in getting new recruits and enhanced public support and sympathy. It helped them to spread their ‘people’s war’ into an increasing number of Nepal’s districts, reaching 45 out of a total of 75 districts by 2001.

The repression unleashed by the government against the Maoists could have been bloodier if the army had been deployed against them. However, King Birendra did not let this happen. There were a number of considerations in the King’s firm resistance to the use of army against the Maoists. Deploying army against the Maoists under the leadership of a political party-led government would have meant a dilution of the King’s own power base, as the party could get access to and influence over the Royal Army’s command structure. He was also averse to escalating the civil war which would have resulted from the army’s deployment. As the use of the army would have been on a long term basis, this would also have meant strengthening of the army and incurring more expenses. The escalation of conflict with ruthlessness of the army would also have resulted in unpopularity of the King among the affected people. King Birendra, known for his comparatively liberal views, emphasised a political approach. He established clandestine contacts with the Maoists through his younger brother Dhirendra and even arranged to have talks with them. The Maoist leader Prachanda disclosed it years later in 2010, when he said: ‘Birendra’s youngest brother Dhirendra was in touch with us and we were to start direct talks with him within a month with the request to abdicate his throne and become the country’s first president. He was killed in this backdrop’.²³ Analysts in Nepal also attribute King Birendra’s reluctance to the deployment of army against the Maoists as a reflection of his frustration with the way the political parties were managing the insurgency. The possibility of him making deft use of the Maoist insurgency to weaken and discredit the political parties also cannot be ruled out. The Maoists deeply lamented the assassination of King Birendra and his family and took out public demonstrations to sympathise with him and other victims of the palace massacre. The Maoist leader, Baburam Bhattarai, in a published open letter after the sixth day of the Royal massacre said:

Whatever your political ideology might be, one thing every honest Nepali nationalist has to agree with is this: King Birendra’s liberal political ideology and his patriotism were

²² As quoted in Thapa, *Ibid*.

²³ *The Hindustan Times*, (10 January 2010).

seen as his weaknesses and had become a crime in the eyes of the expansionist and imperialist powers... his unwillingness to mobilise the army – which has a tradition of loyalty towards the King – to curb the People’s revolution taking place under the leadership of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) became his biggest crime... Some Marxist pundits, based on this, called us a pro-monarchist party, and we can now say that we – NCP (Maoist) and King Birendra – had similar views on many national issues and this had created in fact an informal alliance between us.²⁴

This ‘informal alliance’ between the King and the Maoists changed into an unmitigated antipathy under the new King Gyanendra. Permission to deploy the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) against the Maoists was granted by the new King in September 2001. Taking advantage of the changed international context after 9/11, where international community supported strong anti-terrorism methods, King Gyanendra resolved to militarily eliminate the Maoists and assume greater powers in the name of fighting terrorism. In this process, he also wanted to sideline the political parties, as since 2002 he increasingly took control of the administration directly into his hands leading eventually to his coup in February 2005.

It was this use of army against the Maoists that made the RNA and the Maoists enemies. There were no indications of hostility between them until the end of King Birendra’s regime in 2001. Initially, the RNA fared badly against the Maoists. It had never been exposed to a resolute and well organised ideological rebellion. In the 23 operations listed between November 2001 and December 2002, the Maoists claimed success against the RNA in all except three or four.²⁵ In these operations, they had destroyed the army camps and even captured many of their weapons. The army therefore had to be expanded and heavily equipped. Its strength reached almost 100,000 by April 2006, when the *Jan Andolan-II* eventually brought the Maoist insurgency to an end. But the enhanced strength also did not result in the RNA’s victory over the Maoists. At best, it created a stalemate, where army could defend its cantonments only, without stirring out to challenge the Maoists in rural or urban areas. On their part, the Maoists perfected the tactics of paralysing the movement of goods and people on the main road network of Nepal and creation of chaos in the country. The hostility between the two precipitated the issue of ‘civilian supremacy’ and equal treatment of the Maoists People’s Liberation Army and the RNA. This issue has vitiated the whole peace process in Nepal and, if not resolved soon, threatens to restart the insurgency as we shall see later.

An important factor in building up the Maoist insurgency and carrying forward their ‘people’s war’ was the nature of leadership. We have noted that the beginning of the Maoist movement in

²⁴ Kantipur, (6 June 2001).

²⁵ *The Worker*, a Maoist organ has listed these operations. See S.D. Muni, *Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: The Challenge and the Response, Annexure III* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2003), pp. 88-89.

Nepal took place in the early 1970s in the context of the Chinese Cultural revolution and the rise of Naxal revolt in India. The internal ideological and leadership conflicts kept the Nepal Maoists preoccupied for the first decade. Prachanda admits that by 1985, he and his associates had the clarity that their struggle should be waged on the basis of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideas.²⁶ The present leaders of the Maoist movement stand out distinctly from their predecessors in two areas, namely intellectual sharpness and ideological resilience. The present Maoist leaders, at least the top duo of Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai, are better educated. While Prachanda completed his graduation in agricultural science, Baburam after obtaining an engineering degree, did his PhD at India's Jawaharlal Nehru University. The intellectual agility and higher educational levels of this leadership have enabled them to engage with a diversity of contacts and ideas, both within and outside Nepal. This in turn has helped them to broaden their approach and imbibe the lessons learnt from this exposure in carrying their movement forward. It has also enabled them to cast the requirements of their movement to adjust with the prevailing regional and international context within which Nepal is placed, as also the internal socio-economic dynamics that impinges on their political objectives.

The second notable character of the present Maoist leadership is their ideological resilience and strategic pragmatism. Most of their predecessors had remained stuck to the dogmas of Marxist and Leninist thought without relating these thoughts to Nepal's internal and external realities. They also believed in preparing fool-proof plans before launching substantial and decisive actions, in turn keeping them static in their proposed struggle. The present leadership analysed the failure of the communist movements and learning from them has tried to evolve a synthesis of the ideal and the real; the praxis of thought and action, in the classical Marxist sense. Explaining his approach to 'people's war', Prachanda said:

*...we must also learn war by waging war. The intellectuals' instinctive tendency is that we have to learn all these things, we should read everything,... and then we can make war. These kinds of tendencies were there right from the beginning. But we said, no, this is not Maoism. This is not Marxism. This is not dialectical materialism...The issue is of learning war through war itself.*²⁷

A couple of years later, in 2001, he added:

*In our opinion, the real key to rapid development of the People's War is the fusion between the science of proletarian revolution, on the one hand, and the needs and fighting spirit of the Nepalese people, on the other.*²⁸

²⁶ Prachanda's interview with Li Onesto, *op.cit.*

²⁷ Prachanda's interview to Li Onesto, *op.cit.*

²⁸ Interview to RIM magazine, 'A World to Win' (May 28, 2001). Text in Karki and Seddon, *op.cit.*

The ideological resilience and pragmatism is also in the definition of their ideological exposition in the form of *Prachanda Path* (Prachanda Line) that goes beyond Marxist-Leninist-Maoist straitjacket. Prachanda described *Prachanda Path* as ‘enrichment of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism’ and ‘a new example of creative Marxism, opposed to both, the right revisionists and sectarian dogmatists’.²⁹ Though this amounted to ego projection and bragging on the part of the leader, it nonetheless synergised their Marxist ideology with Nepali nationalism and added a typical popular flavour and appeal to the movement. The ideological resilience and pragmatism also enabled them to play the Marxists’ concept like ‘united front’ and ‘two line struggle’ for forging alliances and tactical equations with all sorts of contradictory forces, ranging from monarchy to the multi-party proponents. Consistency has not really been the ideological virtue for the present Maoist leadership. The strength of this approach has been evident in their success in bringing together diverse marginalised social groups under their struggle and secure support from their known adversaries, howsoever tactical and short-lived this support might have been proved. It moved their movement and political goals ahead. A significant contribution of their pragmatic approach can be seen in the involvement of women in their struggle in a big way. Almost 30 per cent of their cadres have been women and this strengthened the movement in several respects.³⁰ It has brought gender equality to the forefront of New Nepal’s political agenda.

The new Maoist leadership has, however, not been free from internal tensions and rivalries. These tensions have manifested on issues of ideology and tactics, on united front allies and adversaries.³¹ A serious ideological and personality cleavage exists between the Maoist supremo Prachanda and his better educated and ideologically grounded deputy, Baburam Bhattarai. This cleavage has erupted periodically, at times threatening to split the movement vertically. Some of Prachanda’s close associates have also resisted the rise of Baburam Bhattarai within the organisation to preserve their own respective places around the party chief. The party has managed to keep the organisational unity largely because Baburam Bhattarai does not seem to have a stronger push for power or personality projection.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.276.

³⁰ Com. Parvati, *Women’s Participation in the People’s War*, in Karki and Seddon, *op.cit.* Also see, Hisila Yami, ‘Women’s Role in the Nepalese Movement: Making a People’s Constitution’, *Monthly Review* (8 March 2010), <http://mzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/yami080310.html>. For the tensions arising from the large women cadres in the movement, see Rita Manchanda, ‘Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Radicalizing Gender Narratives’, *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol.16, no. 2-3 (Sage Publications, 2004), pp.237-258.

³¹ For details see, ICG Reports, ‘Nepal Maoists: Their Aims, Structure and Strategy’, *Asia Report No. 104* (27 October 2005); and ‘Nepal’s Maoists: Purists Or Pragmatists?’, *Asia Report No. 132* (18 May 2007).

The External Dimension

Nepal's Maoist insurgency was considerably helped by the external factor. As noted above, the new Maoist leadership was induced to establish wider contacts and learning from their external exposure. Their first contacts were with the Indian Naxalites in 1970s as noted earlier. But the new Maoist leadership has expanded these contacts and there have been reports that Prachanda played a significant role in facilitating the merger of India's Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and the People's War Group. The Nepal Maoists also established close contacts with the Nepali diaspora (eight to 10 million strong), in pursuance of their political agenda. These contacts with the Naxalites and the Nepali diaspora substantially helped the Maoists in ensuring shelter and 'safe havens', procuring arms, training and mobilising financial support in India. Way back in 1985, they were among the founding fathers of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), which aimed at networking with the radical left movements all over the world. This brought the Nepal Maoists into the contact of Peruvian communist and led them to study and imbibe ideas from Shining Path. In some ways, inspiration for evolving its own ideological trade mark and naming it as *Prachanda Path* came from the Nepali Maoists' interaction with the Peruvian Communist Party. The Nepal Maoists also took initiative in bringing the South Asian Maoist groups onto one platform by establishing the Coordination Committee of the Maoists Parties of South Asia (CCOMPSA) in July 2001. There have been annual meetings of CCOMPSA since then to take a collective position on some of the regional and global issues. Explaining the advantages of all these external contacts and their role in advancing the Maoist movement in Nepal, Prachanda said:

*... there was consistent international involvement. First and foremost, there was the RIM (Revolutionary International Movement) Committee... From the RIM Committee, we gained the experience of the PCP (Communist Party of Peru) and of the two line struggle there, and also we shared experience in Turkey, in Iran, in the Philippines. We learned from the experience in Bangladesh and from some of the experience in Sri Lanka. There was a South Asian Conference in which we participated. At the same time we were also having direct and continuous debate with the Indian communists, mainly the People's War (PW) and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) groups. All of this helped in one way or another; it helped us to understand the whole process of People's War.*³²

The Nepal Maoists went beyond the communist and Maoist groups in seeking support and establishing linkages in the interest of their struggle. After a careful analysis of the changing international and regional strategic context that had become strongly oriented towards anti-terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11, the Maoists sought to differentiate themselves from the

³² Interview with Li Onesto, *op.cit.*

‘terrorist groups’. For this, they wrote letters to various heads of states in the United States (US), Europe and also to the United Nations Secretary General. They also tried to reach highest levels in the government of India to explain their political goals and ensure the Indian government that they would desist from doing anything against India’s vital interests.³³ This international mobilisation of support was essentially prompted by the fears that King Gyanendra was seeking military support from the US and the United Kingdom (UK) to defeat their ‘people’s war’, invoking the post-9/11 context of counter-terrorism. Support and understanding was secured in India, not only from the government but also political parties, intellectuals and civil society members. This proved critical in fighting against King Gyanendra’s autocratic moves and in leading to the success of the *Jan Andolan-II*, launched by the Maoists in alliance with the mainstream political parties of Nepal. The success of the *Jan Andolan-II* in April 2006, marked the culmination, or at least a radical transformation of the ‘people’s war’.

Unfolding of the Insurgency

Nepal’s Maoist insurgency has unfolded gradually in various stages. These stages were influenced by the broader dynamics of Nepali politics and the changing regional and international strategic parameters. The first stage, from the beginning of 1970 to 1985, was of the Jhupali revolt as mentioned earlier, when the Maoists leaders mobilised peasants of Jhupali in eastern Nepal to take arms. This revolt was an unprepared beginning by romantic Maoists and was quickly suppressed by the Nepali state. This led to an intense debate among the Maoists on the experience of the Jhupali revolt and strategy to move the struggle forward. By 1985, at least a section of the Maoists had come to the conclusion that Maoism has to be treated as an integrated part of Marxist-Leninist thought and the parameters of the movement have to be cast in the wider context of international experiences. This led to the second stage of further ideological churning and the leadership struggle, which ended in 1995 when the present Maoist leadership emerged as a focused group determined to launch the ‘people’s war’.

The ‘people’s war’ has passed through two major stages. One was from 1996 to 2001, when the Maoists fought with state police forces with rudimentary weapons, expanded their cadres and strengthened their organisation, established base areas and developed institutions of governance, including kangaroo courts. According to the Maoists, this stage of the ‘people’s war’ was carried out according to six strategic plans namely: decentralised actions within centralised plan and command; balance between political and military offensives against the enemy; political justification of military action; utilisation of the contradictions amongst the enemies to isolate the

³³ See S.D. Muni, ‘Bringing Maoists Down from the Hill: India’s Role’, in David Malone and others, *Conflict Resolution in Nepal* (Forthcoming edited volume).

main enemy; organisation and mobilisation of the masses in the quickest and best possible way.³⁴ During this stage, the ‘main enemy’ was the party governments of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – UML. The King was treated as an ally. Besides attacking police posts, the Maoists also ruthlessly killed many of the political activists of the ruling parties, occupied their properties and distributed their lands to their own cadres.

The second stage of the ‘people’s war’, from 2001 to 2006, began with two major developments: one inside Nepal and another outside. In June 2001, Nepal witnessed its ghastly royal massacre that changed the character of monarchy. The new King Gyanendra followed his father’s strategy of acquiring more powers at the cost of representative institutions and popular parties. He dismissed parliament in 2002 and assumed all executive powers in a coup on 1 February 2005. He also decided to deal with the Maoists strongly, unlike his brother, the slain King Birendra and deployed the army against them. Externally, 9/11 took place unleashing the reactive ‘global war on terror’ under the US leadership. With this, military assistance started pouring into the RNA, especially from India, the US and the UK. The Maoists’ enhanced confidence through their success during the first phase and the deployment of a well assisted RNA made the ‘people’s war’ dirtier and bloodier. There were brutal killings from both the sides, though independent estimates by a Kathmandu-based NGO – Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) – attributed two-thirds of all the killings to the RNA and one-third to the Maoists between 13 February 1996 and 24 April 2006.³⁵ The Maoists expanded their operations covering more than 80 per cent of all the Nepali districts. The army’s responses also gradually improved with greater training and better equipment through external assistance. The brutality of the conflict deepened and reinforced the antagonism between the Maoists and the RNA that subsequently created serious difficulties in the progress of Nepal’s Peace Process.

During this second stage of the ‘people’s war’, a realisation started dawning on the Maoists that while they have reached a strategic balance with the RNA by 2002-2003, it may not be possible for them to achieve total victory in their struggle. Even if they succeeded in capturing the state through their ‘people’s war’, the international community and India would not let them retain the control of the state for long. They had already activated their political front by exploiting the emerging conflict between King Gyanendra and the political parties, seeking ‘united front’ with the latter, and also by approaching India and the international community to explain that they were not waging a terrorist war, but a genuine political struggle of socio-economic emancipation for the Nepali people. Between 2001 and 2003, the Maoists had rounds of ceasefires and talks with the King’s government and they increasingly interacted with the political parties in search of a ‘united front’ against the autocratic monarchy. King Gyanendra’s coup of 2005 greatly

³⁴ Prachanda’s interview with RIM magazine (May 2001), *op.cit.*

³⁵ Conflict Study Centre, ‘Situation Update VIII: Ratification of International Criminal Court to Just Peace’, (15 September 2006), www.nepalresearch.org/coup_2005/paper/csc_060915.pdf.

facilitated this search as that move had not only antagonised all the political parties, but also alienated the international community. The result was the 12 Point Understanding signed in November 2005 between the Maoists and the mainstream parliamentary parties of Nepal, who had earlier formed a Seven Party Alliance (SPA). This understanding precipitated a 19 day-long *Jan Andolan II*, from 6 to 24 April 2006, leading to the collapse of King Gyanendra's autocracy and the eventual elimination of monarchy, less than two years later.

Under the 12 Point Understanding and post-*Jan Andolan II* Peace Process, the Maoists have abandoned their 'people's war' and committed themselves to peaceful and democratic participation in restructuring a new Nepal. The Peace Process gave the Maoists a share in power, first as a junior coalition partner under the interim government headed by G.P. Koirala of Nepali Congress and then as leader of the coalition after the Constituent Assembly elections held in April 2008, in which the Maoists surprising all their opponents, emerged as the largest block. This Maoist victory seems to have become a source of the undoing of Nepal's fragile Peace Process.

The vulnerabilities of the Peace Process arise from serious deviations on the part of both the Maoists and the mainstream political parties in their commitments made under the 12 Point Understanding, as well as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement concluded on 21 November 2006.³⁶ The Maoists have not returned to the legitimate owners the land and properties that were occupied by them during the insurgency nor have they completely given up their strong-arm methods of coercive political mobilisation. This has given rise to doubts about the sincerity of their commitment to democratic functioning, and also because they continue to harp on their radical rhetoric of the 'people's war' period. Possibly, the Maoists accepted the outcome of the *Jan Andolan II*, in form of the reinstatement of the dissolved parliament and installation of an interim government under G.P. Koirala, only as a compromise and yet another stage in their revolutionary struggle. The mainstream political parties on their part have not accepted the Maoists as equal partners in the democratic political process. This was evident during the interim government when no critically important portfolio was given to the Maoist ministers. It became even more evident when a representative government was not installed for three months under the Maoist leadership after the April 2008 elections by the interim Prime Minister Koirala, under one flimsy pretext or the other. Even then, the Nepali Congress decided to stay out of the government and play the role of opposition, contrary to the agreement on consensual politics until the writing of the constitution by the elected Constituent Assembly. The mainstream parties have also been reluctant to integrate the Maoists armed cadres into Nepal's security forces. It was this issue that precipitated the conflict between the Maoists and the Nepal Army, resulting in

³⁶ For details see, 'Nepal's Peace Agreement: Making It Work', *Asia Report No. 126* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 2006).

the ouster of the Maoist government in May 2009.³⁷ The mainstream parties united to form the alternative government, keeping the Maoists, the largest single group, in opposition. India and other interested international forces are keeping this fragile government functioning without any real governance or the prospects of the Peace Process reaching its culmination through the writing of the new Constitution, the deadline for which was 27 May 2010.³⁸

The hard reality of Nepali politics at this juncture is that Nepal's Peace Process and constitution writing cannot proceed unless there is a constructive political consensus at least among the Maoists, the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML) and the Terai-based parties. This consensus has actually broken down on the question of power sharing since the installation of the Maoists government in May 2008, when the Nepali Congress as an opposition party created difficulties in carrying the Peace Process forward. The consensus was further strained on the issue of 'civilian supremacy' over the army raised by the Maoists to secure the sacking of the then army chief General Rukmangad Katawal. The political parties connived with the President to defeat the cabinet decision (with dissent from other coalition partners) of the Maoist-led Ministry. The Maoists resigned on this issue and have been demanding redress on the 'civilian supremacy' issue and restoration of a national government under their leadership.

On both these issues, the Maoist position, at least theoretically, is justified because the army cannot defy the civilian authority in a democracy and the largest group in Constituent Assembly has the legitimate privilege to head the government. However, the deep trust deficit which exists among the main stakeholders in political power is not allowing any way out of the political impasse. It may not be out of place to mention here that while the Maoists have also sufficiently contributed to the prevailing trust deficit, the mainstream parties and the international community can in no way escape blame. They are equally responsible for ensuring culmination of the Nepali Peace Process and securing the mainstreaming of the Maoists. The Maoists, at least ostensibly, abandoned their 'people's war' in favour of fair accommodation in democratic politics. Keeping them out is forcing them to consider reviving the 'people's war'. Nepal is certainly not prepared for the 'people's war II', and the Maoists cannot be wished away from the unfolding Nepali politics. Whether an amicable resolution to save Nepal from another round of chaos and anarchy, remains to be seen.

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³⁷ On the Army- Maoists conflict see S.D. Muni, 'The civil-military crisis in Nepal', *The Hindu* (6 May 2009).

³⁸ See the address by B. Lynn Pascoe, the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, *Nepal's Peace process* (Kathmandu: Nepal Institute of Policy Studies, 11 March 2010). Also, W.A. Sunil, 'Political Standoff in Nepal over constitution', *World Socialist Website* (17 March 2010), www.wsws.org/tools/index.php?page=print&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.wsws.org.

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The 18th Amendment: Pakistan's Constitution Redesigned

Shahid Javed Burki¹

Abstract

In the midst of all the economic and political turmoil in the country, or perhaps because of it, Pakistan's political forces of many different colours and ideologies have come together to reshape the 1973 constitution and create a new political order. The constitution was disfigured by a number of amendments inserted into it by military leaders who wanted to create a much more centralised structure than was permitted by the available constitutional framework. The end result was to give the country a hybrid system of governance that operated a presidential system within the guise of a parliamentary structure. There were problems with the system thus created. It had a president at the apex who was responsible to no one other than himself (or perhaps to the army high command) and provinces with only small amounts of authority. There was a consensus among the political forces that the system had to be changed. This was done with the adoption of the 18th amendment to the constitution on 19 April 2010. This was aimed at achieving the following two objectives. Firstly, to revert executive authority to the prime minister and his cabinet and hold them accountable to parliament. Secondly, to allow much greater autonomy to the provinces. This paper discusses how this amendment was processed and how its content will change the system of governance.

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Introduction

The main purpose of this paper is to suggest that Pakistan needs a different development paradigm to deal with its many economic, social and political problems. It needs to be different from the one followed in recent years which, after several years of high growth, plunged the country into a deep crisis. This manifested itself in many different ways. The rate of economic progress slowed down and the incidence of poverty increased. Domestic terrorism grew to the point that most contacts with the outside world were severed. The last was particularly troubling since Pakistan depends on external capital flows. Any slack in their quantity has a deadening impact on the economy. Poor economic performance, accompanied by palpably poor governance, have created an environment in which inter-regional, intra-provincial, inter-economic classes and sectarian conflicts which have risen to the surface and to the point at which they threaten the very integrity of the Pakistani state. These have come with heavy economic, social and political costs that will further set back progress on a number of different fronts.²

As has been said by a number of people who have influence over world affairs, including Hillary Clinton, United States (US) Secretary of State, that Pakistan faces an existential threat. Dealing with it must be a high priority for those who hold the reins of power in the country today. A new development paradigm must therefore work to restore not only the confidence of the domestic players in the economy, it must also revive external interest in the country's economic future.

An important part of the suggested paradigm is the notion that one way of rebalancing the economy and the social and political systems is to bring the government closer to the people. The award made by the 7th National Finance Commission in late 2009 is a step in the right direction. This however is the subject of another chapter in this report. The other is the passage and signing into law the 18th amendment to the constitution by President Asif Ali Zardari on 19 April 2010. Notwithstanding these momentous developments and the comprehensiveness with which the drafters of the 18th amendment carried out their assignment, further tinkering may still be required to make the constitution more meaningful for the times. The constitution was so thoroughly disfigured by a number of authoritarian rulers that governed the country for long periods of time that making it an effective instrument of governance may require even more changes. But a good start has been made. Decentralisation of policy-making as well as the implementation of the policies made are some of the important outcomes of the 18th amendment. But it will need much more than that to address the problems the country faces today.

² Some of the costs to the economy resulting from terrorism and power shortages were estimated by the Institute of Public Policy, Baeconhouse National University, Lahore, in its second annual report issued in May 2009. See *State of the Economy: Emerging from the Crises* (Lahore, 2009). These estimates have been updated in this report while the costs of two other shortages – gas and water – have been added to the calculus.

Highlighting these and suggesting some ways of dealing with them is the main theme of this paper.

The paper will first provide a quick overview of the situation in the country to lay the context for the discussion of the recently enacted 18th amendment. It will then briefly discuss the history of constitution-making in the country, suggesting that the tendency towards having a highly centralised system of governance has deep historical roots. It will then discuss the 18th amendment, focusing on both the process used for arriving at a consensus among different political parties on the substance of the amendment and then moving on to analyse its content. Finally, using experiences of other countries, the chapter will examine how effective the amendment to the constitution will be in bringing about effective decentralisation and providing services to the people for which the government must take full responsibility.

The Need for a New Development Paradigm to Sail Out of the Perfect Storm the Country Faces

How can policy-makers navigate through the perfect storm that has hit the country at this time? It has been produced by a number of interacting factors that include domestic terrorism; economic stagnation; serious shortages of power, gas and water; and political unease in the less developed provinces and in the country's more backward areas. How can this situation be addressed? The problem posed by terrorism that is taking a heavy toll on the economy deserves the most attention. The use of force is one part of the solution to combat this scourge and it has begun to show some results in the areas of the country where it was applied. In 2009-10, the military carried out successful operations in Swat and Buner districts of Malakand division and in South Waziristan tribal agency. As some analysts have suggested following the arrest of Faisal Hayat, a US citizen of Pakistani origin, for attempting to set off a home-made bomb in the middle of Times Square in New York, Pakistan cannot afford to draw distinctions between bad (South Waziristan) and not-so-bad (North Waziristan) centers of terrorist activities³. This is also the position taken by the US administration.

Even if further progress is made to cleanse all areas in which terrorists are concentrating their activities and where they have found sanctuaries, the difficult part is the effort to bring the disaffected into the mainstream of economics and politics. To achieve the latter result, Pakistan must move towards a new development paradigm. The one we have in mind has several elements of which the following four are particularly important. The first is improving the quality of

³ Ahmed Rashid, 'North Waziristan: Terrorism's new hub', *The Washington Post* (5 May 2010), p.17.

governance. The second focuses effort on improving the country's resource situation⁴. The third would provide the young with education and skills they can use to enter the economic and social mainstreams. The fourth is to make Pakistan a functioning part of the global economic and political system.

This paper will focus on the first – the need to improve the quality of governance and bring the state closer to the people. The 18th amendment to the constitution has done more than go back to the original system. The 1973 constitution provided the country with a federal system in which the provinces were to have considerable authority over economic issues. This was a promise that was to be fulfilled after a period of political maturation which was defined as ten years. The subjects over which the provinces were to exercise total control were lumped together in the 'concurrent list', over which during the interim period, both the central government and the provinces were to share responsibility. But the promise was not kept.

Some Historical Background

Most of the press coverage of the 18th amendment focused on the division of power between the president and the prime minister. Since the 1973 constitution established a parliamentary form of government in the country, it has been the contention of those who favoured the reduction in the authority of the president that executive authority must reside in the parliament. That was the intention of the framers of the constitution. However, the parliament's powers were repeatedly usurped by the governments dominated by the military. Through constitutional amendments or simply by practice, the president became the chief executive of the Pakistani state. The military leaders introduced changes in the constitution through the 8th amendment inserted by President Ziaul Haq and the 17th amendment by President Pervez Musharraf to provide legal covers to their efforts to monopolise power. The 18th amendment seeks to correct that anomaly by restoring the powers given to parliament under the 1973 constitution. At this point, it might be useful to pause a bit and provide a brief historical background to the evolution of Pakistan's constitution with respect to provincial rights.

What has escaped notice by most analysts and commentators is another part of the amendment, a significant increase in the powers of the federating provinces. Granting provincial autonomy was also the intention of the original constitution. This became a political necessity when East Pakistan was part of the Pakistani federation. It was larger in size in terms of the population compared to the combined population of the four provinces in the country's western wing. In the mid-1950s, a political solution was found by merging the four western provinces into the One

⁴ For a brief discussion of this, see Shahid Javed Burki, 'Managing external flows', *Dawn* (11 May 2010), p.7.

Unit of West Pakistan which led to the adoption of what came to be called the system of 'parity', or simply 'the system of fifty-fifty'. Under the system, East and West Pakistan were assigned equal number of seats in the national parliament created in the constitution promulgated in 1956. This was the first of three constitutions Pakistan was to adopt in a period of only 17 years, one indication of the political turmoil through which the country has passed at various times in its history. However, the principle of parity meant depriving East Pakistan the representation it deserved on account of its larger population. The Bengali acquiesced to this arrangement in the expectation that it would bring to an end the system of politics that had been dominated by the civil and military bureaucracies working with one powerful group – the landed aristocracy of Punjab and Sindh. Punjab also had a large presence in the bureaucracies which gave it enormous power in the political and economic systems.

The arrangement did not work to the satisfaction of the Pakistani military, which seeing the yo-yo style of politics the constitution of 1956 had set in motion, decided to intervene. The men in uniform had become apprehensive that political turmoil would damage the economy and create problems for national security. They struck on 7 October 1958 and put the country under martial law. National and provincial assemblies were dissolved, the constitution was abrogated and eventually, a military presidency was established. Nearly four years after assuming power, the military gave the country another constitution, promulgated in 1962. It sets the pattern of extreme centralisation of authority that was to be followed for the next several decades, not only when the country was under the direct rule of the military. Civilian rulers also continued with this tradition of centralisation.

President Ayub Khan was pushed out of power in March 1969 by General Yahya Khan, following a movement that focused on the outcome of his economic policies that produced high rates of economic growth but some income inequality. Under the new leader, the military opted for another spell of political engineering. The 1962 constitution was abrogated; the One Unit of West Pakistan was dissolved and replaced by four provinces; a Legal Framework Order was promulgated under which a new assembly was to be created, elected on the basis of adult franchise and charged with the task of providing the country with yet another constitution; and East Pakistan was given a share in the assembly proportionate to its population. Elections were held in December 1970, the first time the people of Pakistan were allowed to vote directly for their representatives in the national assembly. The script however, was not played out on the political stage the way it was written. West Pakistanis, under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, refused to grant power to East Pakistan's Awami League which under Mujibur Rahman, had won all but one seat from that wing of the country and an outright majority in the national assembly. The stand-off eventually led to a civil war, the departure of East Pakistan from the Pakistani federation and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. The military in

West Pakistan – now Pakistan – lost power and was replaced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as the chief martial administrator and president.

Bhutto began the process of providing Pakistan with another constitution. He and the framers of the new constitution recognised that the failure to run a federal system allowing significant provincial autonomy was the main reason for the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state. They were also concerned with the fact that the country that emerged after 1971 had one very large province – the Punjab – in the federation. It could, and perhaps would, dominate the federation even more than was the case in the 1947-1971 period when Bangladesh, as East Pakistan, was a part of Pakistan. During that period, in terms of the country's total population, the share of the Punjab was about 30 per cent. It was slightly more than that in terms of its contribution to the country's gross domestic product. With the departure of East Pakistan, these ratios had climbed to 60 per cent.

Accordingly, the smaller provinces demanded that their rights should be protected in the new state that was being organised after the break-up of original Pakistan. This was ensured in the form of several provisions in the 1973 constitution. Without these it is unlikely that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto would have won the support of all the provinces to the constitution that he and his advisors put in front of them. One important provision in the draft was the inclusion of a 'concurrent list' that included the subjects that will be the joint responsibility of the federal government and the provinces. The constitution had two lists, one for federal subjects and the other that were to be the joint responsibility of the federal government and the provinces. The concurrent list included 47 matters, such as civil and criminal law, preventive detention, arms and explosives, drugs, marriage and divorce, adoption, bankruptcy, arbitration, trusts, transfer of property and registration of property, population planning, electricity, tourism, trade unions, and other matters of common interest.

The constitution also had provisions for the settlement of disputes between the governments at federal and provincial levels. The Chief Justice was assigned the responsibility for arbitrating these disputes. The President could establish a Council of Common Interests (CCI) to deal with the matters identified in both the federal as well as the concurrent lists. According to Hamid Khan, a prominent constitutional authority, 'this was meant to be an important body for the provinces to air their grievances. If the federal government or a provincial government was dissatisfied with the decision of the Council, it could refer the matter to parliament for a joint sitting [of the two houses], whose decision would be final.'⁵

⁵ Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.495.

There was no list of subjects for the provinces, the assumption being that all the residual areas will be taken care of by them. Bhutto and his colleagues reached an understanding that the concurrent list will be removed from the constitution ten years after its promulgation. That of course did not happen and the country continued to be run from the centre at Islamabad. Under the 18th amendment, there is once again a promise that decentralisation will be achieved not just on paper but also in practice.

The country has also attempted to bring government closer to the citizenry by constituting local bodies, directly elected by the people. A number of different systems have been tried since independence but did not survive long enough to provide services only local governments can effectively deliver. Had one system been allowed to remain in place with changes introduced from time to time, Pakistan would possibly have developed an effective system of local governance. This did not happen. The most elaborate of the previous systems was designed by President Ayub Khan as a part of the 1962 constitution. It was to perform two functions – provide a mechanism for the people to have representation at six different levels of government and to deliver a number of basic services to the people at these levels. The six levels were union, a large village or a cluster of smaller ones; *tehsil*; district; division; province; and finally, the nation. Each of the bottom four jurisdictions had councils made up of elected representatives of the people and government functionaries. The top two tiers had assemblies. The people directly elected only the Union Councilors, while members of other councils were elected indirectly by the members of the bottom tier. The Union Councilors, 80,000 in all – 40,000 from each wing of the country – also served as the electoral college for the office of the president.⁶

Called the system of ‘basic democracies’, the new structure was successful in bringing development to the country’s villages, and to create the economic and administrative environment for the launch of Pakistan’s first green revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But the structure was not accepted by the political establishment as an appropriate system of representation. It was not representative enough, particularly for electing the president and the members of the provincial and national assemblies. As already indicated, the system was dissolved in 1969.

The most recent of the attempts to create a system of local government was made by the administration headed by President Pervez Musharraf that provided the stool of governance with its third leg – governments at the local level. The design that was incorporated in the ordinance issued in 2001 by the president drew inspiration from the system of ‘basic democracies’. The provinces were instructed to issue their own local government laws as long as the basic construction proposed by Islamabad was not tempered with.

⁶ For the reason why the military leaders developed this elaborate structure, see Muhammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters, A Political Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

There is a default constitutional condition in Pakistan, where the country reverts back periodically to a highly centralised system of management. It has happened during the periods of military rule as well as when politicians with strong popular backing were in power. The military accustomed to a centralised command and control system of management was not willing to devolve power to other institutions that could possibly challenge its authority. Strong political men and one politically powerful woman who have governed Pakistan were equally reluctant to share power. This trend started with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who did not fully subscribe to the spirit of the constitution he had helped write and was responsible for having it accepted by all major parties. He began to subvert it the moment it was promulgated. The provisions that came under attack were precisely those that were meant to create a functioning federal state. Once the constitutional dust had settled down, the prime minister turned his attention to removing the administrations that were not in the control of his political party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). These were in Balochistan and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

The 18th Amendment

The 18th amendment does more than repeal the 17th amendment that had given enormous authority to the president. It also removes the clutter that had accumulated in the constitution as a result of the tinkering by two military leaders, first President Ziaul Haq and then President Pervez Musharraf. Will the passage of this amendment ensure Pakistan's move towards making parliament sovereign and introducing genuine federalism in the country? Only time will answer this question. As has been shown by the experience of several other federal systems, decentralisation of power to governments at the sub-national level takes more than provisions in the constitution. Ultimately it depends upon how the various parts of the government structure act out their roles.

There cannot be any doubt that the 18th amendment will have a profound impact on the way the country is governed and its economy is managed. If the federating units – the provinces – receive additional powers as a result of the abolition of the concurrent list put into the 1973 constitution by its framers, it will mean transferring large amounts of economic authority to the provinces. They will, for instance, have the right to manage labour laws; environmental impact of development in both the public and the private sectors of the economy; generation of much larger amounts of electricity than currently permitted; development of infrastructure; movement of goods and commodities within their own boundaries; improving the level of education and providing for the acquisition of usable skills by the populace. This will happen only if the provinces find a way of financing these activities. If they remain dependent on the central government for funds, the autonomy promised by the amendment will remain illusory. What is

the meaning of the 18th amendment for economic decentralisation? We will take up this matter in a later part of the paper. For the moment, we will discuss the process adopted to write the amendment as well as its content. Both are worth noting in some detail.

The Process

The amendment has as its source the Charter of Democracy (COD), signed in London by Benazir Bhutto, chairperson of the PPP, and Mian Nawaz Sharif, president of his faction of Pakistan Muslim League, [PML(N)]. The signing took place in 2006 when President Pervez Musharraf was at the peak of his power and was engaged in creating circumstances that would help to prolong his tenure. At the time of the signing, the Charter seemed like a hope that would take a miracle to realise. But miracles happened. These included the decision by President Musharraf to allow the two former prime ministers to return home from exile; his decision to withdraw the emergency under which he had placed the country in November 2007 after dismissing the Supreme Court Chief Justice for the second time in less than eight months; to hold free and fair elections in February 2008; and to resign from his office in August 2008. Normalcy did not return immediately after the departure of the military president. President Asif Ali Zardari, who succeeded Musharraf, initially resisted the effort to restore the Chief Justice to his position and to cleanse the constitution of the distortions introduced by the military presidents. However, he finally agreed to set into motion a process that would result in the incorporation of the COD in the constitution by way of the 18th amendment.

A 28-member Constitutional Reforms Committee was constituted in 2008 under the chairmanship of Raza Rabbani, a PPP member of the national assembly who had shown the ability to act independently of his party's leadership. This became evident when the lawyers launched a movement in the country to restore the Chief Justice to his position from which he had been fired twice by President Pervez Musharraf. The composition of the committee deviated considerably from the party composition in the national assembly. Only 13 of its 26 members were from the four large parties – the PPP; the PML(N); the PML(Q), a faction of the Muslim League that had supported Musharraf while he was in power; and the Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a party that was created to protect the interests of the refugees who had migrated from India after 1947 and had settled in Karachi and other cities of southern Sindh. The PPP had five members, three each from the two Muslim League factions and two from the MQM. The remaining 13 belonged to ten different parties and groups. This composition was meant to provide confidence to the smaller parties that their wishes would not be ignored.

The committee assigned itself an ambitious mandate. The most important objective was to strengthen parliament as well as the provincial assemblies. The chief executives – the prime

minister and the provincial chief ministers – would be guided by their respective assemblies and would be accountable to them. This would ensure government transparency and also reduce individual discretion. The constitution would also revert to its original intent, ie. accommodate provincial autonomy. Fundamental rights will be strengthened by expanding their reach. Judiciary would also be strengthened.

The committee conducted its business in relative secrecy in order not to have a national debate while it was deliberating the various clauses in the draft amendment. The members agreed not to give public statements and speak to the press on the issues that were being discussed even when the committee was not in session.

The amendment was voted by the committee after a slight hiccup when Nawaz Sharif and his party refused to give ground on two issues: the renaming of the NWFP as Pakhtunkhawa, and the mechanism for appointing judges to the superior courts. The committee made some accommodations in the final draft to keep the party on board. The draft amendment was placed first before the National Assembly and then before the Senate. The vote in assembly was 292 in favour and none against. The vote in the Senate was 90 in favour and none against. This represented an enormous display of confidence in both the processes that was followed by the drafting committee in producing the amendment as well as in its content.

The Content

The amendment met the long-standing demand of the Pakhtun population of the NWFP to rename their province by identifying it with the main ethnic group living in the area. The group would have preferred the province to be named Pakhtunkhawa but this was resisted by other ethnic groups, in particular the Hindkoh speakers who live in the areas bordering Punjab. A compromise was struck and the province was given the unwieldy, hyphenated name of Khyber-Pakhtunkhawa. That did not satisfy the Hindkoh speakers. There were riots in the area after the amendment was passed, leaving several people dead. Giving the NWFP a long name may have stalled the move that is gaining some momentum in the country to create a number of new provinces to accommodate different linguistic groups. If that move was to succeed, Pakistan will follow the example of neighbouring India that reorganised the country essentially on linguistic grounds soon after achieving independence.

One of the more important changes in the constitution pertains to the powers of the president. All the authority bestowed on this office by General Ziaul Haq's 8th amendment and General Pervez Musharraf's 17th amendment were withdrawn. While the president retains the right to be informed on all matters pertaining to domestic and external policies, he cannot now require

reports on any administrative or legislative matters to be submitted to him. These reports were the basis of one dismissal of the prime minister of the day by President Ziaul Haq (Mohammad Khan Junejo), two dismissals by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan (Benazir Bhutto and Mian Nawaz Sharif) and one by President Farooq Leghari (Benazir Butto). In other words, the notorious section 58.2(b) that allowed the president to dismiss the prime minister on such vague charges as incompetence and poor governance was used more frequently by civilians than by military leaders. This clause was inserted in 1985 by the 8th amendment brought in by Ziaul Haq when he began the process of sharing power with politicians. It was removed in 1997 by the 13th amendment piloted through the national assembly by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who wanted to become the chief executive of the state by diluting the powers of the president. It was reinserted by Pervez Musharraf in 2002 when the National Assembly, at his urging, passed the 17th amendment. The need for this arose after Musharraf held elections and was in the process of transferring some executive authority to an elected prime minister. The 18th amendment has removed the clause once again.

Further limits have been placed on the powers of the president. Time limits have been fixed for the president to act on the advice given to him by the prime minister and his cabinet. President's discretionary powers to dissolve the National Assembly or to refer a matter to referendum have been removed. Referendums were conducted by both Presidents Ziaul Haq and Pervez Musharraf to win legitimacy for their rules. In both cases, the results were massively rigged. The president is now to appoint the provincial governors and service chiefs on the advice of the prime minister which is binding.

The amendment has several provisions to give more power to the smaller provinces. The constitution had created a bicameral legislature in which the Senate, the upper house, was to have equal representation of all provinces. The amendment seeks to strengthen the Senate. The membership of the Senate increased from 100 to 104; the prime minister and his cabinet will be responsible to both the National Assembly as well as the Senate; the body must meet for at least 110 days a year rather than only 90 days; the president cannot issue an ordinance when the Senate is in session; the Senate can discuss money bills (budget etc.) for 14 rather than seven days; and the government's annual report on implementation of principles of policy must be placed before both houses of the parliament.

The amendment strengthened Article 6 of the constitution that was originally inserted to deter military takeovers. In the original constitution, any effort to dislodge a duly constituted government was made a capital offense punishable by death. This did not however prevent the coups staged by Generals Ziaul Haq in 1977 and Pervez Musharraf in 1999. In both cases, when challenged, the acts were given legal cover by the Supreme Court. Using legal contortions – the 'doctrine of necessity' among them – the superior courts managed to justify the string of military

takeovers and also the subsequent indemnification of the measures they had adopted in office. The amended article expands the definition of high treason by including in it an act of suspending the constitution or holding it in abeyance. Further, the Supreme Court or the High Courts cannot validate assaults on the constitution.

The number of fundamental rights have been increased to include the right to fair trial, the right to information and the right to education. It is now compulsory for children between the ages of five to 16 years to be in schools and for the state to provide them with free education. This provision will have enormous implications for a resource-strapped state that spends just under two percent of the gross domestic product on education. Meeting this condition could quadruple this proportion.

For the appointment of judges – a contentious area that held up the final agreement on the draft for a few days – the amendment appoints a seven member Judicial Commission headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The recommendations of the Commission will be sent to an eight member Parliamentary Committee with the authority to reject the nomination by no less than 75 per cent majority. This section of the amendment has been challenged in the Supreme Court by some members of the legal community who believe that it will politicise the judicial system and not necessarily make it independent of executive control. Whether it remains a part of the amended constitution will be decided by the Supreme Court. The amendment has created a new high court at Islamabad, the federal territory, and has established two additional benches of the High Courts at Mingora in Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa and at Turab in Balochistan. The motives for this were to accommodate the wishes of the people of these two provinces. The Taliban led rebellion in Swat of which Mingora is the capital was prompted in part by people's unhappiness with the time it took the courts to settle disputes and render justice. There is an expectation that by reducing the physical distance between some of the far-flung areas in some of the more backward provinces and judicial centers will help to take care of some of the grievances of the people.

For the focus of this paper – the need to bring the government closer to the people – the most important changes in the constitution relate to the assigning of responsibilities to governments at different levels. The concurrent list in the original document that gave joint responsibilities to the federal as well as provincial governments has been removed. However, criminal laws, criminal procedures and the rules of evidence remain subjects on which both Parliament and Provincial Legislatures can make laws. The Council of Common Interests (CCI) has been greatly strengthened. It shall now be chaired by the prime minister and meet at least once a quarter. There will be a permanent secretariat, comprising of the prime minister, three federal ministers and the four chief ministers. The list of subjects that will fall within the purview of the CCI has been substantially expanded, including some of the subjects that were on the abolished

concurrent list. Some of the subjects which will now be subject to deliberation by the CCI include major ports; electricity, presumably all aspect of it including generation, transmission and distribution; all regulatory authorities; national planning; public debt; census; legal, medical and other professions; higher education; and inter-provincial matters and coordination. The federation will not be allowed to build hydroelectric stations in any province without consultation with that province.

The amendment has removed the sixth schedule to the constitution that had given protection to 35 laws and ordinances promulgated during the Musharraf period. These could only be amended with the consent of the president. Included in these was the Local Government Ordinance of 2001. This leaves open the question whether the provinces would continue the systems that were in place as a result of the 2001 Ordinance. However, the provision inserted by the 17th amendment by President Musharraf relating to the devolution of power to local governments has been retained and expanded to provide that elections should be held to local councils by the Election Commission.

An effort has been made to strengthen the Election Commission and make it autonomous. The term of office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has been increased from three to five years and the number of Commissioners has been fixed at five. The CEC will be appointed by the president after he has received a binding recommendation from a committee of the parliament that will include the leader of the opposition. A panel of three members will be sent to the committee for its consideration; the committee will select one person from the panel and forward his (or her) name to the president for appointment. The commission's powers have been expanded to include the preparation of electoral rolls, holding elections to the seats that fall vacant, appointment of election tribunals to handle complaints, and staff recruitment.

There are a number of provisions pertaining to strengthening the finances of the provinces. They will have the right to raise domestic or foreign loans with the approval of the National Economic Council, a body chaired by the Prime Minister with its Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance. They will collect the entire amount generated by excise duty on oil and natural gas. Future National Finance Commissions cannot issue awards that reduce the combined share of the provinces in the central 'divisible pool'. In other awards, the amount given to the provinces by the seventh award has been frozen in time. The only discretion they have is to change the proportions allocated to the provinces.

There are some other amendments to the constitution pertaining to political matters that warrant some mention. As a nod to the peculiar political circumstances in Pakistan with the heads of the three of the four major political parties – the PPP, the PML(N) and the MQM – not present in the parliament, disqualification of members defection will be undertaken only on the initiative of the

party head and not by the parliamentary leader. Inserted in the constitution by the 13th amendment to deal with horse-trading that had marked politics in the 1990s, members of the assembly who cross the floor may risk losing their seats. The new provision means that the absent leaders will be able to rule over their parties from outside the parliament or the provincial assemblies. Also, the clause in the 17th amendment that limited the tenure of the prime minister to two terms has been removed, thus enabling Nawaz Sharif to once again aim for that position, which were held twice in the 1990s. These changes will have intended or unintended consequences of strengthening the hold of some of the powerful families over the political process.⁷

Will the 18th Amendment Deliver Decentralisation?

With the passage of the 18th amendment, Pakistan may be on the way towards establishing not only a fully democratic system with political authority vesting in a directly elected parliament, where the military will have to come under the control of the civilian authority. The country may also be moving towards the creation of a federal system in which there is sharing of power between governments at different levels, between the federal and provincial governments and between provincial and local governments. If this happens, what will be the impact on the economy and on delivering services to the people? The answer to this question has been provided by many theoretical and empirical studies done over the years by scholars from both developed and developing countries. While many benefits have been claimed for federalism, it is ‘paradoxical that we observe so few countries in the world which possess all the attributes of a strong federalist structure’, writes Dennis C. Mueller of University of Vienna. ‘There are two possible explanations for this paradox. First, there may also be several disadvantages associated with federalism, so many that for most countries the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Thus full blown federalism may be rare, because in fact it is undesirable. The second possible explanation for federalism’s rarity is that it is somehow inherently unstable. When chosen, it fails to survive not because of any fundamental difficulty in the outcome it produces, but because of the existence of forces in a democracy which undermines it.’⁸

To explain the case for federalism, we should perhaps start with the reason why the state is involved in economic matters in the first place. The main reason for this is made in the public choice literature according to which markets fail in many situations, particularly when public

⁷ Pakistan is not the only country in South Asia that has developed the tradition of dynastic politics. It is prevalent in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka as well. It has been argued in a recent article that the new breed of leaders emerging in India have strong family connection to political families that have played important roles in the country. See James Lamont, ‘The loom of youth’, *Financial Times* (11 May 2010), p.7.

⁸ Dennis Mueller, *Federalism: A Constitutional Perspective* (Vienna: University of Vienna, n.d.), mimeo.

goods such as defense of the borders, police protection, providing a bridge connecting two places across a river, or where what economists call externalities become important. There are positive externalities (when educated people work together to bring about positive change) and negative externalities (when industrialisation produces air and water pollution). Markets are less efficient providers in both cases. The governments, at least in theory, do a better job. But what type of government? There are three possibilities: a unitary state, a federalist system, or a confederation. We will concern ourselves with the first two.

A unitary system need not be distant from the people especially when the state is decentralised with government departments organised to reach people where they are located. This was the system used by the British during their long rule of India and was the one that Pakistan inherited when it became an independent state. But it was not a federalist system in the sense that elected representatives of the people were not responsible for providing public goods to the people. The responsibility rested with the officials appointed by a highly centralised state. In British India, the responsibility for providing public services rested with the members of the powerful Indian Civil Service (ICS). The ICS was variously called the ‘steel frame’ of the British raj in India or the ‘mai bap’ of the people over whom its members ruled.⁹ In a unitary system, responsibility to the people is only at the central level. In a federal system, people have control over those who serve them through elections. This in theory is the system that Pakistan attempted to establish following the adoption of the 1973 constitution.

Once the decision is made to establish a federal system, the next question concerns its optimal design. How many levels of government should there be? What should be the division of responsibility among them? How should the governments at various levels finance their activities? The 1973 constitution established two tiers of government, one at the central level and the other at the provincial level. The 17th amendment inserted into the constitution by President Pervez Musharraf effectively introduced a third tier into the structure. This was done by devolving various state responsibilities to an elaborate system of local government, patterned to some extent on Ayub Khan’s multi-tiered system of ‘Basic Democracies’. A new position was created to assign responsibility for delivering public services to an elected official called the *nazim*. This official was to be elected by the people and the bureaucracy at the local level was made responsible to him (or her). The *nazim* effectively replaced the Deputy Commissioner who was the anchor of the administrative system Pakistan had inherited from the British.

⁹ Perhaps the best account of the role performed by the Indian Civil Service is to be found in Philip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India* (London: W.W. Norton, 1985). The book was initially issued as a two-volume study under the titles of *The Men Who Ruled India: The Founders* and *The Men Who Ruled India: The Guardians*. The author used the pseudonym of Phil Mason to hide his identity when the books were first published since at that time he was still in the service of the government.

The 1973 constitution, even when amended by President Musharraf, did not provide many resource generation responsibilities to the governments at the sub-national levels. They were mostly dependent on the central government for financing their activities. The provincial governments were given some say in the amount of resources they obtained from the centre by their representation in the National Finance Commission (NFC). The NFC was to be convened every five years. According to Section 160 of the constitution, ‘Within six months of the commencing day and thereafter at intervals not exceeding every five years, the president shall constitute a National Finance Commission consisting of the Minister of Finance of the Federal Government, the Ministers of Finance of the Provincial Governments, and such other persons as may be appointed by the president after consultation with the governors of the provinces.’¹⁰ The NFC would decide on the formula to be followed for allocating the resources available in what was called the divisible pool. However this provision, like so many others in the constitution, was largely ignored. For instance, the most recent NFC award was signed in 2009, almost 13 years after the one it replaced. Whatever shares were agreed upon were provided to the provinces in the form of grants. According to many economists, this way of providing resources to the federating units introduces serious distortions.

More than a hundred years ago, the economist Knut Wicksell established what has come to be called the Wicksellian connection. According to this, each public expenditure should be coupled with a tax to finance it so that the voting public knows how much it is paying for the services being provided. Some experts go a step further. They suggest that the people receiving services from the state, no matter where the state is located, should be charged for the services being provided. This approach serves several purposes. It forces the state to be efficient in the business in which it is involved. It also makes it possible for the people to bypass the state and go to the private sector if they are not happy with the services being made available by the state. This is what has happened in the case of education and health services for the more well-to-do segments of the Pakistani society. The people who can afford to go to the private sector have largely abandoned the state in these areas. It also forces the state to choose between different programs constrained as it would be by the envelope of available resources.

There is a virtual consensus among economists that inter-governmental grants lead to an expansion of the public sector, as there is empirical evidence to suggest that a local government generally spends a far larger fraction of an unconditional grant from a higher level of government than its citizens would consider to be optimal. Applying this finding to Pakistan where financing for the provinces will come mostly from the NFC awards, the 18th amendment induced autonomy will not necessarily lead to economic efficiency. The provinces must be given

¹⁰ Yasmeen Rehman, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 as Amended by Constitution (18th Amendment) Act, 2010* (Lahore: Punjab Law Book House, 2010).

a way to finance most of their own development and take full responsibility for the resources they mobilise, including servicing them if they were obtained through borrowing.

Conclusion

While the 18th amendment to the constitution has taken a major step forward in moving Pakistan towards a federal system, the real test of the efficiency will come once the envisaged system begins to take shape. The passage of the amendment and its signing into law has not stilled the controversy that surrounds many aspects of governance in Pakistan. Many petitions have been moved in the Supreme Court challenging the Parliament's right to bring about such a major change in the original structure. Some legal experts contend that parliament, even when voting unanimously, as was the case with the votes in favour of the amendment, cannot bring about a fundamental change in the original structure. Others maintain the opposite.¹¹

Another test will come in terms of providing services for which the provinces will have the responsibility with the abolition of the concurrent list by the 18th amendment. Most economists agree that basic services are better provided by the governments that are closer to the intended beneficiaries. Decentralisation of government's authority should help in addressing the problem the country faces as the number of people living in absolute poverty increases. But will the provinces have the resources to carry out this mandate? The amendment has largely left this as an open question, which is a mistake. It is only when the devolution of responsibility is coupled with the responsibility of raising resources that the real test of the new system will come. Preceding the passage of the amendment was the announcement of the 7th NFC award which has broken new ground in increasing the combined share of the provinces in the resources generated by the federal government. The NFC also provides a much larger share – 9.1 per cent of the divisible pool – to Balochistan, the country's most backward province. However, grants made as part of the NFC rewards do not necessarily produce fiscal efficiency.

Then there is a lesson Pakistan's history has to teach. The process of centralisation within a federalist structure does not remain fixed. Pakistan's history is so pervasive worldwide that it has come to be referred to as the Popitz law, named after the German economist who in the early part of the previous century, identified the tendency toward centralisation in state revenues and expenditures. According to a 2004 study by Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, it is suggested that this law has the support of empirical evidence. His conclusion is based on a study of 20 countries, where he states, 'Starting from highly decentralised tax systems in 1930s, unitary and federal countries

¹¹ One example of the sharp dispute on this issue is the exchange outside the Supreme Court between two prominent lawyers, Aitzaz Ahsan and Akram Sheikh. See Nasir Iqbal, 'Aitzaz, Akram spar over parliament', *Dawn* (21 April 2010), pp. 1 and 5.

alike concentrated fiscal authority in the hands of the national governments'.¹² Will Pakistan once again revert to that situation? Again, only time will tell.

Then there is the question of the impact of globalisation on regional development within federalist structures. It has been noted by several scholars that with the easy movement of capital across national frontiers, there is intense competition among federating units within federal structures. This has been seen in federalist systems in both developed (Australia, Canada, the United States) as well as in the emerging parts of the developing world (Brazil, China, India, South Africa). Economists call it 'competitive federalism'.¹³ This aspect of decentralisation is not touched upon in this brief analysis. However, it is important to underscore that if the provinces of Pakistan do acquire significant amount of economic authority, they may start competing with one another for securing scarce foreign capital flows, in particular foreign direct investment. This has already happened to some extent with Sindh working to pull in real estate investments from the Middle East and the Punjab working with China to establish an industrial estate.

There is no doubt that the 18th amendment to the constitution has taken a giant step towards instituting political and fiscal federalism in the country as the basis for improving the quality of governance. Its success or failure would depend upon how those charged with policy-making decide to move forward and make use of the opportunities made available.

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¹² Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, 'The centralization of fiscal authority: An empirical investigation of Popitz's law', *paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American political Science Association* (2 – 4 September 2004).

¹³ This subject was covered in an international symposium held in New Delhi in August 2003 and reported in a Indian journal. See 'Federalism in a Global World: Challenges and Responses', *Economic and Political Weekly*, (6 September), pp. 1-16.

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From ‘Asia’ to ‘Asia-Pacific’: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces¹

Sinderpal Singh²

Executive Summary

Existing discussions of regionalism in Asia reveal diverse ideas of Asia’s composition, with a lack of agreement about which states should be included/excluded in representations of ‘Asia’. This paper seeks to engage the debate by looking at the case of Indian political elites and their efforts to frame India’s own regional space within these larger questions on regional spaces in ‘Asia’ and the ‘Asia-Pacific’. It aims to locate contemporary representations of India’s regional space in a comparative historical framework by looking at India’s earlier tryst with different regionalist projects like the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), New Delhi, in 1947 and the Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, in 1955. It would be argued that such similarities/differences in Indian representations of its regional space over time can be related to how Indian political elites have sought to negotiate Indian state identity, and as a result, India’s role beyond its own borders from the time of its independence in 1947.

The paper consists of five sections. The first section will sketch the theoretical and conceptual framework of this paper. It will demonstrate the importance of grounding the ‘regionalist’ projects of political elites, in this case Indian political elites, within the context of domestic

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 4th Oceanic Conference for International Studies (OCIS) in Auckland, June-July 2010. The author is grateful for comments and suggestions made by conference participants on the earlier version of this paper.

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negotiations of state identity. It makes the point that the way in which a region develops is not a pre-existing given, but a choice made on specific historical and political grounds.

The second section will look at Nehru's efforts at framing India's place in 'Asia' at both the ARC Conference in 1947 and the Bandung Conference in 1955. This section will examine the manner in which Nehru's negotiation of Indian state identity had important implications for his 'India in Asia' project. It will outline the reasons why Nehru's region-building project shared dramatically different fates in 1955 as compared to 1947 and the reasons for the demise of 'Asia' as a regional idea after 1955.

The third section will mark out the initial basis of the 'Asia-Pacific' idea and the factors which led to India's exclusion from this regional space. The position of Japan and the United States (US), according to the context of Cold War politics, is central, in this instance, in understanding the manner in which this 'Asia-Pacific' regional idea originated and developed through this period. Such politics of region-building also explain the basis of inclusion/exclusion from this regional space, India being one of the most notable exclusion during the Cold War era.

The fourth section will look at how Indian political elites, since 1990, have endeavoured to 'locate' India within the regional space of 'Asia-Pacific'. It would examine the period beginning in the early 1990s till the present and trace how different sets of Indian political elites [from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress parties] re-negotiated certain notions of Indian state identity over this period. The implications of such domestic re-negotiations will then be related to how Indian political elites have framed India's place within this 'Asia-Pacific' space.

The concluding section revisits the key points made in the four sections of this paper. It makes the case for re-examining the manner in which the Indian state, via the political elites that represent the Indian state, approach India's place in different regionalist projects. Looking comparatively at two distinct historical periods, the paper demonstrates why we need to look at Indian political elites and how they frame Indian state identity when discussing India's history of navigating the different contours of international regionalism. Looking forward, therefore, India's continued role in the Asia-Pacific region will depend as much on the manner in which Indian political elites can domestically align the idea of India with the idea of the Asia-Pacific as it would on external factors beyond India's borders.

Introduction

Contemporary debates on regionalism in Asia have been marked by different visions of what constitutes ‘Asia’ and the basis on which inclusion/exclusion in such groupings should be based on.³ This paper seeks to engage this debate by looking at the case of Indian political elites and their attempts to frame India’s own regional space within these larger debates on regional spaces in ‘Asia’ and the ‘Asia-Pacific’. It aims to locate certain contemporary representations of India’s regional space in a comparative historical context by looking at India’s earlier tryst with different regionalist projects like the 1947 Asian Relations Conference (ARC) in New Delhi, India and the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. It would be argued that such similarities/differences in Indian representations of its regional space over time can be traced back to how Indian political elites have sought to negotiate Indian state identity, and consequently, India’s role beyond its own borders from the time of its independence in 1947.

The first section will briefly outline the theoretical and conceptual framework of this paper. It will demonstrate the importance of grounding the ‘regionalist’ projects of political elites, in this case Indian political elites, within the context of domestic negotiations of state identity. The second section will look at Nehru’s endeavours at framing India’s place in ‘Asia’ at both the ARC Conference in 1947 and the Bandung Conference in 1955. This section will examine the manner in which Nehru’s negotiation of Indian state identity had important implications for his ‘India in Asia’ project. The third section outlines the initial basis of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ idea and the factors which led to India’s exclusion from this regional space. The fourth section will look at how Indian political elites, since 1990, have attempted to ‘locate’ India within the regional space of ‘Asia-Pacific’. It would scrutinise the period beginning in the early 1990s till the present and trace how different sets of Indian political elites (from the BJP and Congress parties) re-negotiated certain notions of Indian state identity over this period. The implications of such domestic re-negotiations will then be related to how Indian political elites have framed India’s place within this ‘Asia-Pacific’ space. The last section will serve as a conclusion, retracing the manner in which Indian political elites moved from framing India as part of ‘Asia’ during the Nehru era to ‘Asia-Pacific’ from the early 1990s onwards.

³ For examples of the historical and contemporary ‘contests’ over ‘Asia’, see Pekka Korhonen, ‘Monopolizing Asia: The Politics of a Metaphor’, in *Pacific Review*, Vol.10, no.3 (1997), pp. 347-65; David Camroux, ‘Asia...Whose Asia? A “Return to the Future” of a Sino-Indic Asian Community’, in *Pacific Review*, Vol.20, no.4 (2007), pp.551-75.

Going Regional at Home: The Indian Case

In his overview of the study of regionalism and its evolution as a concept within the academic discipline of international relations, Andrew Hurrell notes that the politics of regionalism is often characterised by 'deep conflicts over the geographical scope of the region and the values it is held to represent'.⁴ There have been earlier attempts within international relations to interrogate the basis of international regions and their regional interactions but they remained largely silent on the ideational constructions of such regional spaces, steeped as such studies were in the neo-functional quantitative predisposition within international relations during this period.⁵ There has been, however a relatively recent re-engagement in the 1990s with such questions of 'region building', with a emphasis on the power of discursive constructions of regional places, in line with what some people have termed the 'return' of culture and identity to the study of international relations.⁶ One of the pioneering studies on region-building and region-builders has been Iver Neumann's work on the Baltic region.⁷ More recent writing on the politics of region construction has sought to use Neumann's earlier ideas and re-apply them to various regions and themes.⁸

The central thrust of the 'region-building' approach is to illustrate the point 'that the way in which a region develops is not a given, but a choice made on specific historical and political grounds', via 'certain, often historically developed, characteristics or connotations that actors draw upon'.⁹ Central to this conception is the notion that regions are always works in progress,

⁴ Andrew Hurrell, 'Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective', in Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.66.

⁵ See for example, Joseph Nye (ed.), *International Regionalism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968); Richard Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz (eds), *Regional Politics and World Order* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973); Karl Deutsch et al, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1957).

⁶ Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1996). Other related contributions during this period are: David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁷ Iver Neumann, 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.20, no.1 (1994), pp.53-74. For Neumann's related works on this theme, see Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The 'East' in European Identity Formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁸ For example, see C.S. Browing, 'The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North', in *Geopolitics*, Vol.8, no.1 (January 2003), pp.45-71; Carina Keskitalo, 'International Region-Building: Development of the Arctic an International Region', in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.42, no.2 (2007), pp.187-205; W. Larner & W. Walters, 'The Political Rationality of 'New Regionalism': Toward a Genealogy of the Region', in *Theory and Society*, Vol.31, no.3 (2002), pp.391-432.

⁹ Carina Keskitalo, 'International Region-Building: Development of the Arctic an International Region', in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.42, no.2 (2007), pp.188.

always being created and recreated as part of the region-building process.¹⁰ An equally important aspect of the region-building approach, especially as applied in this study, is the role of ‘region-builders’ in such creation and recreation of regional spaces intrinsic to region-building projects. Region-builders, in this instance, are ‘political actors, who, as part of some political project, see it in their interest to imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity for a region’.¹¹ Such political actors, in their role as ‘region-builders’, are often state elites who identify their own politically expedient representations of regional identity and space as the expression of the states in whose name they speak.¹²

Using such an approach, this paper will look at two specific periods of Indian foreign policy and demonstrate the link between domestic negotiations of state identity on the part of Indian political elites and the manner in which they engaged in different region-building projects across two distinctive historical periods. The first period will be the stretch from 1947 to 1955, the period during which India’s first Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sought to frame certain specific ideas of ‘Asia’. This period is analysed via examining two major international conferences, the 1947 ARC Conference and the 1955 Bandung Conference for two main reasons. The first relates to the deliberations at these two conferences and how they exhibit plainly that, in a period of great historical flux, post-colonial elites like Nehru perceived that the ‘idea’ of Asia was open to ‘new’ and, possibly, radical re-articulations. These two gatherings thus afforded crucial platforms for such possible ‘new’ representations of ‘Asia’ to be expressed, agreed upon and/or contested amongst these post-colonial political elites. The second reason is that a comparative examination of the deliberations and outcomes of the two gatherings of political elites affords a closer look at how and why Nehru’s attempts to cultivate specific types of ‘Asian-ness’ met with differing levels of success at the two conferences. The second period, from 1990 onwards, is significant because of two factors. Firstly, it signalled the end of the Cold War, with far-reaching implications for the ‘region-building’ exercise in the Asia-Pacific space. Secondly, from 1990, certain fundamental changes began to take root within India, with critical consequences for the manner in which Indian political elites began to re-articulate Indian state identity.

¹⁰ Bjorn Hettne & Fredrik Soderbaum, ‘Theorising the Rise of Regionness’, in *New Political Economy*, Vol.5, no.3 (2000), p.461.

¹¹ Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The ‘East’ in European Identity Formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.115.

¹² For example of works with other approaches to states as ‘region-builders’, see: Ole Weaver, ‘Three Competing “Europes”: French, German, Russian’, in *International Affairs*, Vol.66, no.3 (April 1990), pp.477-93; K. Jayasuria, ‘Singapore - The Politics of Regional Definition’, in *Pacific Review*, Vol.7, no.4 (1994), pp.411-20.

Constructing Post-Colonial Asia: The Asian Relations Conference, Delhi, 1947

Nehru's idea that India's own struggle against colonialism and its eventual independence would bestow upon it 'special responsibilities' that went beyond its own borders was evident early on in India's independent history, as when in 1948, in the midst of discussing the framing of India's Constitution, Nehru was of the opinion that with India's independence, he

saw the star of India rising far above the horizon and casting its soothing light...over many countries in the world, who looked to it with hope, who considered that out of this new Free India would come various forces which would help Asia'.¹³

This idea that India's independence, won as a result of a bitter battle against the injustices and discrimination of imperialism, held an important significance for the countries and peoples of 'Asia' was a theme that featured in Nehru's discourse even before independence in 1947. Nehru's own attempts to 'find' an India that could exhibit some form of over-arching unity despite its amazing variety, led him to the idea of representing India as a distinct civilisation. In his ruminations in his *Discovery of India*, he represents India's unity as some form of 'synthesis', a civilisation that was borne out of such a synthesis of various different cultures and influences.

It is instructive to note that Nehru makes a similar claim about China and how despite the apparent split between Nationalist and Communist China; it had a unique, common age-old civilisational identity, just like India.¹⁴ In this representation, India and China both represented different Asian age-old civilisations – civilisational qualities which made them 'India' and 'China'. For Nehru, this discursive move was necessary for two main reasons. The first was the need to define an India that was more than just a product of British imperial design.¹⁵ There was thus a need on the part of elites like Nehru to 'find' a pre-existing, pre-colonial India to legitimate the basis of a future independent Indian state. The second was the need to contest one of the central justifications of colonial rule – that the superiority of Western civilisation legitimated the imperial relationship between Britain and the Indians over whom it ruled.¹⁶ The need to frame and represent a specific form of Indian civilisation, represented as one that was

¹³ Nehru's speech in the Constituent Assembly, 8 November 1948. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy – Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971), p.17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁵ For a deeper discussion of the link between British imperialism and 'creating' India, see Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

¹⁶ An excellent and insightful treatment of such legitimations of imperial control is to be found in Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

equal to, in some cases superior to, Western civilisation became imperative. As Prasenjit Duara notes, such deployments of ‘civilisation’ categories to fit the nascent territorial nation was hardly unique to Indian elites like Nehru but instead was part of a wider move by other ‘Asian’ elites to represent themselves as part of a progressive and historically glorious civilisation.¹⁷

This idea of representing ‘India’ as having a distinct, pre-colonial glorious civilisational past was tied up crucially with Nehru’s representation of ‘Asia’ and the latter’s own glorious civilisational past.¹⁸ India’s own civilisational past was for Nehru thus both distinct from as well as part of the wider civilisational heritage of ‘Asia’ that had existed before the advent of western imperialism into this region. For Nehru thus, the project of framing a specific ‘Indian-ness’ was linked to the framing of a specific Pan-‘Asian-ness’. An important bedrock of both these representational projects was the idea of anti-racialism and the related ‘re-discovery’ of a broad glorious national/Asian civilisation.

The gathering of ‘Asian’ countries at the ARC in 1947 was in some ways novel, yet it had certain precedents. There had been earlier gatherings of Non-Western leaders/representatives with resistance to western imperialism being the central motive of such gathering. Examples include the gathering of the First Congress of the Peoples of the East held in 1920 in the Muslim city of Baku, in the central Caucasus and the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in Brussels in 1927, the latter in which Nehru not only represented the Indian Congress but also had a hand in organising the gathering.¹⁹ However, what was unique about the ARC of 1947 was its historical singularity on several counts: the Second World War had just ended two years prior with the resultant military and political exhaustion of allied countries like Britain, India’s independence was impending and last, but definitely not least, Japan had become a defeated and occupied power, making it almost defunct from playing any kind of ‘pan-Asian’ leadership role, a stark contrast to its leadership pretensions within Asia throughout a large part of the early twentieth century.

Nehru echoes the premise of Asia’s historically shared civilisation heritage and India’s central role in such a shared civilisation during the conference itself when he notes that:

¹⁷ Prasenjit Duara, ‘The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism’, in *Journal of World History*, Vol.12, no.1 (2001), pp.106-107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.110. Duara observes that in the Japanese case in the early part of the twentieth century, “‘pan-Asian-ism’ both fed and resisted the nascent imperialism of that nation’.

¹⁹ For details of the Baku Congress see: Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford & Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.135. For the Brussels Conference and Nehru’s personal ruminations on it, see: Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru, an autobiography: with musings on recent events in India* (London: Bodley Head, 1953), pp.161-65.

India has always had contacts and intercourse with her neighbour countries...With the coming of British rule in India these contacts were broken off and India was almost completely isolated from the rest of Asia...This Conference itself is significant an expression of that deeper urge of the mind and spirit of Asia which has persisted in spite of the isolationism which grew up during the years of European domination.²⁰

The central premise of this conference, for Nehru, was to rediscover this Asian civilisation that he spoke about, and to represent what 'Asia' and 'Asian-ness' now represented. In his role as region-builder, Nehru attempted to do two things that were outlined as part of the region-building approach. Firstly, he sought to place India within this region that both he and others had termed 'Asia'. This he did by representing 'Asian-ness' at that point in time as predominantly a movement against colonialism broadly and Western imperialism more specifically. With this move, he discursively aligned his idea of 'Indian-ness' with that of 'Asian-ness'. Secondly, he then sought to place India as a core part of this new 'Asian-ness'. This he did by representing India's battle against the racially motivated subjugation of colonialism as a path which could serve as a template for other Asian countries looking to free themselves from the shackles of Western colonialism. In the opening plenary address, Nehru notes that:

Apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor, and geographically she is so situated as to be the meeting point of western and northern and eastern and southeast Asia. Because of this the history of India is a long history of her relations with the other countries of Asia.²¹

The fact that Nehru was already part of a provisional government that was, very shortly, about to lead an independent India made this claim to India's centrality within this 'Asian' space even stronger. More importantly, Nehru's attempt to fuse India as Asia's 'centre', both spatially and ideationally, was part of the representational exercise of 'centring' India within this Asian regional space.

Overall, it is largely agreed that the ARC was fairly successful, at least from the Indian state's perspective. This was primarily because of its largely modest aims.²² For Nehru, in his role as

²⁰ Quoted in Asian Relations, *Being Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, March-April 1947* (New Delhi: Asian Relations Organization, 1948), p.23.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² In his classic study, Sisir Gupta notes, 'the conference has been viewed as a success by most Indian writers...within the limited context of its aims'. Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p.37.

region-builder, this conference was relatively successful mainly because of two factors. Firstly, there were hardly any contestations about the need for 'Asia', with its attendant civilisational claims, to represent a rediscovered spirit of resistance to western colonialism. As such, aligning a specific form of 'Indian-ness' to this particular brand of 'Asian-ness' was not too controversial a move on the part of Nehru. Secondly, India's centrality was also largely acknowledged mostly because of the fact that it was destined to be the first Asian country to obtain independence from colonial British rule and as such had, on some level, reached the basic aim of the countries gathered in the conference – that of political freedom from western colonial control. Nehru, however, would find that such region-building tasks were not always unproblematic and this he would discern by the end of the Bandung Conference in 1955.

Constructing Post-Colonial Asia II: The Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 1955

Meeting in Bogor, Indonesia, in December 1954, the five countries that comprised the 'Colombo Powers,' (Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan), decided that the upcoming Bandung Conference in 1955 would determine its own procedure and agenda. These powers did however list four general objectives for the Bandung Conference.²³ They were:

1. to promote goodwill and cooperation among the nations of Asia and Africa, to explore and advance their mutual as well as common interests, and to establish and further friendliness and neighbourly relations;
2. to consider social, economic and cultural problems and relations of the countries represented;
3. to consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples – for example, problems affecting national sovereignty, of racialism and colonialism; and
4. to view the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the world today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.²⁴

Keeping to this general theme, in his opening address as the representative host of the 1955 Bandung Conference, President Soekarno of Indonesia, while mindful of the large variation amongst the diverse group of Asian and African states/representatives gathered, pointed to the basic continuity the gathering shared with the one in Delhi in 1947. Soekarno observed that:

²³ For details of the Bogor meeting, see: Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), pp.20-22. Abdulgani, an Indonesian diplomat, was Secretary-General of the Organising Committee for the Bandung Conference.

²⁴ George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.3.

we are of many different nations, we are of many different social backgrounds and cultural patterns...Our national characters, or colours or motifs are different. Our racial stock is different and even the colour of our skin is different...We are united, for instance, by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism.²⁵

There was thus a sense that despite the major global events that had taken place since 1947, like the emergence and escalation of Cold War rivalry between the two rival blocs and the de-colonialisation of a large number of states, that a common rejection of the racialism and imperialism that colonialism entailed would still form an important and sufficient basis for fraternity, as it was in Delhi in 1947.²⁶ This, at least, was the initial sense shared amongst the ‘Colombo Powers’, as evident from the four general objectives outlined above. It would be the ‘filling in’ of the conference’s agenda, moving beyond just general objectives, which would however prove more problematic.

Before that however, turning to Nehru and India, the period between 1947 and 1955 was most obviously momentous for both. One of the major challenges that Nehru faced, especially after the death of Gandhi, was reframing Indian-ness, moving from the nebulous idea of India signifying a symbol of resistance to the imperial subjugation of British colonialism to a more specific mode of ordering the Indian state and what it represented as the driving force of a now-independent country. As Benjamin Zachariah notes in his study of Nehru, the deliberations over India’s new constitution made the latter realise that his plans for a ‘socialist’ framework for a newly independent India did not have enough converts both within and outside the Congress Party.²⁷ Instead there was a compromise of sorts – the redistributive imperative was to be achieved via the mantra of ‘economic planning’.²⁸ Out of this came a somewhat new, reordered idea of India – that it was still a symbol of anti-imperialism but now it was given deeper content. India was now to aim for ‘national self-sufficiency’, a continuation, but yet an important elaboration on its earlier anti-imperial, anti-colonial identity. Nehru thus had reworked ‘Indian-ness’ to signify national self-sufficiency as a form of India’s perennial anti-imperialist identity.

²⁵ From Soekarno’s opening address at the Asian-African Conference, 18 April 1955. Full text of speech reproduced in: George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.43. See also, Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), p.173.

²⁶ For a discussion of Bandung’s significance for later discourses on neo-colonialism within Asia, see: David Camroux, ‘Asia...Whose Asia? A “Return to the Future” of a Sino-Indic Asian Community’, in *Pacific Review*, Vol.20, no.4 (2007), pp.555-6.

²⁷ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p.151.

²⁸ The highly regarded Indian political scientist, A. Appodurai, terms Nehru’s efforts to blend a socialist, redistributive ethos into the workings and the idea of democracy in India as an example of ‘democratic socialism’. A. Appodurai, *Indian Political Thinking: From Naoroji to Nehru* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.117-8.

This particular representation of Indian state identity at home had specific implications for the representation of India abroad. This notion of self-sufficiency and self-reliance permeated into Nehru's foreign policy outlook for India. In terms of policy stances, it translated into one of Nehru's major foreign policy mantras – 'non-alignment'. Just as domestically, a specific meaning and content had been given to earlier broad notions of anti-imperialism, the same now applied to Indian foreign policy. For Nehru, non-alignment and staying out of the bloc politics of the Cold War was a commonsensical extension of India's perennial steadfast resistance to anti-imperialism in all its permutations. For Nehru, this particular representation of India was not just an expression of India's 'true' identity, but rather that of Asia-Africa as well, given their commitment to defeat colonialism and imperialisms of all kinds. It is here also that the disjuncture between Nehru's representation of India and his representation of India's place in its wider Afro-Asian space begins to come unstuck.

Being initially not convinced of the utility of holding an Afro-Asian conference, Nehru, as part of the five 'Colombo Powers', was aware of the many potential areas for strong disagreement and heated discussion rather than commonality and unity of purpose among potential invitees – the issue of Israel and Palestine chief among these.²⁹ However, one of the central considerations that changed Nehru's mind on this matter was the opportunity such a gathering offered to the Asian-African countries to convince the newly Communist government of China to engage with the wider international community, rather than just being cocooned in its close ideological relationship with the Soviet Union.³⁰ This desire emanated from Nehru's hope that the Bandung gathering would endorse and represent India's own non-aligned outlook for 'Pan-Asian-ism', with Asian countries forming the core of the Afro-Asian grouping.³¹ Besides China, Nehru's chief concern was with the impending formation of SEATO (Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation), an organisation of Asian countries that would soon become part of US-sponsored military alliance along the lines of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) of Western Europe.³² This organisation, for Nehru, flew in the face of the non-alignment doctrine that he

²⁹ For an elaboration, see: S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol.II (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p.232. See also: Jyoti Sengupta, *Non-Alignment: Search for a Destination* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1979), pp.94-5. Sengupta was an Indian journalist during this period with access to the Sri Lankan Prime Minister at this time, Sir John Kotelawala, Sri Lanka's representative to the preparatory meetings prior to and to the Bandung Conference itself.

³⁰ Anthony Reid, 'The Bandung Conference and Southeast Asian Regionalism', in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), p.23.

³¹ As Krishna Menon, Nehru's long-time confidante and Indian foreign minister later pointed out, from the Indian perspective, 'Bandung was largely Asian'. Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.60.

³² For details on the factors leading up to the formation of SEATO, see: Yano Toru, 'Who Set the Stage for the Cold War in Southeast Asia?', in Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (eds), *The Origins Of The Cold War In Asia* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1977), pp.329-33.

wanted to hoist onto ‘Pan-Asian-ism’, as an integral part of India playing a leading role in this grouping of countries.

In a telling speech at Bandung, Nehru laments the emergence of the bloc politics of the Cold War and links it to the repercussions both for Indian ‘identity’ and the wider identity of the Bandung grouping. In his view,

if I join any of these big groups I lose my identity; I have no identity left, I have no views left...Therefore every step that that takes place in reducing that area in the world which may be called the unaligned area is a dangerous step and leads to war...It is an intolerable thought to me that the great countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom only to degrade themselves or humiliate themselves in this way.³³ Nehru, in his role as region-builder, attempted to re-articulate earlier less definite notions of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism expressed in Delhi in 1947 into a more specific idea of anti-imperialism as nonalignment in Bandung in 1955. He had managed to deploy such meanings into representations of India between 1947 and 1955 and now attempted to do the same for the Afro-Asian gathering. This time, however, there were fierce contestations to such a representation and with it to Nehru’s attempts for India to play a central role in the grouping.

One of the most strident contestations came from India’s two closest neighbours. The first, rather expectedly, came from Pakistan. Having just joined the US-backed SEATO a few months prior, Pakistan made it a point from the outset to equate Communism and all its manifestations as imperialistic. Following on from this, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, John Kotelawala insisted that the gathering condemn Soviet colonialism over what he termed were its satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe if all gathered were serious about wanting to do away with all forms of colonialism.³⁴ As much as Nehru tried to scuttle away the proposal on procedural grounds (one of them being that Central and Eastern Europe were not part of ‘Asia-Africa’ and thus should not be discussed), several other countries joined in support of Sri Lanka’s proposal, namely Pakistan and Turkey, both being part of the western-sponsored Baghdad Pact and NATO respectively. Nehru’s central aim – to link anti-imperialism/anti-colonialism to the principle of ‘non-alignment’ – was therefore beginning to falter at Bandung.

One of the central reasons why such a link was rejected by a number of countries at Bandung was due to the fact that these nascent nation-states saw other Asian countries as the primary

³³ George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.66-7.

³⁴ Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005), pp.73-4.

threats to their identity and security. The imperialism of ‘white’ western states was still a concern but the fear of ‘Asian’ imperialism was far greater for certain smaller Asian states.³⁵ The shadow of India, China and Indonesia, three of the largest Asian states, loomed perilously large for other Asian states gathered at Bandung. These ‘aligned’ countries had become part of US-led, purportedly anti-Communist military pacts largely to guarantee their security and identity against certain other Asian states.³⁶ It was this specific link between ‘identity’ and ‘anti-imperialism’ that Nehru failed to grasp at Bandung. He failed to grasp that ‘anti-imperialism’ did not necessarily translate into ‘non-alignment’ for all gathered, largely because certain Asian states viewed joining military-political ‘blocs’ (mainly the US bloc at this point in time) as a collective defence guarantee against potential Asian ‘imperialism’.

Nehru, however, was not alone in equating non-alignment to anti-imperialism as the cornerstone of a new ‘Asian-ism’ at Bandung. In this he was supported strongly by the leaders of both Burma (now known as Myanmar) and Indonesia. However, his failure as a region-builder lay in not being able to get the wider support of other Asian states to endorse his ‘idea’ of ‘Asia’ as an ‘unaligned zone’, beyond the sphere of East-West bloc politics. More specifically, although India was still seen by most of the other states as part of the ‘Asian space’, Nehru could not reinforce India’s central role within this space. This was because he could not get the Asian states at Bandung to place ‘non-alignment as anti-imperialism’ at the core of the ‘idea’ of ‘Asia’ as he had done with the ‘idea’ of ‘India’. Although much has been said, some of it very recently, about the success of the Bandung Conference and the ‘Bandung Spirit’ for ‘Pan-Asian-ism’, it was not a case-study of successful region-building on the part of Nehru.³⁷ A quick comparison between official Final Communiqué of the conference and Nehru’s closing remarks will illustrate this point quite clearly.

Two sections (out of the seven sections) contained within the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference are especially relevant. These are Section (D), ‘Problems of Dependent Peoples’ and

³⁵ For an interesting account of how the US government itself was concerned about its military pacts being seen as vestiges of ‘white’, Western imperialism in the run-up to Bandung, see: Matthew Jones, ‘A “Segregated” Asia?: Race, the Bandung Conference and Pan-Asianist Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954-1955’, in *Diplomatic History*, Vol.29, no.5 (November 2005), pp.841-68.

³⁶ For details on how certain ‘aligned’ states approached the Bandung Conference, see: Ang Cheng Guan, ‘The Bandung Conference and the Cold War International History of Southeast Asia’, in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp.27-47.

³⁷ Even as early as 1957, one writer laments, ‘since Bandung, it has become fashionable to invoke the “Bandung Spirit” on every possible occasion’. Georgiana G. Stevens, ‘Arab Neutralism and Bandung’, in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.11, no.2 (1957), p.148. For a more recent call to re-examine such ‘triumphalist’ interpretations of Bandung, see Pang Yang Huei, ‘The Four Faces of Bandung: Detainees, Soldiers, Revolutionaries and Statesmen’, in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.39, no.1 (February 2009), pp.63-86.

Section (G), ‘Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation’.³⁸ In Section (D), the Conference echoes sentiments echoed earlier at the ARC in 1947, agreeing that ‘colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end [and] in affirming that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights’.³⁹ This marked continuity in embedding a generic rejection of colonialism at the heart of a new ‘Asian-ism’, an idea whose genesis can be traced to the ARC in 1947. More interestingly, a small part in Section (G) asserts that those gathered should demonstrate ‘abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers (and) abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries’.⁴⁰

It is important to note here that participation in collective defence arrangements/pacts per se was not rejected but only its use to serve the interests of the big powers, an oblique reference to the US and the Soviet Union. The second part on countries not exerting pressure on other countries was a counter-balancing point – a veiled reference to larger Asian states like China, India and Indonesia vis-à-vis the smaller Asian states.

The disjuncture between the Final Communiqué and Nehru’s own ideas of ‘Pan-Asian-ness’ can be discerned from the latter’s closing remarks at Bandung. In a speech which contained the standard references to there being ‘yet another spirit of Asia today’, and of this new Asia no longer being ‘a submissive Asia’, one particular part of Nehru’s speech illustrates his departure from the Conference’s Final Communiqué. In a thinly disguised attack on Asian states joining collective defence pacts and the impact of this on an ‘Asian-ism’ being true to the principles of anti-imperialism, he observed that the gathering at Bandung

(r)epresents the ideals of Asia, it represents the new dynamism of Asia...We are Asians or Africans. We are none else. If we are camp followers of Russia or America or any other country of Europe, it is, if I may say so, not very credible to our dignity, our new independence, our new freedom, our new spirit and our new self-reliance.⁴¹

³⁸ George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.76-85; Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), pp.197-206.

³⁹ Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), p.202.

⁴⁰ George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.84.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.74.

The distance between the agreed Final Communiqué and Nehru's closing remarks is clear. The communiqué reinforced earlier broad notions of a new 'Asian-ism', formulated at the ARC in 1947, centred on notions anti-colonialism and racial equality. Nehru wanted to go further, to link these broad notions to the specific idea of non-alignment as anti-imperialism. In his role as region-builder, he sought to hoist this particular representation upon this new 'Asian-ism', at the same time positioning India at the core of this region-building exercise. However, such attempts on the part of Nehru were unsuccessful at Bandung. India, for other Asian states, remained part of the Asian space but its core role came to be increasingly questioned just as its non-alignment mantra came to be viewed with scepticism by the other Asian states at Bandung.

Constructing the Asia-Pacific: Cold War Imperatives

Arif Dirlik has argued that although the term 'Asia-Pacific', along with related terms like 'Pacific Rim' and 'Pacific Basin' have become relative commonplace, the meaning of these terms still remains fuzzy. The immediate reference is obviously geophysical – a reference to societies/states on the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean and those within it. However, the actual usage itself sometimes left out some of these societies/states while including societies/states outside the physical boundaries of the Pacific Ocean. Arif concludes that 'the terms represent ideational constructs that, although they refer to a physical location on the globe, are themselves informed by conceptualizations that owe little to geography understood physically or positivistically; in other words, that they define the physical space they pretend to describe'.⁴²

In representations of both 'Asia' and the 'Pacific', Japan's position as a region-builder has been core, both physically as well as in intellectually conceptualising the parameters of these regional spaces, as far back as the late nineteenth century.⁴³ In the post-war period, however, until the 1960s, Japan's attempts to play any kind of role in the Asian region, much less re-articulate any vision of a regional space, were crippled by latent suspicions towards Japan on the part of several newly independent Asian states. By the late 1960s though, as Japan became the third largest national economy in the world after the US and the Soviet Union (by 1967), it began to represent itself as a member of two identifiable regional groups. Japan, according to this representation, belonged firstly to the advanced industrialised countries, specifically the Pacific advanced

⁴² Arif Dirlik, 'Introducing the Pacific', in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998). See also: Arif Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure', in *Journal of World History*, Vol.3, no.1 (1992), pp.55-79.

⁴³ For an elaboration, see Pekka Korhonen, *Japan and Asia-Pacific Integration: Pacific Romances, 1968-1996* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.89-105. Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', in *Journal of World History*, Vol.12, no.1 (2001).

countries. Secondly, Japan was also part of Asia.⁴⁴ Put together, a conception of an ‘Asia-Pacific’ region, a distinctive regional entity that suitably captured Japan’s dual ‘position’, was put forth. More importantly the ‘Asian’ part of this early ‘Asia-Pacific’ idea did not necessarily include the whole of ‘Asia’, as usually understood. Therefore ‘the concept of Asia relevant to Japan is in a process of being defined through the term “Pacific”, so that it means what is today known as East and Southeast Asia’.⁴⁵

Regions, though constructed by statesmen, are hardly arbitrary or random. They are represented on the basis of certain ideological foundations as evidenced from the previous discussion on earlier attempts to forge an Asian region. One of the central ideological foundations of such early Japanese constructions of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ was ‘economism’. Similar to earlier rhetoric about the ‘Pacific Age’, an important part of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ ‘idea’ was centred around the vision of economies growing and developing rapidly, in a context where it became taboo to even mention military affairs within discussions of the ‘Pacific’ or the ‘Asia-Pacific’.⁴⁶ By the 1980s, the term ‘Asia-Pacific’ was no longer an unfamiliar term in both the policy and academic discourses on international regionalism. The ‘economism’ that under laid earlier representations continued into this period, especially with the advent of NICs (Newly Industrialised Countries) or the ‘Asian Tigers’, comprising of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. In fact, these examples of export-led capitalist development were lauded as models for other countries in the ‘Asian’ region which had chosen (mistakenly according to this discourse) economic policies of ‘self-reliance’ or ‘socialist development’ (Burma and North Korea).⁴⁷ Despite being originally left out of this Asia-Pacific region in the 1970s, on the basis of its “socialist” character, China post-1978 (with Deng Xiaoping’s economic ‘reforms’) began to slowly accepted as part of this economically “dynamic” regional space.⁴⁸ By the late 1980s, the Asia-Pacific region, in line with this dominant representation, included most of East Asia (with the notable exclusion of North Korea, Myanmar and Indochina, mainly Vietnam), Japan, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

A second basis of this specific representation of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ was military-strategic. In this particular representation, US conceptions of regional ‘order’ were crucial. Up till the mid-1960s, the US perceived its strategic interests in Asia as that of facing the greatest of threats from the

⁴⁴ Pekka Korhonen, *The Origin of the Idea of the Pacific Free Trade Area* (Jyvaskyla: University of Jyvaskyla, 1992), p.162.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Pekka Korhonen, “The Pacific Age in World History”, *Journal of World History*, Vol.7, no.1 (1996), p.64.

⁴⁷ For details see: Bruce Cummings, ‘RimSpeak; or, The Discourse of the “Pacific Rim”’, in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998), pp.32-3. For an examination of the economic-cultural basis of representing Asia from the perspective of other states within Asia, see: Khoo Boo Teik, ‘The Value(s) of a Miracle: Malaysian and Singapore Elite Constructions of Asia’, in *Asian Studies Review*, Vol.23, no.2 (1999), pp.181-92.

⁴⁸ Bruce Cummings, ‘RimSpeak; or, The Discourse of the “Pacific Rim”’, in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998), p.31.

Chinese-Soviet alliance and its military-ideological support for 'Communist' movements within this regional space. Beginning in 1950, the Korean War and its aftermath were enduring reminders for the US of the contested nature of the 'Asian' space.⁴⁹ The US sought to make a legitimate role in this part of the world by fashioning this space as not just 'Asia' but as 'Asia-Pacific', in effect placing itself 'within' this seemingly geo-physically defined space.⁵⁰ The Vietnam War, the domino theory and conceptions of a monolithic Sino-Soviet threat to the US interests and allies in Asia and the Pacific were the salient features of this 'struggle' over the 'Asia-Pacific' space. In important respects, these military-strategic elements were of course intimately linked to the market-capitalist aspects of Asia-Pacific region-building.

A discernible shift occurred with the Sino-Soviet 'split' by the mid- to late-1960s and the signing of the Shanghai communiqué between the People's Republic of China and the US in 1972, signalling a normalisation of ties between the two countries.⁵¹ From this period till about the end of the 1980s, the US and the China viewed each other as uneasy partners, both seeking to retard the military-strategic aims of the Soviet Union within the Asia-Pacific region, while remaining wary of each other's intentions within this regional space. Reflecting this tension, one of the central principles underlying the Shanghai communiqué was that 'neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony', with no geographical definition given for the 'Asia-Pacific' either in the communiqué or anywhere else.⁵² Despite the lack of any clearly stated definition, it was clear that one important site of such a Soviet challenge by the late 1970s was the close relationship between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. This relationship was deepened gradually by the provision of naval and airbases to the Soviet Union at Vietnam's Danang and Cam Ranh Bay.⁵³ Such developments were seen in military-strategic terms as providing the Soviet Union with military reach into the Pacific Ocean and as part of 'the Soviets' quest for 'Asian Pacific' status by extending their ocean fleet capacity from the Sea of Okhotsk to the

⁴⁹ As one observer notes, the Korean War 'experience reinforced in blood, US determination over the next two decades to take the lead, pay the costs, and run the risks...to "contain" the spread of Chinese and Soviet-backed Communist expansion in the Asia-Pacific'. Robert Sutter, *The United States in Asia* (Lanham & Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Pub., 2009), p.3.

⁵⁰ On a similar note, more recently, there have been calls for the US to be accepted as part of the East Asian region, even though it is understood that barring a 'continental drift, the US will never be an Asian country in geophysical terms'. Donald K. Emerson, *Asian Regionalism and US Policy: The Case for Creative Adaptation*, RSIS Working Paper, no.193 (19 March 2010), p.1.

⁵¹ For a fuller discussion see, Steven I. Levine, 'China and the Superpowers: Policies towards the United States and the Soviet Union', in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.90, no.4 (1975-6), pp.648-9.

⁵² Joachim Glaubitz, 'Anti-Hegemony Formulas in Chinese Foreign Policy', in *Asian Survey*, Vol.16, no.4 (1976), p.205.

⁵³ Victor Funnel, 'The Soviet Union and Vietnam: Bilateral Relations in a Great-Power Triangle', in Margot Light (ed.), *Troubled Friendships: Moscow's Third World Ventures* (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp.82-109.

South China Sea.⁵⁴ An important domain of the Cold War military-strategic contest was thus clearly the 'Asia-Pacific'. In effect, the 'Asia-Pacific' became a regional microcosm, stretching from military bases in the Pacific, through Southeast and Northeast Asia and extending to Australia and New Zealand, of the global politics of the Cold War. The 'Asia-Pacific', in these representations, was a site of struggle and contestation between US, China and their allies in the 'region' on one hand, and the Soviet Union and its 'client states' like Vietnam on the other.

India and the Asia-Pacific – From Outside to Inside the 'Region'

Another important aspect of representations of the 'Asia-Pacific' during this period was the near total absence of a major 'Asian' state - India. Seemingly content at being represented as part of the regional space of 'South Asia', Indian political elites did not express much interest in staking a place or role in the 'Asia-Pacific' throughout the 1960s until the late 1980s. Similarly, countries belonging to the 'Asia-Pacific' at this point in time did not view India as part of this regional space. On the basis of the preceding discussion of this paper, this was hardly remarkable. India's closed economy, built and sustained by Indian political elites on notions of economic self-reliance and anti-imperialism, did not fit into the economic basis of 'Asia-Pacific' region-building. It lacked the export-driven capitalist ethos that countries in the 'Asia-Pacific' had embraced as part of their respective foreign economic policies. These political elites had also built a fairly strong consensus in their respective domestic spheres on the importance of embracing this particular market-oriented economic model. Indian political elites, in this sense, had not built a similar domestic consensus. In the words of 'Pacific Rim-speak', India lacked the economic 'dynamism' that would have qualified it as part of this 'Asia-Pacific' region.

In the military-strategic sphere, there was a somewhat similar narrative accounting for India's exclusion from this regional space. From the end of the Nehru era in 1962, right up till the late 1980s, Indian political elites saw their foreign policy interests largely anchored within the South Asian region. More specifically, Indian political elites sought to keep 'extra-regional' powers out of South Asia, while at the same time attempting to keep well clear of the bloc politics of the Cold War outside South Asia. In fact, Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister for three consecutive terms from 1966 till 1977 and then from 1980 till 1984, saw the demonstration of Indian predominance in the South Asia region as a central goal of Indian foreign policy during this period.⁵⁵ Even more significantly, Indian political elites, over this period, did not see India as a global power with global interests. The inverse was also true. The major powers of this time,

⁵⁴ Hiroshi Kimura, 'Soviet Policies in the Asian Pacific Region: A Japanese Assessment', in *Asian Affairs*, Vol.11, no.4 (1985), p.43.

⁵⁵ Mohammed Ayoob, 'India in South Asia: The Quest for Regional Predominance', in *World Policy Journal*, Vol.7, no.1 (1989-90), pp.107-33.

the US, the Soviet Union and China (after 1972), viewed India as a mere regional power, with little to offer in terms of the global politics of the Cold War.⁵⁶ The other states in the Asia-Pacific, defined as much due to their participation in the bloc politics of the Cold War, also perceived no tangible role for India in this region. India, most definitely, was in Asia but not the 'Asia-Pacific' at the end of the 1980s. The new decade would usher in significant change to such representations.

The story of India's economic reforms in 1991 is frequently narrated with reference to the Indian government's 'unsustainable levels of foreign and domestic borrowing', with 'reserves down to two weeks of imports' in 1991.⁵⁷ In effect, although it is a narrative imbued with notions of reluctance on the part of Indian political elites in liberalising India's economy, it is largely agreed that in this instance, 'in a democracy there must be a sufficient body of influential opinion already convinced, or ready to be convinced, of the need for radical change'.⁵⁸ Despite this, the then Indian Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, largely credited with devising and pushing through these reforms, had to strongly defend these reforms against wider domestic criticism that India's "new" reliance upon the Bretton Woods institutions' would 'lead to a form of dependent development that would exclude or even impoverish the mass of India's labouring poor'.⁵⁹

In effect, beginning in the 1990s, Indian political elites began to dramatically renegotiate a central pillar of Indian state identity since independence – that of national sovereignty based on notions of economic self-reliance. Re-interpreting somewhat radically this notion of 'self-reliance', from 1991, political elites within the Congress Party, led by Prime Minister Narashima Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, began to reframe this pivotal notion of Indian state identity without 'surrendering some intact and mythical notion of sovereignty that had been handed down from Gandhi or Nehru'.⁶⁰ Between 1991 and 2004, despite India changing government six times, alternating between Congress and BJP-led coalition governments at the central government level, there has been a consensus, at least amongst political elites in the Congress and BJP parties, that economic liberalisation cannot be reversed and there is no going

⁵⁶ This is not to imply that the Cold War did not impact India within the South Asian region, but that India remained largely peripheral to the global politics of the Cold War between the 1960s and the late 1980s. For a fuller discussion see: Robert McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁵⁷ Vijay Joshi and I.M.D. Little, *India's Economic Reforms, 1991-2001* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), p.1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.2.

⁵⁹ Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.143.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.144. As one scholar notes, the proponents of India's economic openness often make their case on the basis of 'a changed definition of the historically institutionalised meanings of Indian "self-reliance", tracing many of the problems in the Indian economy to what they see as an incorrect understanding of it'. See also: Himadeep Muppidi, *The Politics of the Global* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp.32-3.

back to the pre-1991 days.⁶¹ The idea of India's development being based on outward-looking economic policies which entangles it in increasingly deeper ways with the global economy is increasingly the 'new' idea of India in this respect.⁶²

The result of such dramatic changes within India led to significant transformations in the manner in which the world began to view India. The radical negotiation of a central pillar of Indian state identity did not go unnoticed by those observing India. It led to numerous works predicting the coming 'rise' of India as a global economic power, prompting Fareed Zakaria to proclaim India as the 'star' attraction the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2006.⁶³ Peripheral for long periods, India's economic reorientation now especially caught the attention of states within the Asia-Pacific region. As part of India's 'Look East' policy announced in 1992, India's political leadership, motivated, initially at least, primarily by economic considerations, sought to build closer links with member states of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).⁶⁴ As a result, in 1992, India became ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner, leading to full dialogue partner status in 1995.⁶⁵

This led eventually to a range of various bilateral Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various ASEAN member states, as well as a range of economic agreements with other Asia-Pacific countries like South Korea and Japan.⁶⁶ Most recently, India has vigorously pushed for membership within APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), an 'Asia-Pacific economic forum...championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration'.⁶⁷ Presently, there is strong support for India's application especially from countries like the US, Japan and Australia although there is a moratorium on new membership

⁶¹ For a deeper discussion of the elite based nature of India's initial economic reforms, see: Ashutosh Varshney, 'Mass politics or elite politics? India's economic reforms in comparative perspective', in *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*, Vol.2, no.4 (1998), pp. 301-35.

⁶² For an excellent examination of how a relatively 'new' and compelling narrative about 'nationalist globalism' was employed by Indian political elites in pushing and sustaining India's economic liberalisation, see Jalal Alamgir, 'Managing Openness in India: The Social Construction of a Globalist Narrative', in Linda Weiss (ed.), *States in the Global Economy: Bringing Domestic Institutions Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 225-44.

⁶³ Fareed Zakaria, 'India Rising', *Newsweek* (6 March 2006). Another example of such works is Tarun Das (et.al), *India Rising: Emergence of a New World Power* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).

⁶⁴ Faizal Yahya, 'India and Southeast Asia: Revisited', in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.25, no.1 (2003).

⁶⁵ Rahul Sen, Mukul Asher and Ramkishan Rajan, 'ASEAN-India economic relations', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.39, no.29 (17-23 July 2004), pp.3297-308.

⁶⁶ For detailed information about the specific terms of these different economic agreements, see Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 'International Trade (Trade Agreements)', http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta.asp?id=2&trade=I. Accessed on 17 August 2010.

⁶⁷ APEC, 'Mission Statement', www.apec.org/apec/about_apec/mission_statement.html. Accessed on 2 August 2010. For an incisive treatment of the birth and evolution of APEC, see: John Ravenhill, *APEC and the Construction of Pacific Rim Regionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

till 2012.⁶⁸ From the perspective of Indian political elites, engaging in and being part of this Asia-Pacific economic space was and is essential in sustaining and pushing further their domestic re-articulation of Indian state identity. On a fundamental level, Indian political elites represented India's need for economic liberalisation on the premise of emulating specific economic policies of the various East Asian 'dynamic' economies within the 'Asia-Pacific' countries which had earlier seemingly left India 'behind' and which India had to 'catch up' with. In important policy documents, the Indian government rehearsed this theme of India learning lessons in economic openness from like-sized countries within East Asia like China and Indonesia.⁶⁹ As such, economically engaging with these countries in the Asia-Pacific, and thus becoming an important part of this Asia-Pacific space was crucially tied to the domestic re-construction of 'Indian-ness' and the 'new' role of the Indian state.⁷⁰

The 'Look East' policy, initially driven by economic imperatives, also came to embody a clear shift in the strategic outlook of Indian political elites. More significantly, following on from its economic liberalisation measures domestically, Indian political elites began to increasingly articulate a specific discourse about India's role within global politics in the 1990s. The Indian nuclear test of 1998 was, in a sense, the strategic-military equivalent of India's domestic economic reforms of 1991.⁷¹ The BJP-led government's decision to conduct nuclear tests enjoyed wide domestic support, exhibiting a rare cross-party consensus within Indian politics.⁷² These series of tests were represented by Indian political elites as evidence of a 'new' India, an India that had tired from playing the part of a self-restrained 'moral' actor within international politics and to one that saw nuclear weapons and the great-power status they conferred as India's due. As Jaswant Singh, then Indian External Affairs Minister, argued in an article in *Foreign Affairs* just a few months after the nuclear tests:

⁶⁸ For a review of the debate over India's possible admission to APEC, see: Yuen Pau Woo, 'A Review of the APEC Membership Debate and Prospects for India's Admission after 2007', in Charan Wadhwa and Yuen Pau Woo (eds.), *Asian Regionalism: Canadian and Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2005), pp.101-16.

⁶⁹ 'General Review', *Economic Survey 1995-96* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1997), p.16.

⁷⁰ The latest Indian *Economic Survey* makes the claim that 'India is now completely a part of the world's fastest growing economies... (with economic figures that) fall comfortably within the range of figures one traditionally associated with the East Asian economies'. 'Prospects, Short Term and Medium Term', *Economic Survey 2009-2010* (New Delhi: Government of India), p.19.

⁷¹ As one scholar points out, the 1998 nuclear tests can be better understood by discerning the relationship between Indian state identity – what she calls the 'the post-colonial identity logic' – and the global economy. Latha Varadarajan, 'Constructivism, Identity and Neoliberal (In) Security', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.30, no.2 (2004), pp.319-41.

⁷² Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London & New York: Zed Books, 1998), pp.1-3.

Nuclear weapons remain a key indicator of state power. Since this currency is operational in large parts of the globe, India was left with no choice but to update and validate the capability that had been demonstrated 24 years ago in the nuclear tests of 1974.⁷³

The Indian state, as this discourse asserted, had arrived as a ‘great power’ within global politics. As much as such discourse was meant for foreign consumption, such re-articulation of the identity of the Indian state vis-à-vis the outside world was still contested within India, even though such voices of dissent appeared to be on the periphery.⁷⁴

An important and associated facet of this discourse of India’s ‘arrival’ as a global or great power also hinged on forging a closer relationship with what Indian political elites saw as the sole superpower after the end of the Cold War – the US. In this there was clear continuity between both BJP and Congress political elites. As compared to the Nehru era, where, as observed earlier in this paper, Indian self-representations were dependent, in important respects, with keeping the US at a safe distance, from the 1990s onwards, Indian political elites from both the major parties began to view a closer relationship with the US as a central part of defining a ‘new’ India.⁷⁵ An important illustration of this sentiment appears in the aftermath of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998. Despite the huge (initial) criticism from the US as a result of the Indian nuclear tests, in 1998, then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared that ‘India and the US are natural allies in the quest for a better future for the world in the 21st century’.⁷⁶

⁷³ Jaswant Singh, ‘Against Nuclear Apartheid’, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77, no.5 (2008), p.44.

⁷⁴ For example, the leftist Communist Party of India (Marxist) urged the BJP government not to ‘weaponise’ its nuclear capability. For details of its position on this issue, see Communist Party of India (Marxist), ‘Party Programme’, <http://cpim.org/content/party-programme1>. Accessed on 14 August 2010. More strident criticisms came from public intellectuals like Arundhati Roy, ‘The End of Imagination’, in *Frontline*, Vol.15, no.16 (1-4 August 1998), <http://hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1516/15160040.htm>. Accessed on 14 August 2010. See also: P.R. Chari, ‘India’s Nuclear Doctrine: Confused Ambitions’, *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.7, no.3 (2000), pp.123-35.

⁷⁵ Some date the start of improving ties between India and the US to the Rajiv Gandhi period, with his official visit to the US in June 1986. Maya Chadda, ‘India and the United States: Why Détente Won’t Happen’, in *Asian Survey*, Vol.26, no.10 (1986), p.118.

⁷⁶ The remarks were made at the Asia Society, New York, in September 1998. K.P. Nayar, ‘Vajpayee describes India and US as Natural allies’, *The Telegraph* (Calcutta) (29 September 1998). Interestingly, more than ten years later, in January 2009, President Obama used the same phrase to describe US-India relations saying ‘that obviously, the US and India are natural friends and natural allies. ‘India, US are Natural Friends and Allies: Obama’, *Indian Express* (29 January 2009), www.expressindia.com/latest-news/India-US-are-natural-friends-and-allies-Obama/416486. Accessed on 18 August 2010. Before 1990, nothing about that phrase was natural and is evidence of the manner in which India-US relations have come to be significantly re-represented since 1990.

Such declarations of close ties with the US persisted even with the replacement of the BJP-led government by a Congress-led coalition after the 2004 general elections.⁷⁷ In fact, these affirmations of close ties with the US, as an integral part of representing India as a great power, came to the forefront as a result of the debate surrounding the proposal for a US-India civilian nuclear deal, first mooted in 2005 in a joint statement by George W. Bush and Manmohan Singh.⁷⁸ By mid-2008, as the Congress-led government sought to ‘operationalise’ the civil nuclear agreement, it faced tremendous political opposition from its main alliance partner, the Left Front, the latter eventually withdrawing support for the Congress-led government at the Centre. Crucially, an important element of this fierce debate pivoted on the notion of the identity of the Indian state.⁷⁹ Indian critics of the civilian nuclear deal with the US saw the signing of the deal as a development that ‘will only lead to India’s surrender to America’s dictates and will have implications and bearing beyond the nuclear deal’.⁸⁰ The familiar link between closer relations with the US and India surrendering its autonomy, and thus its very identity, was a central part of this particular strand of criticism. Countering such criticism, the Congress Party, and especially Prime Minister Singh, in a robust defence of the agreement in parliament, linked the 1991 economic reforms and the civilian nuclear agreement as historical milestones, both of which would enable India to finally emerge as a great power. As Prime Minister Singh saw it:

In 1991, while presenting the Budget for 1991-92, as Finance Minister, I had stated: No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I had then suggested to this august House that the emergence of India as a major global power was an idea whose time had come... Both the Left and the BJP had then opposed the reform. Both had said we had mortgaged the economy to America and that we would bring back the East India Company. Subsequently both these parties have had a hand at running the Government. None of these parties have reversed the direction of economic policy laid down by the Congress Party in 1991... The cooperation that the international community is now willing to

⁷⁷ For an analysis of the possible factors for the largely unexpected Congress victory, see: Steven Wilkinson, ‘Elections in India: Behind the Congress Comeback’, in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.16, no.1 (2005), pp.153-67.

⁷⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, India, ‘Joint Statement, India-US’ (18 July 2005), <http://meaindia.nic.in/>. Accessed on 17 August 2010.

⁷⁹ This is not to suggest that the debate was all about ‘identity’. A related part of this debate also focussed on the material benefits the agreement would deliver to India’s energy generation levels via nuclear power use. For a discussion of this issue, see: Anshu Bharadwaj et al., ‘Whither Nuclear Power?’, in *Economic and Political Weekly* (25 March 2006), pp.1203-12. For an official statement on the benefits of nuclear power production for India, see: ‘Nuclear Power Alone Can Fulfil Energy Requirement: Vasani’, in *The Hindu*, (11 August 2008), www.hindu.com/2008/08/11/stories/2008081165290800.htm. Accessed on 19 August 2010. G.K. Vasani, then Union Minister of State, made the above observation at a public forum on 10 August 2008 in Chennai, India.

⁸⁰ Statement made to the press by Communist Party of India –Marxist (CPI-M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury (28 September 2008). ‘N-Deal Passage a Diplomatic Feat: Congress’, in *Indian Express* (29 September 2008), www.expressindia.com/latest-news/ndeal-passage-a-diplomatic-feat-congress/367201/. Accessed on 10 August 2010.

extend to us for trade in nuclear materials, technologies and equipment for civilian use will be available to us without signing the NPT or the CTBT. This I believe is a measure of the respect that the world at large has for India, its people and their capabilities and our prospects to emerge as a major engine of growth for the world economy... Our critics falsely accuse us, that in signing these agreements, we have surrendered the independence of foreign policy and made it subservient to US interests. In this context, I wish to point out that the cooperation in civil nuclear matters that we seek is not confined to the USA. Change in the NSG guidelines would be a passport to trade with 45 members of the Nuclear Supplier Group which includes Russia, France, and many other countries. We appreciate the fact that the US has taken the lead in promoting cooperation with India for nuclear energy for civilian use. Without US initiative, India's case for approval by the IAEA or the Nuclear Suppliers Group would not have moved forward.⁸¹

Singh was recasting an important aspect of Indian state identity. More specifically, Singh sought to demonstrate the crucial link between growing international recognition of India's place within international politics and the role of the US-driven civil nuclear agreement. In this re-casting of the Indian state's foreign policy 'interests', India's close relationship with the US did not result in any type of "surrendering" of Indian autonomy; however, 'without US initiative', India's claim to great power status would at best be delayed if not perpetually retarded.

Conversely, in the Asia-Pacific, things had begun to change since the early 1990s as well. Strategically, countries that were part of the Asia-Pacific had also begun to re-order the role that this regional space played within global politics in the post-Cold War world. Led by the ASEAN states, and supported by countries like Japan and the US, the Asia-Pacific became a realm within which China's growing military and strategic presence could be 'managed' peacefully. The exact manner of 'managing' this rise is however contested. For example, the ASEAN member-states view 'socialising' China as getting the latter to habitually engage in the process of 'develop(ing) norms' within regional multilateral institutions as an important way of managing China's rise.⁸² Another strand views balancing strategies as central in 'managing' China's rise – this usually translates into policy positions that prescribe continued military-strategic predominance of the

⁸¹ 'PM's reply to the debate on the Motion of Confidence in the Lok Sabha', (Prime Minister's Office: New Delhi, July 2008), www.pmindia.nic.in/speeches.htm. Accessed on 12 August 2010.

⁸² Evelyn Goh, 'Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies', in *International Security*, Vol.32, no.3 (2007-8), pp.113-57. See also a discussion of the 'ASEAN approach' in William Tow & Brendan Taylor, 'What is Asian Security Architecture?', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.36, (1), 2010, pp.95-116.

US within the Asia-Pacific regional space.⁸³ In the post-Cold War era, the Asia-Pacific has therefore become a venue for managing China's rise as a great power. Notwithstanding differences on how exactly to cope with China's rise, for the majority of countries in the Asia-Pacific, an important part of negotiating this phenomenon of China's rise involves promoting the necessity of continued US military presence in this regional space.⁸⁴

This need to 'negotiate' the rise of China has, of course, been a fundamental aspect of Indian self-representations since the 1962 border war with China.⁸⁵ More recently, at the time of its 1998 nuclear tests, the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee cited China as one of the major reasons for India's decision to declare itself a nuclear-weapons state.⁸⁶ In the post-Cold war period, this Indian anxiety, however, was also coupled with the recognition that relations with China needed to be upgraded, with the result that by 2005, India and China announced a 'strategic partnership'.⁸⁷ This posture of anxiety and engagement over China's rise similarly characterised the range of attitudes across the various countries of the Asia-Pacific. As such, India began to gradually emerge, given such a commonality of outlook, as a useful addition to the Asia-Pacific strategic space.⁸⁸ Thus, from the 1990s onwards, the countries of the Asia-Pacific began to gradually include India within Asia-Pacific regional institutions. India became part of the ARF in 1996 and then participated in the East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2005.⁸⁹

In recognising India's shared apprehensions about China's rise both militarily and politically, as well as grasping India's position on the need for a continued US military presence in the Asia-Pacific, several Asia-Pacific member states began to represent India's participation within the region as central to its future trajectory. An example of this is the 2005 Update to its Defence White Paper where the Australian government saw India as one of the region's 'major powers', who together with China, Japan, Russia and the US, 'have the power – actual or potential – to influence events throughout the Asia-Pacific region'.⁹⁰ More specifically, in relation to the

⁸³ For a recent articulation of this view, see: Benjamin Schwarz, 'Managing China's Rise', *The Atlantic* (29 July 2010), www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/06/managing-china-apos-s-rise/3972/. Accessed on 14 August 2010. For an overview of the various strands of this 'China threat' thesis, see Emma V. Broomfield, 'Perceptions of Danger: The China Threat Theory', in *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.12, no.35 (2003), pp.265-84.

⁸⁴ For an Australian view of this imperative, see: Anthony L. Smith, 'Still Great Mates: Australia and the United States', in *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol.30, no.2 (2003), pp.114-21.

⁸⁵ Very often, the 1962 war is represented, from Indian accounts, as an example of Chinese 'betrayal' and Indian naivety. For example see: B.N. Mullik, *My Years With Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971). Mullik was the head of India Intelligence Bureau (IB) during the Nehru era.

⁸⁶ This he did in a letter to US President Clinton justifying India's nuclear tests. See 'India's Letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing', *New York Times* (13 May 1998), p.A14.

⁸⁷ 'India, China Hoping to Reshape the World Order Together', *Washington Post* (12 April 2005), p.A16.

⁸⁸ C. Raja Mohan, 'India and the Balance of Power', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.85 (2006), p.25-6.

⁸⁹ Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy*, (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), pp.115-9.

⁹⁰ Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: Defence Update*, (2005) p.IX, www.defence.gov.au/update2005/. Accessed on 18 August 2010.

particular point being made here, the 2005 Update saw ‘the nature of the relationships’ between India and these states as ‘the most critical issue for the security of the entire region’.⁹¹ In this re-articulated representation of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ as a space in which China’s rise needs to be ‘negotiated’, India is seen increasingly as an integral part of this region.

Conclusion

An important part of the argument made in this paper concerns the manner in which Indian political elites have articulated and framed India’s regional space and role within the context of domestic politics. A comparative study between the Nehru era and the post 1991 period demonstrates how Indian political elites, located across two distinct historical periods, negotiated India’s changing conceptions of its own regional space and the role it expected to play therein. From 1947 till the 1955 Bandung Conference, Nehru sought to represent ‘Asia’ in ways that were related to his own articulations of Indian state identity. Although initially relatively successful, by the end of the Bandung Conference, India’s foreign policy was characterised by a failed regional project.

This paper then traced the initial modes of representing the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War and the reasons why such representations resulted in India being excluded from this regional space. In the post-Cold War period, two changes were taking place. Firstly, Indian political elites were significantly reframing Indian state identity, first with India’s economic reforms and then with India’s nuclear tests. Secondly, specific representations of the Asia-Pacific region were also changing in the post-Cold War era. In this regard, the manner in which countries in the Asia-Pacific perceived ‘negotiating’ China’s rise as a global power in the Asia-Pacific is a fundamental feature of this regional space. One way of ‘negotiating’ this rise of China has been to enmesh China, the US and emerging powers within the regional institutions and processes of the Asia-Pacific region. Indian political elites’ articulation of India as a great power and its desire to similarly manage China’s rise in international politics has increasingly facilitated the representation of India as a vital player in this Asia-Pacific space. Resulting thus far, compared to the ‘India’ in ‘Asia’ regional project, the ‘India’ in ‘Asia-Pacific’ venture seems to have been more successful. This is, however, still an ongoing enterprise. Gazing into the future, some of the more complicated issues Indian political elites will face in navigating the Indian state’s role in the ‘Asia-Pacific’ will be domestic, in terms of state identity negotiation, as it would convincing the ‘region’ of India’s rightful place and role in this regional space.

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⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.17.

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India and China: Emerging Dynamics and Regional Security Perspectives

Rajshree Jetly¹

Executive Summary

India and China, both heirs to ancient civilisations, have emerged today as the two most powerful and influential Asian nations in terms of their economic capabilities and geopolitical standing. The two erstwhile adversaries have recognised the need for casting off the baggage of history and residual mistrust and have embarked on the path of building a new pragmatic partnership. However, despite the recognition that cooperation may be in their mutual interest, this will be easier said than done. Sino-Indian relations have always been complex with multilayered regional and global dimensions, which have complicated their bilateral relationship. Even as India and China have traversed a long road from being friends to adversaries to pragmatic partners, a factor which has been constant in the conduct of their affairs, is the fact that they are neighbours and geopolitical rivals who have as much to gain from each other as to fear from the other.

A stable and cooperative relationship, which seems to be more or less 'in the cards' of the foreseeable future, would thus not necessarily be translated into a closer relationship between the two Asian giants. It is contended that regardless of the thrust and pace of mutual engagement (cooperation), a relationship between the two largest Asian countries will inevitably have strong

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undercurrents of contest and rivalry as they seek the same economic and political space for future interaction. This paper sets out some of the security challenges confronting the two countries and argues that it will essentially be not so much how India and China perceive the gains and opportunities of mutual cooperation, but how they manage their geopolitical and strategic rivalries that will determine the future shape of their relations in the years ahead.

Introduction

India and China, both heirs to ancient civilisations, have emerged today as the two most powerful and influential Asian nations in terms of their economic capabilities and geopolitical standing. The two erstwhile adversaries have recognised the need for casting off the baggage of history and residual mistrust and have embarked on the path of forging a new pragmatic partnership. There are two mutually reinforcing components to this new partnership. One, both continues to have a vested interest in a peaceful neighbourhood to focus on an uninterrupted process of economic and technological progress and to sustain their steady rise as important centres of power. Two, there is a greater understanding on the part of both China and India that cooperation could work to their mutual advantage and benefit. Any conflict between the two would not only jeopardise their national security, but would also have serious implications for their regional and global security perspectives. It would also go a long way in positioning Asia as the fulcrum of the future world order, a prospect which would only be in their long-term economic and strategic interest.²

However, despite the recognition that cooperation may be in their mutual interest, this is easier said than done. Sino-Indian relations have always been complex with multilayered regional and global dimensions which have complicated their bilateral relationships. Even as India and China have traversed a long road from being friends to adversaries to pragmatic partners, a factor which has been constant in the conduct of their affairs is the fact that they are neighbours and geopolitical rivals who have as much to gain from each other as to fear from the other. It is argued in the following pages that Sino-Indian relations, driven as they will by the primacy of national strategic interests and quest for global influence, will continue to remain subjected to diverse pulls and pressures from their competing interests.

² This pragmatism is clearly evident in government thinking in both countries. For example, in a speech made by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, he reiterated that 'Without friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation between India and China, there would be no development and prosperity of our respective countries, no harmony and rejuvenation of Asia, and no peace and progress of the world'. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Yang Jiechi delivers a Speech on China-India Relations' (9 August 2008), www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t512134.htm, accessed 2 September 2010. Also, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China, 'A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India' (15 January 2008), www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/2649/t399545.htm, accessed on 2 September 2010.

A stable and cooperative relationship, which seems to be more or less ‘in the cards’ of the foreseeable future, thus would not necessarily be translated into a closer relationship between the two Asian giants. It is contended that regardless of the thrust and pace of mutual engagement (cooperation), relationship between the two largest Asian countries will inevitably have strong undercurrents of contest and rivalry as they seek the same economic and political space for future interaction. On that account, it will be essentially not so much as to how India and China perceive the gains and opportunities of mutual cooperation, but how they manage their geopolitical and strategic rivalries that will determine the future shape of their relations in the years ahead.

Towards Cooperation

India has steadily moved a long way from the shadows of hostilities generated by the 1962 war and is today constructively engaged with China in building a stable and cooperative relationship. The momentous visit of the then Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi in December 1988 – the first ever such visit after the 1962 hostilities – was the first clear signal of India’s readiness to end the stagnation and unfreeze the border issue which had immobilised Sino-Indian relations for over almost three decades.³ The visit was a landmark in lifting the relationship to a qualitatively new level. It set in motion a process of mutual engagement, marked by a greater sense of pragmatism and realistic expectations for both parties.

The landmark agreement on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the ‘Line of Actual Control’ (LAC) of 1993 was a breakthrough in terms of the clear commitment on the part of both countries to ensure a peaceful environment along the Sino-Indian borders, even as substantial points of difference remained between them over the final settlement of the disputed boundary issue. Both countries have since remained engaged in a steady and uninterrupted dialogue to find a just and rational settlement of the vexing border issue. An agreement on ‘Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas’ was signed in 1996.⁴ Consequently, a number of confidence-building measures have been taken by the two countries to avert the threat of any accidental confrontation. Measures for reduction of troops on

³ There is abundance of literature on the India-China border issue. For a good historical background on the border dispute, see Sumit Ganguly, ‘India and China: Border issues, Domestic Integration, and International Security’, in Frankel and Harding (eds), *The India-China relationship, Rivalry and Engagement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.103-33. For details on the lead up to the dialogue and Rajiv Gandhi’s visit, see B.M. Jain, ‘India-China Relations: Issues and emerging trends’, in *Round Table*, Vol.93, no.374 (April 2004), pp.253-8. Also, see David P. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee, ‘India and China: Conflict and Cooperation’, in *Survival*, Vol.52, no.1 (February-March 2010), p.252.

⁴ S. D. Muni ‘September 11: the Asian Giants get closer’, in Vicziany, Wright et al (eds) *Regional Security in the Asia Pacific, 9/11 and After* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2004), p.84.

both sides, prior notification of military exercises, regular meetings between the local commanders and joint military exercises are securely in place to maintain peace and tranquillity along the borders.⁵ An important agreement for spelling out the political parameters and guiding principles to delineate and demarcate the LAC was signed in 2005, calling for both sides to ‘make meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustments to their respective positions’ and ‘give due consideration to each other’s strategic and reasonable interests, and the principle of mutual and equal security’.⁶

India and China have also moved to simultaneously accommodate each other’s concerns on some touchy and sensitive bilateral issues. Following the visit of then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Sikkim in 2003, there was a visible thaw in the approach of the two countries on the border. This was signalled by their decision to re-establish their Consulates General in Shanghai and Bombay and resume border trade through the Nathu La pass⁷ for long an emotive issue for both India and China. India unequivocally accepted the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as an integral part of the territory of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). It reaffirmed its commitment to not allow the Dalai Lama to engage in anti-Chinese political activities on its soil. In a similar vein, China officially recognised India’s sovereignty over Sikkim, which it had been contesting for a long time. More significantly, it veered towards a more nuanced position on Kashmir. Its call to Pakistan to respect the LAC and resolve the dispute through negotiations rather than military action during the Kargil War of 1999,⁸ helped to allay India’s deep concerns of a Sino-Pak entente on its sensitive north-western borders. All these measures have gone a long way in palpably reducing tensions on the borders and generating greater transparency and trust between the two countries.

India and China have also expanded multifaceted bilateral cooperation in a number of areas including, trade, investment, agriculture, education, cultural heritage and tourism. Terrorism has also emerged as a new area of cooperation between the two countries after 2001.⁹ While progress is underway in all the areas, economic cooperation has emerged as the dominant feature of the emerging Sino-Indian partnership. Notwithstanding a number of existing impediments,¹⁰ both countries are engaged in a steady endeavour to diversify the trade basket and exploit their present

⁵ David Scott, ‘Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-first century’, in *Asian Security*, Vol.4, no.3 (2008), p.252.

⁶ Surjit Mansingh, ‘Rising China and Emergent India in the 21st Century: Friends or Rivals?’, in *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.XIX, no.4 (Winter 2007), p.131.

⁷ Trade between Tibet and Nathu La pass (India) resumed in 2006 after a gap of almost 40 years.

⁸ For details on the Chinese response to the Kargil war, see Srikanth Kondapalli, ‘China’s Response to the Kargil incident’, in *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.23, no.6 (1999), pp.1039-1044.

⁹ S. D. Muni ‘September 11: the Asian Giants get closer’, in Vicziany, Wright, et al (eds) *Regional Security in the Asia Pacific, 9/11 and After* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2004), p.92.

¹⁰ These range from the Chinese imposition of a series of tariff and non-tariff barriers against Indian goods to India’s resistance to Chinese investments on security grounds into core sectors such as telecommunications.

potential complementarities to their fullest potential. Bilateral trade between the two countries has witnessed spectacular growth over the last few years touching a staggering figure of US\$51.8 billion in 2008.¹¹ China has also overtaken the United States (US) as India's largest trading partner.¹² There is little doubt that the overriding framework of economic cooperation, based on expanding trade, commercial and investment linkages [not discussed at length as it does not fall within the scope of this paper], is going to remain the single most positive factor in Sino-Indian engagement and evolving partnership in the foreseeable future.

China's Security Challenge: Discordant Notes on Border Settlement

Given the fact that a stable and cooperative framework of relationship has remained firmly in place over the years, one can assert with reasonable certainty that, barring any unfortunate turn of events, Sino-Indian relations will move on a more or less even keel in the foreseeable future. However, at the same time, the complex overlay of geographical proximity and historical memories on the Sino-Indian strategic landscape will make for strong undercurrents of competition and contest between the two Asian giants.

China undoubtedly represents a major long term, even primary, security challenge for India. While India has ample reasons to draw comfort from the steadily expanding ties with China, it also remains cognizant of the formidable reach of China's technological, military and nuclear capabilities across its borders.¹³ With its undisputed power potential, China's strong military and nuclear presence in Tibet looms large on India's strategic horizon. China has stationed medium and intermediate range missiles in Tibet which have major Indian cities within their reach.¹⁴ It is also engaged in a massive infrastructural push to increase its connectivity with Tibet, keeping India vulnerable to its future designs. Apart from the main Qinghai-Tibet rail link and the 3900 km Beijing-Lhasa rail link (which may be extended later to Xigaze, South of Lhasa, and then to Yatung, near Nathu La Pass that borders India), China is involved in the construction of airports

¹¹ According to Chinese statistics, China-India trade grew from US\$ 2.9 billion in 2000 to US\$ 51.8 billion in 2008, registering a 16-fold increase in the eight-year period, <http://in2.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/biography/201001/20100106754740.html>, accessed on 28 September 2010. India-China trade is currently pegged at US\$43 billion.

¹² Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Total trade, Top n countries, <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/Default.asp>, accessed on 28 September 2010.

¹³ This point was highlighted in the Indian Defence Ministry's report for 2009-2010. See Government of India, Ministry of Defence, Annual Report 2009-2010, p.26, <http://mod.nic.in/reports/welcome.html>, accessed on 30 August 2010. J. Mohan Malik, 'India-China competition revealed in ongoing Border Disputes', in *Power and Interest News Report*, No. 695 (9 October 2007).

¹⁴ According to one source, there are 66 Chinese nuclear missiles stationed in Tibet, which are directed towards India's major cities. Cited in Harsh Bhasin, *The Big Three: The Emerging Relationship between the United States, India and China in the Changing World Order* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2009), p.66.

and road projects that link most of its major cities with Tibet.¹⁵ Major highways such as the Qinghai-Tibet (central highway); Sichuan-Tibet (eastern highway); Lhasa-Kashgar/Aksai Chin/Xinjiang (western highway); and the Yunnan-Tibet highway connect Tibet with neighbouring provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Xinjiang.¹⁶ Air connectivity is similarly enhanced through the Gonggar Airport (linking Lhasa with most other Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu); smaller airports at Chamdo and Nyingch, and a new airport in Ngari, scheduled to open in October 2010.¹⁷ These developments cause grave anxiety in India regarding China's intentions, particularly in view of the fact that the border issue has yet to be resolved. As aptly pointed out by a keen observer of the scene, 'an unsettled border provides China the strategic leverage to keep India uncertain about its intentions and nervous about its capabilities, while exposing India's vulnerabilities and weaknesses ...'.¹⁸

It is important to note here that, notwithstanding India's readiness to engage with China without making border resolution a precondition for normalization of ties, the border dispute continues to remain a core concern in India's long term security perspectives. There is no doubt that Sino-Indian borders have remained by, and large, conflict free since 1962. Furthermore, nobody in the Indian strategic community believes that given the configuration of forces on the ground and India's vastly altered power status, China will repeat any adventurist action against it, like in 1962. At the same time, India is keenly aware of the potential danger of unsolved borders which can be used as much as a strategic leverage as a territorial dispute by China, should it choose to do so at some future date.

To recall briefly, the boundary dispute centres around Aksai Chin in the western sector running into 40,000 square kilometres and the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern sector, running into 92,000 square kilometres, making Sino-Indian borders one of the longest disputed

¹⁵ Alerted by China's heightened activity in the development of rail & road links with Tibet, the Government of India admitted to taking 'necessary steps' 'for the upgradation of infrastructure and force structuring to secure the desired national security objectives along the Northern borders'. See Government of India, Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2009-2010, p.26, <http://mod.nic.in/reports/welcome.html>, accessed on 30 August 2010. India has already planned a 497 km Bilaspur-Manali-Leh rail link stretching from Himachal Pradesh to Jammu & Kashmir, to serve as an alternative route for movement of combat equipment along the Eastern borders.

¹⁶ See Monika Chansoria, 'Trendlines in China's Infrastructure Development in Tibet', *CLAWS Journal*, (Summer 2010), pp.178-79.

¹⁷ Chris Devonshire Ellis, 'Investing in Tibet, The Roof of the World', *China Briefing*, www.china-briefing.com/news/2010/08/20/investing-in-tibet-%E2%80%93-the-roof-of-the-world.html, accessed on 28 August 2010. Also see Vijay Sakhuja, 'Military Buildup across the Himalayas: A Shaky Balance', *China Brief*, Vol.9, no.18 (James Town Foundation: 10 September 2009), www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35469&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=25&cHash=255e0ccfe7, accessed on 28 August 2010].

¹⁸ J.Mohan Malik, 'India-China Relations', *Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies*, p.1145, www.apcss.org/core/BIOS/malik/India-China_Relations.pdf, accessed on 10 June 2010]. Refuting this, a Chinese scholar points out that India's threat perceptions are exaggerated and based on 'Beijing's capability instead of its intentions', See Zhang Guhong, 'The Rise of China: India's Perceptions and Response', in *South Asian Survey*, Vol.13, no.1 (2006), p.99.

borders in the world. India's claim that the Sino-Indian borders were legally binding for both countries under existing treaties was refuted by China. China maintained that borders between the two countries had never been delineated or demarcated and the so called 'legal treaties' were a legacy of British imperialism, imposed unilaterally on China. That it would not hesitate to back its claims even by brutal force was underlined by its swift attack across the entire stretch of the borders in 1962, in which an unsuspecting and surprised India was defeated comprehensively by the Chinese forces. In its moment of complete victory, China declared a unilateral ceasefire, withdrawing from all the territories, barring the strategic Aksai Chin area that it had occupied during the brief, but decisive war. It also simultaneously warned India of severe reprisals, should it breach the ceasefire or cross the LAC in any sector. The situation has remained unchanged on the borders since, with India making no move to cross the LAC or alter the status quo.

Given the prevailing balance of power and China's geo-strategically advantageous position, India does not have much choice in accepting the ground realities. India has reconciled to the fact that China is 'in the driver's seat' and it is China, which will ultimately set the pace of finding a negotiated settlement of the border dispute. China has displayed a certain degree of pragmatism in not allowing varying perceptions of national security to derail the ongoing dialogue. Although, this does not detract from the fact that the resolution of the border issue is not a strategic priority or necessity for China, but a choice, which will be dictated by political expediency. China is keeping the initiative fully in its hands and has displayed no great urgency to move towards a speedy settlement. Not surprisingly, despite an agreement for spelling out the political parameters and guiding principles to delineate and demarcate the LAC in 2005, there has been no real progress on the final delineation and demarcation of the LAC.

On the contrary, China has sought to keep the question open and has not hesitated to up the ante by periodically raking up its claims on Arunachal Pradesh much to the discomfiture of India. China has consistently refused to issue visas to state officials from Arunachal Pradesh on the grounds that because the state is a part of Chinese territory, there is no need for any visas. At one point, it tried to score a point by even protesting against Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's electoral campaign in the State. Last year, it brazenly attempted to block funds from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to India on the ground that some of that money was to be used in Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁹

China also reacted sharply to the Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) which he declared, for the first time, as being part of India. This was particularly galling for China as Tawang holds special significance for Tibetans as the birth place of the 6th Dalai Lama. The

¹⁹ Jeff Smith, 'The China-India Border Brawl', *Wall Street Journal* (24 June 2009), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124578881101543463.html>, accessed on 30 May 2010. Despite Chinese opposition, the loan was eventually passed.

Dalai Lama's statement came at a time when massive protests against the Chinese rule were taking place in Tibet. China officially cautioned India to exercise restraint and not to stir up trouble in the disputed area with a view to ensuring the sound development of China-India relations. It added as a pointed reminder that the two countries had never officially settled the demarcation of their border and China's stance on the Eastern sector of the China-India border was 'consistent and clear cut'.²⁰ India, on its part, reiterated that regardless of what others had to say, 'It is government of India's position that Arunachal Pradesh is a part of India'.²¹

India recognises that China's consistent refrain on Arunachal Pradesh to mount pressure on India is, to no mean extent, a function of its own vulnerability in Tibet. Its tenuous hold on Tibet, even five decades after it moved its forces into the region, underlines its failure to achieve its declared objective of bringing Tibet firmly into the fold of the motherland. Seething unrest and insurgency in the sensitive region continues to make for a deep challenge to China's central authority.²² The Dalai Lama's presence in India only heightens its anxieties and predicament in Tibet. Growing international popularity and support for the Dalai Lama, who is seen as a separatist figure by China, adds to its international embarrassment. India has steadfastly maintained that a grant of asylum to Dalai Lama, as a revered religious and cultural figure, was a purely humanitarian decision in keeping with its democratic traditions. The recent meeting of Mr Manmohan Singh with the Dalai Lama in August 2010 also reinforces this point. Aside from its repeated assurance that he would not be allowed to indulge in any political activities on the soil, India has not given into China's demand for imposing curbs on the Dalai Lama's travels within the country or abroad. India recognises that it is in no position to play the Tibet card, given its limitations in view of China's vastly superior capabilities and its potential to rake up old issues at its will and time of choosing. For the rest, India wants to keep its options open. India is in no hurry to curb the Dalai Lama's freedom or to mitigate China's long term concerns on Tibet.

India recognises that for China the border issue, as it was fifty years ago, is not only about territorial gains, but also about erosion of India's prestige as a major power. China had won the 1962 war, but had vacated most of the territory only to expose India's vulnerabilities and effectively shatter its image in the region. To that extent, China's posturing on the border issue is a reminder of the underlying volatility of Sino-Indian relations. Additionally, this underlines the potential dangers of the dispute being reignited to score political points of sovereignty that go

²⁰ 'MEA reiterates Arunachal Pradesh an Integral Part of India', *The Indian* (13 October 2009), www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/mea-reiterates-arunachal-pradesh-an-integral-part-of-india_100260071.html, accessed on 3 June 2010].

²¹ 'Arunachal an Integral part of India: Nirupama Rao' (16 October 2009), www.asianetindia.com/news/arunachal-integral-part-india-nirupama-rao_90131.html, accessed on 3 June 2010.

²² Tibet is deeply symbolic for China in terms of its full control in its outlying regions and China does not want other disgruntled ethnic minorities such as the Uyghur's in Xinjiang and ethnic Mongolians in Inner Mongolia to draw inspiration from any Tibetan success in resisting the Chinese might.

beyond actual territorial claims. Unresolved borders will thus continue to make for deep concerns in India regarding its security and strategic engagement with China.

India's worries are magnified further with the rapid modernisation and upgrading of China's military facilities. The 60th anniversary celebration of the PRC was centred on a massive display of China's military might and further exposed the widening gap in the military capabilities of the two countries. According to one source, China's defence budget in 2009 at US\$75 billion was two and a half times larger than India's US\$30 billion. The PLA (People's Liberation Army) is the world's largest army with a much higher ratio of men and artillery as compared to India. Furthermore, the acquisition of sophisticated fighter planes such J-11 and J-12, has served to greatly bolster the Chinese Air force, at the expense of India. According to one estimate, the Chinese will have as many as 2,300 combat aircrafts of the third/fourth generation by 2020 as compared to 750 aircrafts by India.²³

India and South Asia

India remains a predominant power in South Asia, in terms of its size, location and power potential. It is, however, also aware of the need to carry the region with it in a cooperative framework to be able to fulfil its long term aspirations of playing a major role in global affairs. India therefore has a stake in not only playing a pivotal role in the region but also keeping it free from external powers' presence and interference. Cognizant of India's status as the most powerful South Asian nation, China has been reluctant to accept its unchallenged leadership in the region. Its strategy to counter balance India's power and influence in the region tends to raise India's security concerns vis-à-vis China's encroachment in its own backyard and remains an integral part of India's regional security perspectives.

Sino-Pak Entente: Strategic Concerns

The Sino-Pak alliance, in particular, ensconced as it is firmly in an anti-Indian construct, has been the single most complicating factor in India's regional security concerns. The Sino-Pak friendship has been durable primarily because it has proved of great value to both countries in furthering their common objective of keeping India under check. China has a clear interest in building Pakistan as an effective counter against India, eroding its wider role in the region and keeping its global ambitions at bay. Close defence cooperation with China has, on the other hand, not only bolstered Pakistan's defence and nuclear capabilities disproportionate to its power

²³ For more details on the growing power differential in nuclear weapons, Army and Air Force for India and China see G.D. Bakshi, 'The Chinese Threat in Perspective', in *CLAWS Journal* (Summer 2010), pp.58-9.

potential, but has also, in no small measure, enabled it to stand up to India and keep it mired within the sub-continental confines.

Beijing remains Islamabad's largest benefactor in terms defence sales and technology. Between 1978 and 2008, US\$7 billion worth of equipment was sold to Pakistan, including ballistic missiles, small arms and conventional war fighting weapons systems.²⁴ More recently, Beijing approved the sale of 36 sophisticated J-10 fighter jets and two F22P frigates to Pakistan. It has, over the years also assisted Pakistan with the production of the JF-17 Thunder advanced multi-purpose fighter aircraft, advanced training aircrafts such as K-8 Karakorum, Al Khalid Tanks, Babur cruise missiles and AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System).²⁵

Additionally, a major source of concern for India is the potential fallout of Sino-Pak nuclear collaboration on its long term strategic interests. By all accounts, China's significant assistance to Pakistan's nuclear programme has been critical to its emergence as a nuclear power in 1998. As widely reported, China began to provide nuclear assistance to Pakistan in the early 1980s, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Subsequently, it also provided significant assistance in the development of Pakistan's ballistic missiles programme, including the short and medium range Ballistic Missiles, Shaheen 1 and Shaheen 2 and Ghauri 1 and Ghauri 2 respectively.²⁶ Even after the signing of Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1992 and 1996 respectively, China has reportedly continued providing nuclear assistance and missile technology to Pakistan, even at the risk of violating its treaty obligations.²⁷ For instance, in 1994, China is believed to have sold unsafeguarded ring magnets to Pakistan which were used in gas centrifuges to enrich Uranium.²⁸

²⁴ Cited in Bruce Riedel and Pavneet Singh, 'US-China Relations: Seeking Strategic Convergence in Pakistan', *Brookings Policy Paper*, no.18 (January 2010), www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2010/0112_us_china_relations_riedel/0112_US_China_Relations_Riedel.pdf, accessed on 27 August 2010.

²⁵ Mohan Guruswamy, 'Pakistan-China Relations, Higher than Mountains, Deeper than the Oceans', in *CLAWS Journal* (Summer 2010), p.101. Also, see Lisa Curtis, 'China's Military and Security Relationship with Pakistan', *Testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (20 May 2009), www.heritage.org/research/testimony/chinas-military-and-security-relationship-with-pakistan, accessed on 1 September 2010.

²⁶ See Rajaan Arpit, 'Nuclear Deterrence in Southern Asia: China, India and Pakistan', (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), p.159; Mohan Malik, 'The Proliferation Axis: Beijing, Islamabad – Pyongyang', *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.XV, no.1 (Spring 2003), pp.57-100. Also, see Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception: Pakistan, the United States, and the Secret Trade in Nuclear Weapons*, (London: Atlantic Publishers, 2007); and Bhumitra Chakma, *Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons*, (New York: Routledge, 2008).

²⁷ This is contested by some Pakistani scholars who have termed allegations of a Sino-Pak nuclear axis as highly exaggerated and not based on concrete evidence. See Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, 'The China Threat: A view from Pakistan', in Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (Eds), *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), pp.302-11.

²⁸ Shirley A. Kan, 'China and Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles: Policy Issues', *CRS Report for Congress RL 31555* (16 August 2010), www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL31555.pdf, accessed on 25 September 2010.

Pakistan's nuclear bomb is, alleged to be, based on the Chinese blueprints.²⁹ China has also played a major role in helping Pakistan to set up the civilian nuclear plants Chashma I and Chashma II. Recently, China has announced the sale of two nuclear reactors to Pakistan.³⁰ China has assured India that its civil nuclear cooperation with Pakistan would be in accordance with its international obligations. Given Pakistan's record of carrying out a clandestine nuclear weapon programme, there are worries in India about diversion of technology for its civilian nuclear plants for military use.

India's pointed reference to China as the primary threat and its nuclear support to Pakistan as the main factor underpinning its rationale for the 1998 tests clearly underlined India's grave concern on Sino-Pak nuclear collaboration. In a 1998 letter to the American President Bill Clinton, Indian Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee justified India's tests on the ground that China was an '... overt nuclear weapon state on our border, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem'. He also referred to the 'material help this state had rendered to "another neighbour" of India to become a covert nuclear weapon state'.³¹

Expectations in some quarters that a subtle shift in China's stance on Kashmir³² - it maintained neutrality in the Kargil war – would lead to a more balanced approach by China vis-à-vis Pakistan have also been largely belied.³³ According to some scholars, China's moderate stance

²⁹ B.R. Deepak, 'Sino-Pak 'Entente Cordiale' and India: A look into the Past and Future', in *China Report*, Vol.42, no.2 (2006), pp.129-51.

³⁰ Ashish Kumar Sen, 'Chinese Deal with Pakistan Hems Obama', *Washington Post* (13 May 2010), www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/may/13/chinese-deal-with-pakistan-hems-obama, accessed on 30 August 2010.

³¹ For the full text of Vajpayee's letter to President Clinton see 'Nuclear Anxiety, India's letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing', *The New York Times* (13 May 1998). www.nytimes.com/1998/05/13/world/nuclear-anxiety-indian-s-letter-to-clinton-on-the-nuclear-testing.htm, accessed on 25 September 2010. Reacting strongly to the above charge, the Chinese government asserted that the 'gratuitous accusation by India against China is solely for [the] purpose of finding excuses for the development of its nuclear weapons'. See 'India's Nuclear Tests Show Fear of China', *Wall Street Journal* (15 May 1998), p.A13.

³² Lisa Curtis, 'China's Military and Security Relationship with Pakistan', *Testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission* (20 May 2009), www.heritage.org/research/testimony/chinas-military-and-security-relationship-with-pakistan, accessed on 1 September 2010.

³³ That China continued to support Pakistan fully on its claims on Kashmir was recently underlined by its decision to issue stapled instead of stamped visas for travellers of Kashmiri residence to China. China has also undertaken several projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) which India considers to be an integral part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 2009, India lodged a strong protest over China assisting Pakistan to build the Bunji Hydro-Electric power project in PoK. According to some recent reports, China has plans to connect Pakistan with rail line running close to Karakoram highway which connects Khunjerab pass with the Chinese town of Kashgar. The rail link will give China access through PoK and is seen by India strategic community a serious military infrastructure close to the Indian border. See Saibal Dasgupta, 'China plans railway link with Pakistan' *Times of India* (7 July 2010). <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/China-plans-railway-link-with-Pakistan/articleshow/6139388.cms>, accessed on 28 September 2010. Recently some reports alluded to the

on Kashmir was a reflection of its concerns about potential Jihadi violence within its own territories in Xinjiang.³⁴ Ethnic tensions remain a concern for China but Pakistan has taken several measures - military and intelligence support and joint anti-terrorism exercises - to allay Chinese apprehensions on this score as to prevent any downward slide in their future relations.³⁵ Quite clearly unless Pakistan descends into greater chaos and there is complete failure on Islamabad's part to control the deleterious consequences of the rising tide of militant Islamic terrorism for Beijing, Sino-Pak relations are unlikely to waver on this score.

Any fundamental change in China's calculation of leveraging Pakistan as a useful counterweight to India's growing power is clearly not on the cards any time in the near future. As an analyst has argued, 'Pakistan is the only country that stands up to India and thereby prevents Indian hegemony over the region thus fulfilling the key objectives of China's South Asian policy'.³⁶ More importantly, Pakistan is a trusted ally to keep India from emerging as an independent centre of power outside the sub-continental balance. This is particularly in view of the growing Indo-American strategic partnership which China sees as countering its growing power and influence in the region. With no prospects of China scaling down its support for Pakistan in the near future, it is clear that India will have to continue factoring Sino-Pak entente as a given in its larger regional security concerns for a long time.

China's Growing Role in India's Neighbourhood

It is equally important for India to factor in China's quest for expanding its presence and influence over the politics and security matrix of other neighbouring countries. Over the years, China has steadily increased its presence in South Asia and carefully crafted economic, political and military linkages with the smaller South Asian countries to find its own space in the region. India has reasons to be concerned about China's undisguised thrust to constrain its leadership and status in South Asia.

presence of 11,000 Chinese troops in Gilgit-Baltistan though this is denied by the Chinese. See 'China denies troops presence in Gilgit-Baltistan', *The Hindu* (2 September 2010), www.thehindu.com/news/international/article609016.ece, accessed on 2 September 2010.

³⁴ Xinjiang is an autonomous region of China, which is home to over 40 ethnic groups. The largest group, Uyghurs, are followers of Islam and have been seeking a separate state since the 1980s. In the 1990s, the group began to use violence and terrorist tactics as part of its separatist movement, causing considerable concern for China.

³⁵ See Rajshree Jetly and Iftikhar Lodhi, 'Pakistan-China Relations in the 21st Century, Retrospect and Prospect' in Tan Tai Yong (ed.), *South Asia: Societies in Political and Economic Transition* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 2010), pp.162-3.

³⁶ J. Mohan Malik, 'South Asia in China's Foreign Relations' in *Global Change, Peace and Security*, Vol.13, no.1 (February 2001), p.85.

On one hand, India's geostrategic location and power makes for its inevitable centrality in the region. Paradoxically, however, India's extensive religious, linguistic ethnic and cultural affiliations with its neighbours have led to greater psychological distance between them. Heightened anxieties regarding the smaller South Asians' national identities and sovereignty have led to greater discord with their bigger neighbour, India. In that context, bilateral issues of water sharing, trade and transit facilities, ethnic overspill and migration and, in more recent years, cross-border terrorism, have acquired such deeply emotive overtones that they continue to defy rational settlement.

On the other hand, China comes with no baggage of historical memories and bilateral disputes. More importantly, China is seen by many of India's smaller neighbours as an effective counterweight to India's preponderant power. This gives a certain edge on which China can capitalise on the prevalent anti-Indian sentiment to build its own bridges of friendship with these countries. Given these ground realities, China's gradual encroachment into India's traditional sphere of influence has long term implications for India's regional status which India cannot ignore.³⁷

China has over the years developed extensive military links with Bangladesh and has emerged as its largest military supplier. It signed a defence cooperation agreement with Bangladesh in 2002 and has also assisted it in developing a missile launching pad near Chittagong port.³⁸ The two countries have also signed an agreement for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. During the visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to China in March 2010, China agreed to assist Bangladesh with the construction of a US\$8.7 billion deep seaport in Chittagong. The port can be used for gaining access to harbours in Chittagong and Cox's Park as well as refuelling facilities for China's aircraft. China also desires to utilise this port as a passage for its southern Yunnan province and is for the same reason pushing for the construction of a road link between Chittagong and Kunming (in Yunnan).³⁹

³⁷ It is not surprising that India was not at all keen for China to be granted an observer status in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It was only when Japan and the US, who could counter balance China, also became observer countries that India finally acquiesced.

³⁸ Anand Kumar, 'Chinese Puzzle in India-Bangladesh Relations', *IDS Comment* (19 April 2010), www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChinesePuzzleinIndia-BangladeshRelations_akumar_190410, accessed on 7 June 2010.

³⁹ Kriti Singh, 'Hasina's visit to PRC: In Quest of a Comprehensive Partnership', *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* (26 March 2010), www.ipcs.org/article/china/hasinas-visit-to-prc-in-quest-of-a-comprehensive-partnership-3074.html, accessed on 28 August 2010.

China has also steadily expanded its trade and economic cooperation with Sri Lanka, surpassing Japan as its largest aid donor.⁴⁰ Gradual reduction of aid and engagement by India, following Sri Lanka's poor human rights record, left a void which China was quick to utilise for its increased interaction with Sri Lanka. China has continued to play an important role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the northern and eastern provinces by upgrading facilities and infrastructure (roads, buildings and hospitals) in the country's war-affected areas.⁴¹ It has been also actively collaborating with it in oil exploration and developing port and harbour facilities in Hambantota. Other significant projects include the construction of a second international airport at Hambantota, a US\$855 million coal power plant at Norochcholai (to be connected to the national grid by early 2011) and a US\$248 million expressway connecting the capital Colombo with the airport at Katunayake.⁴²

China has also built a steady political relationship with Nepal, who has been ever willing to play the China card to offset India. India remains particularly sensitive to China's forays in Nepal given its strategic location on the northern border adjoining China. Chinese investment in infrastructural development in the Himalayan Kingdom has been extensive; it is presently engaged in building a rail line linking Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to the Nepalese town Khasa on the Sino-Nepalese Border.⁴³ It has also extended generous financial assistance to Nepal and its annual aid has increased by 50 per cent to touch US\$22 million.

China's growing links with Myanmar, which technically does not fall within South Asia, but abuts on India's sensitive eastern flank while also sharing borders with China, cause deep concern in India. China has over the past few years established extensive military linkages with significant arm sales and infrastructural development in Myanmar. China's remains Myanmar's largest benefactor in the supply of defence equipment and technical assistance.⁴⁴ China has also assisted with the construction of naval bases, roads waterways, and oil and gas pipelines to link Yunnan, its southernmost province, with Myanmar. China is also helping with the establishment and advancement of radar and communications systems and refuelling facilities at the Hainggyi,

⁴⁰ R.N. Das, 'China's Foray into Sri Lanka and India's Response', *IDSA Comment* (5 August 2010), www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChinasForayintoSriLankaandIndiasResponse_rndas_05081, accessed on 28 August 2010.

⁴¹ 'China grants \$66 million to develop hospitals in conflict-affected areas of Sri Lanka', *Colombo Page* (21 August 2010), www.colombopage.com/archive_10B/Aug21_1282371791CH.php, accessed on 28 August 2010.

⁴² Sudha Ramachandran, 'Sri Lankan Waters run deep with China', *Asia Times* (13 August 2010), www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LH13Df02.html, accessed on 23 August 2010.

⁴³ China has an added reason to have its fingers in Nepal which has the second largest Tibetan refugee community in the world. Abanti Bhattacharya, 'China's inroads into Nepal: India's concerns', *IDSA Comment* (18 May 2009), www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/ChinasInroadsintoNepal_ABhattacharya_180509, accessed on 27 September 2010.

⁴⁴ China played a significant role in modernising Myanmar's army and remains its largest supplier of arms including tanks, fighter aircraft, radar systems, ammunition, surface-to-air missiles and short-range air-to-air missile systems. For details see 'China's Myanmar Dilemma', *International Crisis Group Report No.177* (14 September 2009), p.21, www.burmalibrary.org/docs07/Chinas_myanmar_ICG.pdf, accessed on 28 August 2010.

Coco, Sittwe, Zadetkyi Kyun, Myeik and Kyaukphyu ports. In August 2010, two Chinese warships made a visit to Myanmar's Thilawa Port in an effort to strengthen military and naval exchanges between the two countries.⁴⁵

Closely related to the expansion of China's military and economic presence in its immediate neighbourhood is its relentless urge to secure the energy resources in the region. China and India are today one of the largest consumers of energy in the world and as their needs grow, they are bound to compete for control and access to markets and resources. India remains concerned about China's success in gaining exploration rights for developing natural gas fields in Bangladesh, which had earlier turned down India's proposal for a tri-national gas pipeline between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar.⁴⁶ China is also engaged in exploration and production of gas pipelines linking offshore platforms in Myanmar to Kunming in China. The 2,806km long natural gas line, with a capacity of 1 billion cubic meters annually, to Kunming is expected to be ready by 2012. India, which is expected to face a huge energy crunch in the years ahead, has yet to make any headway in accessing natural gas from either Bangladesh or Myanmar.

Deeply aware that China's inroads into India's immediate neighbourhood cuts into its power base, India has sought to mend its fences with its neighbours and taken manifold steps, even unilaterally, to strengthen its economic and political ties with these countries. Capitalising on a pro-India government in Bangladesh after many years, India has taken significant steps to engage with the government of Bangladesh on a number of issues. These include bilateral trade, financial aid and assistance, and cooperation on terrorism among others. India recently extended US\$1 billion line of credit to Bangladesh.⁴⁷ The two countries are also developing land and sea transport links including the use of Mongla and Chittagong Sea ports, and the construction of the Akhuara-Agartala railway line. Similarly with Nepal, India has acceded to Nepal's long-standing demand for review of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which has been seen by Nepal as compromising its autonomy in foreign and defence matters. It has also tried to offset China's growing investment in Nepal's infrastructure by a granting US\$361 million for development of transportation links in the Terai region.

In recent years, India's policies in Myanmar have also undergone a visible shift in its engagement with the military junta. After realising that its deliberate distancing from the military government was benefitting China to consolidate its presence in the country at India's expense,

⁴⁵ 'Chinese Navy Escort Warships make Port Call in Myanmar', *SINA English* (29 August 2010), <http://english.sina.com/china/p/2010/0829/336618.html>, accessed on 2 September 2010.

⁴⁶ The proposal has since been approved by the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh.

⁴⁷ 'Dhaka to pen \$1 billion loan from India today', *Daily Star* (7 August 2010), www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=149733, accessed on 28 August 2010.

India has for the past few years been engaged in improving its relations with Myanmar.⁴⁸ It has taken several steps to woo Myanmar which remains important for India's strategic interests on its land borders as also for its maritime security in the Indian Ocean. India's interests in Myanmar are spread across a range of sectors including telecommunications, energy, agriculture, industry, IT and education. In line with these priorities, India has taken on a more active role in disbursing aid and building infrastructure. It has, for example, extended US\$20 million credit for renovation of Thanlyan refinery and development of the Sittwe port, and is collaborating with the exploration of oil and gas projects with Myanmar.⁴⁹ It is also assisting in building a transport corridor to connect the port with Mizoram through the Kaladan River. The visit of Myanmar's senior leader General Than Shwe to New Delhi in July 2010 provided a further impetus to growing relations between the two countries.

Even as India accords the highest priority to its 'neighbourhood diplomacy' to maintain its preeminent position in South Asia, there is little doubt that China's growing influence in its own backyard serves to heighten India's long term strategic and economic concerns vis-à-vis its giant neighbour. More important, as long as China keeps up its pressure on India, there is little possibility of any let up in the subtle competition between India and China in India's neighbourhood in the foreseeable future.

India's Maritime Security: Emerging Challenges

As a major peninsular power, surrounded by sea on three sides, India also has a vital interest of maritime security in the Indian region, which it considers crucial for its security and trade. India has a clear stake in not only playing an active role in the region as a leading maritime power but also in protecting its strategic and economic interests by keeping the Indian Ocean free from any potentially inimical dominance by other powers. India has over the years expanded its naval and maritime influence and positioned itself to play a pivotal role in the region by upgrading its naval capabilities and carrying on naval exercises with other powers in the region.⁵⁰

With its aspirations for playing a leading role in the region, India is increasingly finding its interests intersecting with China. It is particularly concerned about China's search for ports and military installations at various points stretching from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean

⁴⁸ For an Indian perspective on India's renewed interest in Myanmar see, Rajeev Bhatia (former Indian ambassador to Myanmar), 'Crafting a Richer India-Myanmar Partnership', *The Hindu* (10 August 2010), www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article562944.ece, accessed on 28 August 2010.

⁴⁹ Harsh V.Pant, 'Keep the General in Good Humour', *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), (2 August 2010), www.tribuneindia.com/2010/20100802/edit.htm#6, accessed on 28 August 2010.

⁵⁰ India has built a naval base in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Its Far Eastern Naval Command at the Andaman Islands has been upgraded to Far Eastern Command of all three services.

and the Arabian Gulf to enhance its geopolitical and naval standing. China claims its 'string of pearls' strategy is geared to protecting the sea lines of communication to secure vital energy supplies for itself. India, however, sees the strategy as not only significantly boosting Chinese naval capabilities in the region where India has vital strategic, geopolitical, economic and energy interests, but also encircling India across its maritime borders.⁵¹ China's search for naval bases and facilities in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan virtually hems in India from all sides with long term implications for its maritime security.⁵²

India in turn, has sought to shore up its naval projections by holding regular naval exercises with the US, Japan, Australia and Singapore near the Andaman Islands, close to Coco Islands and near the strategic Straits of Malacca. China has openly criticised these exercises as seeking to contain its influence in a region where it has significant security concerns vis-à-vis Taiwan, the US and Japan. India's growing strategic relationship with Japan and the US is particularly troubling China, which sees both these countries as its strongest rivals in the region. India has steadily built a strong economic and defence relationship with Japan; Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership Agreement in 2006 has cemented the ties further, setting up a new framework for closer cooperation between the two countries in future. Although India is not projecting its ties with Japan in an anti-China construct, it remains fully aware of the fact that as a historic rival of China, Japan has a vested interest in a regional balance of power, which does not tilt in favour of China to Japan's disadvantage. As an analyst has put it, 'moves by India towards a quadrilateral "axis of democracies" with America, Australia and Japan, whilst not couched in overt anti-China terms, does have an element of China containment inherent in it'.⁵³ Although the strategy has already withered somewhat following Australia's public statement that it did not intend to be party to any anti-Chinese exercise, China remains wary of India's active participation in the region, which it has traditionally considered its sphere of influence.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Some Chinese scholars have argued that India's fears are misplaced and that China's interests in South Asia and the Indian Ocean are purely economic and not targeting India. See Zhang Guihong, 'The Rise of China: India's Perceptions and Responses', in *South Asian Survey*, Vol.13, no.1 (2006), p.99. Some Indian scholars also support this view. See Amardeep Athwal, *China-India Relations: Contemporary Dynamics* (Alingdon, New York: Routledge, 2008), p.65.

⁵² China's biggest pearl in South Asia is its deep water sea port in Gwadar, Pakistan which is capable of offering berthing facilities for the Chinese Navy. Pakistan's deep hostility to India gives an extra edge to China's potential to out-manoeuvre India in the strategic region at the entrance point to the oil rich gulf and energy rich central Asia.

⁵³ David Scott, 'The Great Power Great Game' between India and China: The logic of geography' in *Geo Politics*, Vol.13, no.1 (2008), p.13.

⁵⁴ For more details on the idea of quadrilateral cooperation, see C. Raja Mohan and Alyssa Ayres, 'Shaking Realignment' in Alyssa Ayer and C. Raja Mohan (eds), *Power Realignments in Asia: China, India and the United States* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), pp.314-5. It may be noted here in passing that China was not happy with India's admission into East Asia Summit (EAS) and initially resisted it. Japan, on the other hand, openly supported India's membership. India became part of EAS in 2005.

India's Engagement with South East Asia: Competing Dynamics

India has also been actively engaging with South East Asia, a strategically vital region in terms of India's maritime and economic interests. During the Cold War years, India had chosen to stay on the margins and allowed its interaction with the region to fall into a state of benign neglect. The end of Cold War and the altered geopolitical regional dynamics has seen India take several steps to more constructively engage with the ASEAN countries. India's 'Look East' policy signalled India's desire to give a push to revitalising its economic and political interaction with the ASEAN region. Given India's rapidly developing technological and economic capabilities, ASEAN countries have also found it useful to cooperate with India to reap the benefits of extensive economic and technological linkages. Over the years, India has forged strong economic ties with most ASEAN countries. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand have already emerged as important trading and investment partners for India.

More importantly, India has steadily expanded its strategic presence in the region. It became a dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1995, a member of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996, and a signatory to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN, in 2003 and 2009 respectively. Over the years, India has also forged strong defence and naval ties with Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam. It has a significant strategic relationship with Singapore with whom it signed a Defence Cooperation Agreement in 1993; a year later the India-Singapore dialogue was inaugurated. India also signed a defence agreement with Indonesia in 2007. In 2000, India had signed a defence pact with Vietnam and has been holding joint naval exercises as part of the new strategic partnership. India has also been helping Vietnam to significantly increase its naval and air power. It is pushing for a naval base in Cam Ranh Bay, which would go a long way in augmenting its naval capability in the strategic region.⁵⁵

South-East Asia lies at the junction of South Asia and East Asia, traditionally seen by both India and China as their respective spheres of influence. China has been a keen player in the ASEAN region for historical reasons in view of the existence of a large Chinese Diaspora, trade and investment linkages and protection of its maritime interests. It is also viewed with a certain degree of fear by most Southeast Asian Countries, in terms of its territorial claims on disputed islands in the South China Sea.⁵⁶ India, on the other hand, has the advantage of not carrying any historical memories or baggage of bilateral disputes in the region. Over the last decade or so,

⁵⁵ Some scholars have argued that India wants to use the Vietnam Card to counter China's supremacy in South China Sea. Iskandar Rehman, 'Keeping the Dragon at Bay: India's Counter Containment of China' in *Asian Security*, Vol.5, no.2 (2009), p.133. Also, see David Scott, 'The Great Power "Great Game", between India and China: The Logic of Geography' in *Geo Politics*, Vol.13, no.1 (2008), p.10.

⁵⁶ In particular, Vietnam and Indonesia have been locked for many years in a dispute with China over territorial claims on Spratly Islands.

India has steadily emerged as an important player in Southeast Asia, with many people in the region seeing it as a balancer against China. There is little doubt that the ASEAN countries will have some interest in maintaining a geopolitical balance of power between India and China for maximising their economic strength and security. This could well lead to a quiet competition between China and India over expansion of their geopolitical influence and naval capabilities in the region.

India, United States and China: Emerging Balance of Alignments

As India continues its surge towards emerging as a key regional power, it is bound to engage in the global environment as an autonomous centre of power with its own regional agenda and global priorities. It will also continue to make efforts to seek its rightful place in the global community through strategic dialogue and partnership with other centres of power, particularly the US.

The US today remains the only power with the economic and military potential to impinge on a wide range of issues affecting India's national strategic interests. Recognising India's growing economic power and regional influence, the US has shown greater willingness to deal with India. In 2005, the US President George Bush called India a natural partner and publicly assured it of the US support in its rise as a major power. In 2006, the momentous Indo-US nuclear deal was signed, heralding a new chapter of mutual confidence and goodwill between the two countries.⁵⁷

Apart from getting uninterrupted supply of nuclear fuel for the upgradation of its civilian facilities, India was informally admitted in the nuclear club, without having to formally sign the NPT. Significantly, Pakistan, a long-time ally, was not considered for a similar deal, signalling India's emergence as an independent centre of power in South Asia, after years of carrying the vexing burden of India-Pakistan parity on its shoulders. That the momentum of the Indo-US strategic partnership was irreversible, regardless of changes in the US administration, was brought to the fore by the US President Barack Obama when he reiterated, 'A fundamental pillar of America's comprehensive engagement with the world involves deepening our cooperation with the 21st century centres of influence – and that includes India'.⁵⁸ India and the US cooperation is also underpinned by strong defence ties and a robust economic relationship with Indo-US trade growing from US\$26,807.80 million in 2005-2006 to US\$36,509.17 million in

⁵⁷ Although the nuclear deal got locked in domestic opposition in India and is making slow progress in implementation, it has given India an immense leverage in its international status.

⁵⁸ Cited in Narayan Lakshman, 'After Strategic Dialogue, Big Push to US-India Cooperation', *The Hindu* (5 June 2010), www.hindu.com/2010/06/05/stories/2010060563170100.htm, accessed on 7 June 2010.

2009-2010.⁵⁹ The holding of the US-India Strategic Dialogue in June 2010 was a strong reflection of the progress made by the two countries on important issues of security, anti-terrorism, nuclear disarmament, trade, technology, energy security, science and technology, and education.⁶⁰

India does not presently rank very high on China's strategic radar, but the latter remains keenly aware of India's potential challenge. This is borne out by its steady opposition to India's bid for permanent membership of United Nations Security Council. China has also been resistant to the international, albeit informal, endorsement of India as a nuclear power, following the Indo-US nuclear deal.⁶¹ It also views with unease India's steady strategic engagement with major global powers, particularly the US, which could increase its power capabilities and influence beyond its shores and emerge as a major rival for China in Asia and beyond. It is not surprising therefore that China has tended to view the warming Indo-US relations with some concern as potentially threatening its position in the region. According to a Chinese scholar, 'unlike the US, which worries about the rise of China and not the rise of India, what concerns China most is how to prevent the US-Indian relations from becoming a formal alliance in South Asia'.⁶²

China has exercised restraint in terms of any public statements against the improving the Indo-US relations for its own strategic reasons; China would not want to risk upsetting the US as this would have a detrimental effect on Sino-US relations. China and the US already have security concerns and deep seated mutual suspicions. The US is clearly uneasy with China's rapidly modernising military capabilities, human rights and intellectual property rights violations and balance of trade issues. China is unhappy with the US arms sales to Taiwan, its politicisation of human rights issues and the US pressure to devalue the yuan. Nevertheless, both countries are cooperating on several fronts. Both countries are cooperating in greater measure on global issues like human and drug trafficking, climate change, anti-terrorism, and nuclear weapon proliferation in their bilateral discussions. These are problems that cannot be solved individually by China or the US, as they are global in nature and any solution will require joint concerted action. Similarly, despite differences on trade issues, the economies of both countries are also highly dependent on each other. China holds 70 per cent of its 2 trillion foreign currency reserves in

⁵⁹ *Export Import Data Bank*, Indian Ministry of Commerce, Department of Commerce, <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/iecnt.asp>, accessed on 30 August 2010.

⁶⁰ US Department of State, *US-India Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement* (3 June 2010), www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/06/142645.htm, accessed on 1 September 2010.

⁶¹ China had lashed out India's nuclear tests in 1998 and openly criticised the Indo-US nuclear deal as violating the existing treaty obligations.

⁶² Zhang Guihong, 'US Security policy towards South Asia after September 11 and its Implications for China: A Chinese Perspective', in *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.27, no.2 (April-June 2003), p.161.

USD, including US\$740 billion in treasury bonds,⁶³ and both countries enjoy strong trade relations.⁶⁴ This makes it difficult for them to ignore each other.

It bears reiterating that for India, Sino-Pak-US Conundrum has been a significant feature of South Asian strategic landscape. China and the US remain the key external players, who have in the past both separately and together played an important role in shaping India's security dynamics in South Asia. There is little doubt that as long as India continues to be wary of China's preponderant power across the border and its encroaching role in South Asia, it will find it useful to explore any relationship, which will give it a certain leverage and diplomatic manoeuvrability in dealing with a powerful neighbour whose future intentions remain uncertain at best. Given the US long term interests in containing the increasing power of China, there is bound to be a strategic convergence between both India and the US, who have a shared interest in checking China's unbridled power in the region.⁶⁵

Having said that, it is important to keep in mind that India has a track record of not being a camp follower and there is little doubt that it will strive to retain its own autonomy and initiative vis-à-vis China. It is unlikely that India would either rock the boat of seeking normalisation with China or be seen as being inextricably tied to the US overarching global strategy. As an analyst has argued, 'the best insurance against assertive Chinese power [for India] lies not in participating in any evolving anti-China alliance but rather in emerging as a strong and independent power centre on Chinese periphery'.⁶⁶ To that extent, the Indo-US relations may remain an irritant for China, but will not substantially alter India's quest for keeping the Sino-Indian relations on an even keel.

⁶³ Huang Ping, Tao Wenzhao, Weng Rongjun, et al, 'China-US Relations, Tending Towards Maturity', in *The International Spectator*, Vol.44, no.2 (June 2009), p.12.

⁶⁴ An in depth analysis of US-China relations is outside the scope of this paper but recent writings on issues of cooperation and competition in US-China relations include Rosemary Foot, 'China and the United States: Between Cold and Warm Peace', in *Survival*, Vol.51, no.6 (December 2009-January 2010), pp.123-46; Kenneth Lieberthal, 'The China-US Relationship Goes Global', in *Current History*, Vol.108, no.719 (September 2009), pp.243-49; Huang Ping, Tao Wenzhao, Weng Rongjun, et al, 'China-US Relations, Tending Towards Maturity', in *The International Spectator*, Vol.44, no.2 (June 2009), pp.9-16; and Jia Qingguo, 'Exception to the Rule: The Obama Administration and China-US Relations', in *Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, Vol.22, no.2 (June 2010), pp.249-64.

⁶⁵ Ashley Tellis, 'US and Indian interests in India's Extended Neighbourhood' in Alyssa Ayres and Raja Mohan (eds.), *Power Realignment in Asia: China India and the United States* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2009), pp.224-5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.227.

The Road Ahead

As India seeks to play a major role in global affairs, its stake in the peace and stability in its immediate environment would call for the adoption of a climate of cooperation with China. At the same time, a greater challenge for Indian diplomacy is to engage with China in a cooperative framework within the larger context of geopolitical rivalry and competition between the two Asian giants. India will face increasing competition from China, as their interests intersect and overlap in both South Asia and beyond. This will make for inevitable contest and competition between the two countries in the foreseeable future.

In that context, it is clear that India's regional and global policies will be increasingly driven not so much by seeking to countervail China's preponderant power as by seeking to find its own place as a power of some consequence. India's broad orientation towards China will therefore have to rest on three pillars. The first will be to continue to engage with China within the parameters already set and accepted by both countries. In other words, it will seek a negotiated settlement to the vexing issue of disputed borders, whilst simultaneously expanding its ties in other areas of mutual interest, particularly economic, to generate stakes for continued cooperation. The second, given the uncertainties regarding the long term intentions of its more powerful and assertive neighbour, it will be prudent for India to continue building up its military strength to meet any future challenge from China. The third and last pillar will be to invest in building partnerships with its smaller neighbours in an overarching framework of bilateral and regional cooperation, enabling India to play a more constructive and positive role of leadership in region. As India gains enhanced economic and military power and greater recognition as a regional influential, it will be easier for it to engage with China in a more relaxed and balanced framework. More importantly, as India gradually works out new strategic equations with other major players to emerge as an influential centre of power beyond the confines of South Asia, it is bound to gain greater leverage and manoeuvrability vis-à-vis China.

As relations and domestic strengths progress, it will be as important to push for Sino-Indian cooperation as it will be to be prepared for greater competition with its powerful neighbour. The future of the Sino-Indian relations will, in the ultimate analysis, remain contingent not only on how the two countries manage their geopolitical rivalries and divergent strategic priorities, while dealing with each other, but also how they balance their competing interests and aspirations in dealing with the rest of the world. At best, the Sino-Indian relations will remain an exercise in finding equilibrium between the competing poles of cooperation and contest.

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The Threat of the Geeky Goonda: India's Electronic Voting Machines

Robin Jeffrey¹

Executive Summary

The paper examines the controversy over the reliability of India's Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). Since the national elections of 2009, there have been allegations that the 1.4 million small stand-alone EVMs can be – and according to some protagonists, have been – doctored or rigged to allow election results to be falsified. The paper outlines the charges and describes the formal procedures under which the EVMs have operated for more than 10 years. It concludes that there is no convincing evidence that the machines have been rigged in India. It points out that any comparison with the networked, centralised electronic voting systems of the United States (US) and Europe, which have fallen into disfavour, are inappropriate. However, it is clear that if technically skilled people were to have ready and widespread access to EVMs, they could introduce external components that would enable the machines to be manipulated. Such manipulation would require large numbers of trained and reasonably adept conspirators who would have to escape the notice of or suborn both election officials and agents of rival parties. This is an improbable scenario. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has not however, met the allegations as ably and openly as it might. The Commission should not only be constantly testing, monitoring and improving existing EVMs, but also researching and costing methods that could add a paper trail to the current paperless process that could be used to verify election results.

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Once upon a time, when the world was a simpler place, rigging an Indian election could be seen as an exercise in job creation for unskilled labour. An unscrupulous candidate or political party would mobilise muscular retainers – *goondas* – to take over polling stations, shoo away voters, intimidate election staff and get down to the serious work of marking ballots and stuffing ballot boxes. When the polls closed, beautifully sealed and signed ballot boxes would be returned to the constituency headquarters where their carefully prepared contents would be counted and contribute to the victory of their paymaster-candidate.

There were, of course, other ways to fix elections. Sheer intimidation of the poor and vulnerable was one. Marching landless labourers to the polling booth under armed escort and telling them how to vote was once a method favoured by some rural power-holders. Or you could reward voters individually with bribes and convince them that if they took the money and voted the wrong way, the paymaster would find out. Or you could use your *goondas* to ensure that only your supporters voted at particular polling stations. All these methods required muscle power and quite a lot of it.

From 1999, the ECI began to introduce the EVMs: small, simple computer units, which recorded votes without paper. The machines are self-contained, and one (or more) is allocated for every polling station where an election is being held. An average constituency for a national election has upwards of 1,500 polling stations, and in 2009 the Election Commission used about 1.4 million EVMs to conduct the national elections.

When the polls close, the EVMs in each constituency are brought to constituency headquarters, where they are stored until counting day. On counting day, the total on each machine is calculated by the push of a button on each machine in the presence of the candidates' scrutineers and election officials. The tally on each machine is noted down, the total is added up – all this is done physically with candidates' agents signing off on the totals on each machine – and the result declared.

India runs the biggest democratic system in the world, and the Election Commission and the EVMs have been matters of pride. There were 714 million eligible voters for the national elections in 2009, and an average state election – say, the one approaching in 2011 in Kerala – will have more voters than there are people in Australia. Indian elections, in spite of *goonda* deployment in the past, have been remarkably honest (although there have been a few disastrous exceptions).²

² Kashmir elections prior to 1977 and again in 1987 were among the exceptions.

Indeed, in the past 20 years, the election process has become – most observers agree – more efficient, fair and strictly administered. Veteran returning officers speak of three changes that have improved the working of the voting system. First, from the tenure of T. N. Seshan, Chief Election Commissioner from 1990-6, the Commission acquired greater authority to enforce its powers. It can prevent governments from transferring officials and order the deployment of police. Rules of conduct for elections have been strictly enforced, and candidates are disqualified if the rules are broken. One longtime polling station official writes:

‘There is a rule stating that no placards or hoardings or signs should be put within 100 metres of a polling station. In the 1980s this was common. The rule was often violated and sometimes, if the offending candidate had a lot of local support (meaning in Kerala, muscle, or, more often, vocal-cord power) presiding officers found it difficult to enforce the rule. No longer. Partymen themselves now take care that these rules are not violated.’³

In the 2009 elections, journalists lamented the absence of colour and noise that resulted from Election Commission bans on giant hoardings, painted walls and noisy processions.

Second, today close to 90 per cent of eligible voters have voter identification cards with photographs. These began to be issued in the 1990s. The ID cards eliminated disputes at polling stations. Election agents also have a voters’ list with photographs. A person attends the polling station where he or she is eligible to vote, shows the ID card to the satisfaction of the election official and the party agents and is permitted to vote. Previously, challenges about identity were ‘a presiding officer’s nightmare. Now that the ID cards are compulsory there is never any challenge.’⁴ Voters must vote at the polling station where they are enrolled.

EVMs have been the third element in making the system more efficient. As well as eliminating the need for huge printing contracts, for tons of paper to be transported around a vast country and for millions of ballot papers to be secured and accounted for, the EVMs have made voting easier and reduced the capacity for errors. And while it is still possible to capture a polling booth and have faithful retainers push the right buttons over and over again to give the required result, an honest presiding officer can, on first apprehension of an assault, push a button that freezes the EVM thereby stopping polling at that station. Election officials would then order a repoll at a later date and ensure adequate security. ‘I am very enthusiastic about the EVM,’ the Kerala presiding officer wrote.

³ A teacher in a college in Thiruvananthapuram writing to Robin Jeffrey about his experience as a presiding officer at a polling booth during the 2004 national elections.

⁴ Ibid.

‘Earlier ... the most important items were the ballot papers and the ballot boxes. The papers were a headache. They were stitched in bundles of 50 each. We would count each one, ballot paper by ballot paper, making sure that they were in the correct serial number and were not damaged or defective. We even had to check that the counterfoil and the ballot paper had identical numbers. There were often defects and these had to be recorded on two different sets of documents ... If by mistake a polling officer issued two ballot papers to a voter and the voter slyly made off with both, our accounts wouldn’t be correct and the election agents would raise hell.’⁵

The EVM removed much of this capacity for human error.

‘All you need to do is learn to use the voting machine properly. It’s a marvel: sturdy, easy to use, most reliable and about as foolproof as a machine can be. ... Only the most gadget-challenged of people will have problems operating it.’⁶

The problem thrust forward in the last 12 months lies, however, in the words ‘as a machine can be.’

Since the national general elections in May 2009 a few disappointed politicians and computer specialists have been arguing that the EVMs are deeply flawed and can be manipulated. The critics have not demonstrated that the machines have in fact been tampered with or have produced false results. But they have attempted to show how machines could be manipulated if geeky *goondas* could get access to them at particular stages and replace components or insert small pieces of hardware to make the machines respond to unseen outside commands.

In August 2010, one of the critics, Hari Prasad, managing direct of an electronics firm in Hyderabad, was arrested by the Mumbai police and transported to Mumbai on the charge of stealing an EVM in order to show how it could be rigged to give false results.⁷ Opposition members of India’s parliament have called for ‘an all-party meeting where different technical opinions can be presented ... so that this doubt and question mark ... can be answered once and for all ...’⁸

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *The Hindu* (22 August 2010), www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/article587079.ece?css=print, accessed on 24 August 2010. He got bail on 26 August 2010.

⁸ Arun Jaitley (Bharatiya Janata Party), Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha (upper house), 25 August 2010, Rajya Sabha Debates, <http://164.100.47.5/newdebate/220/25082010/fullday.pdf>, accessed on 30 August 2010. *The Hindu* (26 August 2010), www.thehindu.com/news/national/article594388.ece?css=print, accessed on 26 August 2010.

Accusations after the May 2009 national elections asserted that EVMs had been rigged. ‘Many candidates of BJD [the winning party in the Orissa state elections],’ wrote Biswabhusan Harichandan in the *Organiser*, the English weekly of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh,

‘who had never dreamt of winning ... won the election with unbelievable margins of 25,000 to 60,000 votes. Some have now admitted that it is due to the appropriate programming of EVM, they have won the election with such high margin [sic].’⁹

Harichandan drew on technical critiques of EVMs prepared by Hari Prasad and publicised by a one-time member of the national executive of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), G. V. L. Narasimha Rao.¹⁰ They generated further credibility when they linked up with European and the US opponents of electronic voting and with an assistant professor of electrical engineering and computer science at the University of Michigan (with a PhD from Princeton) and some Indian doctoral candidates in the same field.

The Election Commission of India (ECI), which has an enviable reputation for rectitude and efficiency, did not respond as well as it could to challenges to the EVMs. Members of the Election Commission made the unwise claim, for example, that they were ‘1000 [sic] per cent sure that no one can manipulate’ the EVMs.¹¹

Computer engineers, on the other hand, are unanimous in opining that *if* geeky *goondas* can get their hands on such simple computer hardware as that contained in the EVMs, they can substitute or add parts that will allow properly equipped assailants to make the machine do what they wish. ‘Funnily enough,’ wrote a senior professor of computer science, ‘computer scientists are most suspicious of these technologies since we know how easy they are to hack (Trojan Horse code etc.).’¹² The trust placed in India’s EVMs has to be based on more than a belief that computers can be made immune to manipulation.

But no one has yet presented convincing evidence that any Indian election has been rigged as a result of manipulating EVMs. There have, to be sure, been allegations, including one by the Congress politician Ghulam Nabi Azad, currently Minister of Health and Family Welfare in the national government, that ‘EVMs were manipulated during the [Orissa state] poll which resulted

⁹ *Organiser* (12 July 2009), p. 9.

¹⁰ G. V. L. Narasimha Rao, *Democracy at Risk! Can We Trust Our Electronic Voting Machines?* (New Delhi: Citizens for Verifiability, Transparency and Accountability, 2010). For Narasimha Rao’s political affiliation, *Hindustan Times* (18 February 2009), quoted on ‘Friends of BJP,’ <http://friendsofbjp.org/2009/02/18/lks-the-man-gvl-narasimha-rao/>, accessed on 11 August 2010. He was not listed on the BJP website in August 2010.

¹¹ S. Y. Quaraishi in *The Hindu* (14 December 2009), <http://beta.thehindu.com/news/national/article64660.ece?css=print>, accessed on 14 December 2009.

¹² Email from professor of computer science at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 17 August 2010.

in defeat of many Congress candidates.’¹³ Azad had been responsible for Congress organisation in Orissa, where it had fared badly.

The claims are that EVMs are vulnerable in two simple ways. First, an attacker ‘could alter election results by replacing parts of the machines with malicious look-alike components.’ The fake components could then be made, using wireless technology, to deliver the results required. ‘Election results could be compromised by inserting a dishonest display into an EVM control unit at any point before votes are publically counted, perhaps years before the election.’¹⁴

A second method of manipulating the machines once voting has taken place would involve a *goonda* attaching a small device to an EVM that would allow the totals recorded in the machine to be altered.¹⁵ This requires ‘the temporary application of new hardware.’

The critics of the EVM make valid points, which the Election Commission could treat as constructive. Some of the critiques, however, have a whiff of political losers looking for conspiracies to explain defeats or of technical specialists seeking notoriety for theoretical cleverness.

First, it is true that the current EVM system leaves no paper trail. If EVMs were corrupted or broken, there would be no way of back-tracking to discover the true intentions of voters. In the US, a majority of the 50 states requires a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).¹⁶ This usually involves voters voting electronically and then receiving a print-out record of their vote which they deposit in a ballot box. If necessary, the paper records can be counted to confirm the electronically recorded result. The disadvantages – particularly apposite for India – of such a system are that they introduce an additional element of technology and paper: printers in working order would have to be at every polling booth. In India, it would be necessary to build printers as robust as the EVMs and ensure that the batteries that power the EVMs in many localities were powerful enough to drive printers too. Nevertheless, such a system would still eliminate the mountains of pre-election printing that were required to prepare ballots for elections in the days before EVMs. Such a system could be made to work, but it would involve heavy cost, careful development and rigorous testing.

¹³ IANS, 18 June 2009, www.thaindian.com/newsportal/politics/voting-machines-manipulated-in-orissa-polls-claims-azad_100206516.html, accessed on 25 August 2010. Azad does not seem to have repeated the remark, made at a press conference in Bhubaneswar.

¹⁴ Hari K. Prasad, J. Alex Halderman, Rop Gonggrijp, *et al.*, ‘Security Analysis of India’s Electronic Voting Machines,’ p.10., 29 April 2010, <http://IndiaEVM.org>, accessed on 18 August 2010.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_Verified_Paper_Audit_Trail, accessed on 26 August 2010.

The *second* potential flaw lies in the nature of the EVMs themselves: they are simple, self-contained and abundant – there are 1.4 million of them. It would be foolish to dispute the claim that if *goondas*, supported by moderately talented technicians, have access and time, they can insert illicit hardware that will allow an EVM to be manipulated. But the process sounds laborious and even more labour-intensive than booth capturing in the old days. ‘To use the [clip-on] device,’ to gain control of an EVM, write Hari Prasad and his associates,

‘the attacker connects a jumper wire to the control unit CPU to hold it in reset. Next, he clips the device to one of the EEPROMs on the control unit board. ... To steal votes, the attacker indicates his favored candidate using the rotary switch [installed by the attacker], shown in Figure 8. ... When the switch is set ..., the chip on the clip-on-device executes a vote-stealing program ...’,¹⁷

Such interference on one EVM could result in manipulation of no more than the 2,000 votes that might be cast at a single polling station. Even to rig a single constituency in this fashion would take a lot of eager, moderately trained fingers and a great many sealed lips to prevent the conspiracy being revealed. Access to stored EVMs is no doubt possible. They are stored, in theory, under guard in a locked strong room at district election headquarters; but India has more than 600 districts and standards of maintenance and probity vary. Illegal access in some places would no doubt be possible. The fact that an EVM in Mumbai was stolen for a few days to allow Hari Prasad to work on it – the reason why he was arrested in August 2010 – illustrates vulnerability.

But would attackers seek to doctor every EVM in a Lok Sabha constituency – more than 1,500 machines? If at an early stage they had got inside a great many EVMs and inserted clip-on devices, they would still need to get access to the machines to twist ‘the rotary switch’ to indicate the chosen candidate’s place on the list of candidates on the ballot. That listing is, of course, only determined once nominations close. Critics of the EVMs seem united that ‘to hack an EVM and manipulate its functioning, one has to open the machine and alter the source code (program) in the EVM.’¹⁸ Something physical has first to be done to each EVM to make it susceptible to manipulation. An ‘honest’ EVM, untampered with, cannot be manipulated simply by pointing a cleverly programmed wireless device at it.

A *third* vulnerability lies in the possibility of the chips, on which the simple software that operates the machines is burned, being replaced at the factory or while EVMs are in storage by illicit chips (easily designed and manufactured, critics says).¹⁹ The illicit chips could be

¹⁷ Ibid., p.14.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.98.

¹⁹ Narasimha Rao, *Democracy*, pp.26, 148.

controlled from outside. On counting day *goonda* geeks in key tally rooms would manipulate the results using wireless technology directed from cell phones.²⁰

It would be foolish to deny that such attacks are *possible*. But no evidence has been produced that such attacks have happened. The allegations are characterised by unconvincing assertions such as:

1. 'According to the grapevine, some of these private players engaged by the EVM manufacturers [to check and troubleshoot the EVMs] are close associates and relatives of political leaders.'²¹
2. 'There were no apparent reasons as to why a nationally resurgent Congress party should suffer losses in a state where the party had been out of power for a decade.'²²
3. 'Is there something esoteric [sic] and mysterious in the fact that the only two parliamentary elections in India's parliamentary history, where the pollsters in general have gone horribly wrong, were totally electronic elections in which electronic voting machines (EVMs) were used all over the country?'²³
4. 'Many such instances of election fixers [offering to rig EVMs] have been narrated to me ...'²⁴
5. 'From various problems cited in this chapter, it is evident that hackers already appear to have done so [i.e., 'manipulated' EVMs].'²⁵

Chapter 2 of *Democracy at Risk!* begins with a paragraph on Hitler, *Mein Kampf* and the 'Big Lie' technique' and accuses the Election Commission of having 'applied the Big Lie technique to perfection' in seeking to whitewash the EVM.²⁶ Such exaggeration and gossip are unconvincing.

Much too has been made of the fact that European countries and the US have moved away from electronic voting or have combined it with a back-up paper ballot.²⁷ Narasimha Rao, for example, reproduces a headline from *Newsweek* magazine in the US: 'We do not trust machines: people reject electronic voting.'²⁸ These European and the US systems, however, involved networked computers aggregating votes polled at many polling stations over a wide geographical area. If you can attack the software of such systems, you can rig large aggregations of votes. A

²⁰ Ibid., pp.176-7, has a table of eight ways to rig the voting.

²¹ Ibid., pp.156-7.

²² Ibid., p.85. The reason might be that such a party had totally lost an effective presence after 10 years in the wilderness

²³ Ibid., p.78.

²⁴ Ibid., p.61.

²⁵ Ibid., p.54.

²⁶ Ibid., p.19.

²⁷ Ibid., pp.197-214. See also <http://verifiedvotingfoundation.org/>, a website, founded by Professor David Dill of Stanford University, focused on the flaws of computerised voting in the US.

²⁸ Ibid., p.203, citing *Newsweek* (1 June 2009).

virtue of the Indian system is that one rigged EVM can deliver no more than a couple of thousand votes, and it is possible to identify where, for example, an overwhelming and suspicious vote for a particular candidate was cast. Comparison with the US and European systems appears erroneous and misleading.

The latter quality, however, also represents a negative feature of the EVMs. It is possible, if one can get at the records after an election, to discover how individuals have voted. Some veteran election officials see this as a graver defect than the possibility of electronic vote rigging.²⁹

The Election Commission has not been adroit in responding to recent criticisms. In its Press Note of 8 August 2009 after critics of the EVM system had failed to demonstrate flaws in the machine during an appointment with the Commission, the latter ‘once again completely reaffirm[ed] its faith in the infallibility of the EVMs. These are fully tamper-proof, as ever.’³⁰ Faith and infallibility belong in religion, not politics.

According to the critics, another meeting between themselves and the Election Commission on 3 September 2009 ended abruptly. According to this version, the Election Commission opened a few EVMs to allow the critics to show how they could be tampered with. The critical group ‘note[d] down the details of card and circuit level checks on plain paper.’³¹ The engineers working for the Election Commission ‘suddenly became jittery and rushed... to stall the inspection process lest they be exposed.’ The critics claimed that the Election Commission was ‘in a totally panicked state’ and stopped the inspection of the EVMs.³² There have been no further inspection sessions.

What conclusions can an observer draw about EVMs?

First, there is no convincing evidence that EVMs have been manipulated to affect the result in any Indian election so far.

Second, *if* corrupt people were able to get inside EVMs, they could install components that would allow those EVMs to be manipulated. This, however, would involve a vast, very carefully orchestrated conspiracy, first to install the hardware and then to make it perform as required in the right places at the time of the poll.

²⁹ Email from senior official on 27 August 2010. See also Prasad *et al.*, ‘Security,’ p.14.

³⁰ Press Note, Electronic Voting Machines – regarding, PN/ECI/41/2009, 8 August 2009.

³¹ Narasimha Rao, *Democracy*, p.105.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.105-06.

The obstacles to such a conspiracy are substantial. First, there are the claims that security is high in the government-owned companies that make the EVMs. Those who work in India know, however, that breaching such security would be possible; but having installed false hardware in new machines, the election-fixers would have no way of knowing where the machines were going to be deployed. They are distributed around the country, and there are various generations of machines in use.³³ Machines are sent to polling stations randomly, like shuffling cards for a card game, and candidates' agents are invited to observe the random-distribution process.

There is no doubt that if technicians can get inside an EVM, it can be made to perform in unintended ways. One of the responses is to point out that a national election in India uses 1.4 million EVMs. Would criminals be able to corrupt them all? The reply is that

‘one doesn’t have to tamper with all the EVMs to win elections. Elections are won by small margins and even if a few EVMs are managed ... in one’s favour, it can ... turn a loser into the winner ...’,³⁴

A corrupt party would aim to tamper with elections in only a few dozen key seats.

Let us assume, however, that a single corrupted batch replaced every EVM in a particular Lok Sabha constituency – somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 machines. Two ways to manipulate the election then seem possible. On polling day, an eligible voter in each polling station would go to vote, having been instructed what to do. The corrupt voter would somehow, either without the returning officer’s knowledge or with the officer’s connivance, quickly tamper with the EVM to trigger a ‘trojan’ in the chip that had been illegally inserted earlier. The EVM would then follow instructions communicated through the ‘trojan’ to record votes to favour the cheating candidate.

A second method would be that on the day the vote is tallied – often a few weeks from the day of voting – a corrupt agent would be in the tally room. That person would use a wireless method, perhaps through a cell phone, to communicate with the tainted hardware, installed previously, to instruct some of the 1,500 machines to change their totals to favour the desired candidate.

The scale of this sort of fraud would be vast, even if only a few score machines in a few dozen constituencies were to be rigged. And other methods of doctoring results – e.g., inserting clip-on memory manipulators – are equally labour intensive and fiddly; they require knowledgeable

³³ Ibid., p.130. A criticism of the older machines is that they are so simple in design that they are especially vulnerable.

³⁴ Ibid., p.104.

people to push the right buttons at the right moments. It may all be possible, but the chances of being found out or of a conspirator spilling the electronic beans would be very high.³⁵

What needs to be reiterated is the decentralised nature of the Indian EVMs. Critics of the EVM are disingenuously fond of comparing them to discredited European or North American systems; but the latter have been vast, networked operations in which the corruption of a software program can cast doubt over tens of thousands of votes. Each EVM in India is a discreet unit; it is not networked. Each accounts for no more than a few thousand votes. The final tabulation is done with pencil and paper. Each machine in a constituency is produced in the tally room, its security seals inspected and removed in the presence of election officials and representatives of the parties. Each machine then has a button pressed to reveal the votes recorded for each candidate. Party representatives examine the totals and these are written down. When every machine – close to 2,000 in some constituencies – has been examined, the written totals are added up, the sums signed off by party and election officials and the result of the election declared.

As cynics experienced in Indian elections say, the easiest way to rig a constituency is at this stage: you bribe everyone in the tally room to sign off on false totals and a false winner. The complications and conspirators are far fewer than would be required to rig EVMs effectively. The sums of money available in Indian elections today are huge – large enough to make even the most upright official pause for a moment.³⁶ Shady media organisations in the 2009 elections, for example, appear to have had a ‘poll-period take ... estimated to be in hundreds of millions of rupees’ by selling favourable news coverage to candidates – or offering to forestall bad coverage.³⁷

Attacks on the credibility of the EVMs will undermine confidence in them.³⁸ The danger is that such attacks will also undermine confidence in the electoral system and the office of the Election Commissioner, which has been one of India’s most admirable institutions. Allowing critics to be arrested and remanded in custody on charges of stealing one EVM for experimental purposes is bad public relations at the very least.

To maintain its high reputation and credibility, the Election Commission needs to take various steps:

³⁵ An Australian politician, now dead, had a credo that when faced with the choice between a conspiracy and a stuff-up as an explanation for an event, choose the stuff-up every time.

³⁶ Conversations with a senior civil servant and emails with a longtime presiding officer.

³⁷ P. Sainath in *The Hindu* (26 October 2009), www.beta.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article38482.ece?css=print, accessed on 30 August 2010.

³⁸ This is happening with both constructive criticism and ill-informed commentary. *DNA*, Mumbai (7 September 2010), p.10. *Sunday Express* (5 September 2010), p.13.

1. set up an authentication unit of specialist computer engineers under the Election Commission as was proposed in 2006-07, whose job would be to anticipate potential technical failings that critics have suggested are possible³⁹
2. replace the first-generation EVMs with improved later-generation models to incorporate safeguards suggested by critics and thus minimise both the possibility of tampering and of mechanical failure as the machines age
3. institute constant random checks on the storage facilities of EVMs around the country to demonstrate high standards of security between elections⁴⁰

In the longer term, the Commission needs to explore the requirements and costs of a voting system that leaves a paper trail. This would complicate the EVM system and add to the costs. Such a system would involve a printer being attached to each EVM. A voter would vote electronically and receive a printout with the symbol of the candidate for whom the vote was cast. The voter would deposit that slip of paper in a ballot box. In the event of dispute over the electronic returns, the paper returns could be called on. Such a method introduces the complications of security of paper and effectiveness of printers, but given that criticism of EVMs will continue, it is sensible to anticipate the demand for a paper trail.⁴¹

In conclusion, convincing evidence has not been presented that an Indian election has been won through electronic rigging; but the threat from the geeky *goonda* remains a possibility. The task of the Election Commission is to anticipate and prevent such possibilities and demonstrate constantly and publically the ways in which the EVM system is made secure and honest.

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³⁹ Narasimha Rao, *Democracy*, pp.26-7.

⁴⁰ The Election Commissioner announced additional checking and random dispersal of EVMs for the Bihar state elections in October 2010. *The Hindu* (7 September 2010), www.thehindu.com/news/national/article617920/ece?css=print, accessed on 7 September 2010.

⁴¹ India's critics of the EVMs make much of the fact that European countries have been abandoning electronic voting and that most US states require a paper verification. 'The EVM is like a black box in which you cast your vote. You do not know what happens to it. It does not generate any physical record of voting' (Narasimha Rao, *Democracy*, p.49). The difference, however, is that the European and the US systems involve networked computers that accumulate large totals electronically. The decentralised nature of India's EVMs minimises some of the risks and maximises the difficulties for those who would rig elections through the EVMs.

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Structure and Agency in the Making of Indian Foreign Policy

Sumit Ganguly¹

Abstract

India's foreign policy since independence has evolved in three distinct phases. In the first phase, which lasted until 1964, it was mostly ideational. Between 1964 and 1990, it was a peculiar amalgam of ideational rhetoric and increasingly Realist behaviour. Since the end of the Cold War, it has all but embraced Realist premises with occasional rhetorical nods toward its ideational past. This paper traces the sources of these changes and attributes them to an interaction of structure and agency.

India's foreign policy has undergone a dramatic transformation since the country's emergence as an independent state from the collapse of the British Indian Empire in 1947. This paper will locate the sources of the shifts that have taken place in the country's foreign policy over the past six decades. To that end it will argue that the origins and evolution of India's foreign policy can be best traced to an interaction between the structure and agency.²

Specifically, it will argue that the country's post-independence political leadership had initially embarked upon an attempt to transform the texture of international politics through the pursuit of

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² For a useful discussion, see Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, 'The Gordian Knot of Agency-Structure in International Relations: A Neo-Gramscian Perspective,' *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol.7, no.5 (2001). The paper will also utilise the levels of analysis as spelled out in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

an ideational foreign policy. It will then show how the policy underwent a significant, though incomplete, transformation in the aftermath of the disastrous Sino-Indian Border War of 1962.

After this rude awakening, India's post-Nehru political leadership decided to acquire sufficient military capabilities to defend the country's territorial integrity. However, it refused to entirely abandon the Nehruvian legacy. Accordingly, the country did not dispense with the strategy of nonalignment and continued to support a range of global causes, on occasion to the detriment of its own national interests. Indeed it will be demonstrated that it was only the end of the Cold War that induced India to finally abandon its commitment to nonalignment. Faced with the Soviet collapse, the emergence of the United States (US) as the dominant global power and confronted with the dramatic rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC), India's policymakers were left with little choice, but to do away with the last trappings of the ideational world view. Nevertheless, key individuals within India's attentive public as well as its foreign policy establishment, continued to argue the case for adhering to India's ideational foreign policy orientation.³ In effect, the structural features of the global order ultimately induced India's policymakers to abandon their transformational agenda and adopt policies best suited to advancing India's core strategic and security interests.⁴

The Nehruvian Era: 1947-1964

The principal architect of India's foreign policy, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, had developed and pursued the strategy of nonalignment, as is well-known.⁵ The full dimensions of his foreign policy, however, are not adequately appreciated or understood, for the most part. Imbued with anti-colonial zeal and an ideational world view, he sought to bring about a transformation of the emergent global order. Under these circumstances, he campaigned for decolonisation, disarmament and the redistribution of global resources on a more equitable basis. He also reposed considerable faith in multilateral organisations and in their capacity to limit international conflicts.

The nascent quality of India's domestic foreign policy making institutions had given Nehru considerable leeway to pursue his transformational agenda at the global level. Two particular concerns had animated Nehru in his pursuit of an ideational foreign policy. At one level he was deeply concerned about the possible militarisation of Indian society. He feared that involvement

³ For a particularly clear statement see S. D. Muni, 'India and the Post-Cold War World: Opportunities and Challenges,' *Asian Survey*, Vol.31, no.9 (September 1991), pp.862-874.

⁴ The standard Neo-Realist statement about the significance of structure in shaping the choices of states in the international arena remains. See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979).

⁵ For a slightly contrary view, see T. A. Keenleyside, 'The Inception of Indian Foreign Policy: The Non-Nehruvian Contribution,' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol.4, no.2, (1981), pp.63-78.

in the emergent superpower conflicts and pacts would invariably lead to a distortion of India's domestic political and economic priorities. Critical and scarce resources, he feared, would then be directed toward the military enterprise with considerable opportunity costs. At another level, Nehru abhorred the use of force in international politics and had profound reservations about the profession of arms.⁶

Not surprisingly Nehru sought to bolster the nascent United Nations (UN) and made India an active participant in UN peacekeeping operations. For this reason he sought to play a mediatory role in concluding the Korean War. India helped bring about the neutralisation of Laos and subsequently, along with Poland and Canada, served as members of the International Control Commission in Vietnam.⁷ Among other episodes, India played a vital role in the UN attempts to defuse the crisis in the Congo in the shambolic aftermath of Belgian colonial withdrawal from the country.⁸

Owing to Nehru's passionate opposition to nuclear weapons, India also introduced a resolution in the UN General Assembly as early as 1953, calling for a 'standstill' agreement on the testing of nuclear weapons. Nehru also commissioned the first public study of the radiological, blast and other effects of nuclear weapons.

His preoccupation with these global and multilateral initiatives, however, was not without cost to India's national security. He largely ignored the warnings of his Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel about the possible dangers that India might face from its behemoth northern neighbour, the PRC.⁹ This neglect, in the late 1950s, would have significant adverse consequences for India's defence policies and ultimately culminate in the military debacle of 1962.¹⁰

⁶ On Nehru's views about the profession of arms, see the discussion in Stephen P. Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For an early assessment of the possible risks of a military takeover in India, see Taya Zinkin, 'India and Military Dictatorship,' *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.32, no.1 (March 1959), pp.91-98.

⁷ D. R. Sardesai, *Indian Foreign Policy in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, 1947-64* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

⁸ For a discussion of the political backdrop of the Congo crisis see Carole J.L. Collins, 'The Cold War Comes to Africa: Cordier and the 1960 Congo crisis', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.47, no.1 (Summer 1993), pp.243-256.

⁹ An early and important discussion of Indian defense policy in the Nehru years and immediately thereafter is Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defense Policies: 1947-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

¹⁰ An excellent account of the events leading up to the war and the intra-war decision-making process is Steven Hoffman, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

In the Aftermath of Nehru

On a personal level, the disastrous border war left Nehru a broken man and for all practical purposes spelled the doom of his ideational world view. His immediate successor, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, though a competent politician, lacked Nehru's grand visions of domestic and international transformation. Furthermore, he faced more compelling quotidian tasks, including the urgent need to address India's severe conventional military deficits.

On a national level, his government undertook a drastic and much overdue modernisation of India's armed forces to render them suitable to cope with a future military threat from the PRC.¹¹ India was in the early stages of revamping its conventional military capabilities when the PRC tested its first nuclear weapon in 1964. The nuclear test generated a political firestorm within India and contributed to an important parliamentary debate about India's ability to cope with this new threat.¹²

Finally, on a global level, India embarked on an abortive quest to obtain a nuclear guarantee from the great powers.¹³ In the wake of this failure and aware that the global nuclear order would be shaped dramatically with the passage of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was under discussion at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva, India's policymakers authorised the Subterranean Nuclear Explosions Project (SNEP).¹⁴ The project proceeded apace, though not without setbacks and culminated in the first Indian nuclear test of 1974.

The country had barely recovered from the shock of the Chinese nuclear tests when another war erupted with Pakistan in 1965. The conflict, which was of a short duration and fought over the question of the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir, ended mostly in a stalemate.¹⁵ Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri negotiated a post-war agreement at the then Soviet Central Asian city of Tashkent under the terms of which the two sides agreed to return to the status quo ante. Almost immediately after the formal completion of this accord, Shastri died of a heart attack.

¹¹ Raju G. C. Thomas, *The Defense of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1986).

¹² On the Chinese nuclear test, see John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). On the Indian debate see G. G. Mirchandani, *India's Nuclear Dilemma* (New Delhi: Popular Book Services, 1968); also see Sisir Gupta, 'The Indian Dilemma', in Alastair Buchan (ed.), *A World of Nuclear Powers?* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966).

¹³ On this subject see A. G. Noorani, 'India's Quest for a Nuclear Guarantee,' *Asian Survey*, Vol.7, no.7 (July 1967), pp.490-502.

¹⁴ Stephen M. Meyer, *The Dynamics of Nuclear Proliferation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

¹⁵ For an excellent treatment of the origins and conduct of the 1965 war, see Russell Brines, *The Indo-Pakistani Conflict* (New York: Pall Mall, 1968).

Following Shastri's abrupt demise the ruling Congress Party chose to install Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, as the new prime minister. Indira Gandhi, unlike her father, had no intellectual proclivities and had little interest in pursuing any sweeping designs to transform India's domestic political order, let alone the global arena. Indeed, in retrospect, it is more than apparent that she had no viable, coherent vision for India's foreign policy, barring some crude notion of enhancing India's national interests as she and a handful of close advisers construed them. As one observer of her foreign policy has written, 'Where Nehru had articulated India's national interests in high-flown phrases of world peace and cooperation, Indira stressed security, territory and prestige as integral parts of national interest.'¹⁶

As a consequence, her foreign policy was one that was mostly ad hoc, reactive and lacking in strategic vision. When faced with a severe domestic economic crisis, she demonstrated little diplomatic finesse in negotiating with the US and multilateral donors.¹⁷ Indeed her inept handling of the issue, including her strident (and ineffectual) criticism of the US conduct of the war in Vietnam, led to a significant rift in Indo-US relations.

In fairness, however, she did manage the Indo-Pakistani crisis in 1971 in the subcontinent with consummate skill. The difference in her handling of these two crises requires a word of explanation. During the first crisis she had just assumed office, was (and remained) unfamiliar with key questions of economics and very possibly unsure about her standing at home and abroad. Five years later she had managed to strengthen her domestic position. Also, the 1971 crisis, unlike the one in 1966, was both political and strategic.¹⁸

India at the Margins

During much of the next two decades, systemic, national and decision-making factors contributed to India's near-complete marginalisation in the global order. At a global level, between 1966 and 1971, India's material weakness enabled the US to mostly ignore it. The Soviets also evinced limited interest in India. Indeed it was not until the 1971 crisis that they paid much heed to India. Ironically, despite India's limited material capabilities, they chose to court India because of a common concern about the PRC and the emergence of a PRC-US nexus, which had an underlying anti-Soviet orientation.

¹⁶ Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy 1966-1982* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1984).

¹⁷ On this subject, see Sumit Ganguly, 'Of Great Expectations and Bitter Disappointments: US-Indian Relations Under the Johnson Administration', *Asian Affairs*, Vol.15, no.4 (Winter 1988/89), pp.212-19.

¹⁸ For two excellent and complementary discussions of the 1971 crisis see Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975); and Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: India, Pakistan and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

India also felt compelled to move closer to the Soviets because of on-going fears about a revanchist PRC, the US support for Pakistan during the 1971 war, and because it suited the Congress regime's left-wing orientation. Finally, the Indo-Soviet treaty of 'Peace, Friendship and Cooperation' signed in August 1971 provided the country with a tacit security guarantee.

Finally, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's own predilections cannot be entirely discounted. Nixon and Kissinger sought to cow her during the 1971 crisis. Not surprisingly she developed a personal animus toward the US and particularly towards the Nixon administration.¹⁹ This hostility combined with the material benefits that accrued from the Indo-Soviet relationship, especially significant arms transfers, led her to tilt toward the Soviet Union all the while professing nonalignment.

The most significant test of this relationship came after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Contrary to popular belief, there is little questioning that Indira Gandhi cared little for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.²⁰ Her concerns were mostly based upon pragmatic security considerations. The Soviet invasion, as she feared, would bring the US into South Asia, renewing an arms transfer and security relationship with Pakistan. In the event, her concerns proved to be entirely justified as the Reagan administration in a strategy to dislodge the Soviets from Afghanistan came to utilise Pakistan as a conduit for training, organising and supplying the Afghan resistance.²¹ The US obtained access to Pakistan through a program of significant economic and military largess that inevitably affected the conventional force balance in the subcontinent. Not surprisingly, India immediately turned to the USSR for military assistance to restore the conventional balance in its favour. The Soviets, keen on ensuring India's public acquiescence on the Afghan question, unhesitatingly complied with India's requests for arms transfers.

Under the circumstances, Indo-US relations simply could not dramatically improve. Some minor, and mostly cosmetic, changes did take place after President Reagan and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met at a North-South summit in Cancun, Mexico. In an effort to wean India away from the Soviet Union, the Reagan administration did make some limited overtures. To that end, it allowed the transfer of some high-technology items which India desperately needed to boost its indigenous weapons industries.²²

¹⁹ See the analysis based upon declassified State Department documents in Debasish Roy Chowdhury, 'Indians Are Bastards Anyway,' *Asia Times* (23 June 2005).

²⁰ For two detailed discussions of the impact of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on India and South Asia, see G. S Bhargava, *South Asian Security After Afghanistan* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1983) and Bhabani Sen Gupta, *The Afghan Syndrome: How to Live with Soviet Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

²¹ Mohammed Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* (London: Casemate, 2001).

²² Linda Racciopi, *Soviet policy toward South Asia since 1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

In the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984, her son, a political neophyte, assumed office. Since he had belatedly entered politics after a career as an airline pilot, he lacked the necessary political acumen to bring about substantial changes in India's foreign policy. Consequently, in the absence of bold new initiatives at the level of India's political leadership, there was a substantial continuity in India's foreign and security policies.

National-level factors also militated against significant changes. Given the Reagan administration's willingness to work with and support the military dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq, India could ill-afford to weaken, let alone end its on-going relationship with the Soviet Union. It relied on the Soviets for diplomatic support on the Kashmir question, for arms transfers and for substantial markets.

Finally, the global distribution of power was such that India benefited from its quasi-alignment with the Soviet Union as it inhibited any serious prospect of Chinese revanchism. In effect, forces at all three levels offered few incentives for any dramatic shifts in Indian foreign policy.

What did change, however, was the regional security situation in South Asia. The changes in the regional security order stemmed mostly from the exigencies of India's domestic politics and more specifically from the shortcomings of India's federalism. As a consequence, the country faced ethno-religious insurgencies in both the Punjab and Kashmir in the early and late 1980s, respectively.²³ Though both uprisings had quintessentially domestic origins, Pakistan quickly became involved in both. Pakistani involvement in both rebellions increased their intensity, prolonged their duration and made their resolution more difficult. Throughout much of the decade, India remained preoccupied with the suppression of the Punjab insurgency and then had to devote substantial efforts to the containment of the uprising in Kashmir.

Despite these domestic preoccupations because of geopolitical, national and leadership considerations, India also became embroiled in the civil war in Sri Lanka in the mid-1980s. At a geopolitical level, India looked askance toward Sri Lanka's increasing closeness with the US. At a national level, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi felt compelled to intercede in Sri Lanka's domestic conflict because of the growing concerns about the plight of the country's Tamil minority within the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Finally, he also visualised a more active role for India within the region. Unfortunately, his decision to send in an Indian military contingent to enforce the Indo-

²³ For a thoughtful analysis of the origins of the Punjab insurgency, see Hamish Telford, 'The Political Economy of the Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy,' *Asian Survey*, Vol.32, no.11 (November 1992), pp.969-87. On the Kashmir insurgency, see Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Sri Lankan Accord, which had been designed to end a fratricidal civil war, ended mostly in a fiasco.²⁴

The Post Cold War Era

It was not until the end of the Cold War that all three forces again converged to contribute toward a fundamental re-appraisal and eventual transformation of India's foreign policy. A leadership change came about as a consequence of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination on the campaign trail in May 1991. A stalwart of the Congress Party, Narasimha Rao, became the new prime minister. Quite early in his term, he confronted an unprecedented national financial crisis.

A number of factors contributed to this crisis. First, under Rajiv Gandhi, India had pursued a policy of piecemeal economic liberalisation. As a consequence, it had loosened regulations on imports and had also engaged in considerable deficit spending. Resultantly, it had amassed considerable external debts with multilateral institutions payments on which came due at a most inopportune moment.

Second, the timing of these debt payments was less than propitious for India because they coincided with the aftermath of the first Gulf War. The war had a disproportionate impact on India because over a hundred thousand Indian expatriate workers in the region had to be repatriated. Third, the Indian exchequer also faced an abrupt loss of their remittances.²⁵ The severity of the crisis was such that at one point India had only two weeks' worth of foreign exchange available to purchase essential edible oils on the global market.

Fortunately, the Indian political leadership under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao along with his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh used this crisis to dramatically alter the orientation and content of India's domestic and foreign economic policies.²⁶ In effect, India steadily abandoned its commitment to import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) with its emphasis on high tariff walls. Simultaneously, it started to dismantle the labyrinthine set of controls, quotas and licenses that had throttled economic growth, stifled innovation and curbed competition.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao not only showed considerable dexterity in handling this crisis, but also managed to change the direction of India's foreign and security policies in the wake of

²⁴ On the politics of the Indian involvement in Sri Lanka, see S. D. Muni, *The Pangs of Proximity* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993). For a military analysis of the Indian Peace Keeping Force and its fate see Lieutenant-General Depinder Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (Noida: Trishul Publications, 2002).

²⁵ Sumit Ganguly, 'Between Iraq and a Hard Place: The Developing World and the New Oil Crisis,' *The International Executive*, Vol.32, no.4 (January-February 1991), pp.37-8.

²⁶ Jagdish Bhagwati, *India in Transition: Freeing the Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the Soviet collapse. He was acutely aware that the principal successor state to the Soviet Union, Russia, was simply unwilling and unable to assume the same role that the Soviets had played vis-à-vis India during the Cold War.²⁷ Yet important differences remained with the US on questions of human rights in Kashmir, on international trade and on nuclear proliferation. Consequently, while attempting to mend fences with the US, he nevertheless emphasised India's preference for a multi-polar world order, a sentiment echoed both in France and Russia, albeit for their own reasons.

In his attempt to improve Indo-US relations, Rao changed India's long-standing policy of keeping Israel at some distance. The successful conclusion of the secret Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Madrid also provided him sufficient political cover at home and abroad to pursue a new relationship with Israel. Such political protection was deemed vital because virtually all political regimes in India had long been staunch supporters of the Palestinian movement for self-determination and were acutely sensitive to Muslim political opinion at home.²⁸

In addition to his attempts to improve relations with the US and Israel, Rao initiated what came to be known as India's 'Look East' policy. This policy entailed engaging the dynamic economies of Southeast Asia after a long period of neglect.²⁹ Despite India's early and initial engagement with the region, during much of the Cold War, it had been at odds with most of the states of the region because it had seen their regimes as little more than stooges of American global power. The liberalisation of the Indian economy made it imperative to end the ideologically-based neglect of this economically vibrant region of the world.

Apart from these initiatives, the Rao regime also continued support India's nuclear weapons program. The program had received a significant boost in 1989 under Rajiv Gandhi, when he had been advised of the growing threat to India's conventional capabilities because of the growth of the PRC-aided Pakistani nuclear weapons program. Rao's willingness to support the nuclear weapons program was not difficult to fathom. India, for all practical purposes, had lost the tacit security guarantee from the Soviet Union that it had enjoyed since 1971. Consequently, it made much sense for the country to acquire a viable nuclear deterrent to ward off possible nuclear blackmail at the hands of the PRC. In fact, it is now known that Rao had authorised a nuclear test in 1995. However, American spy satellites had detected the preparations at the Pokhran test site leading Ambassador Frank Wisner to confront Rao with the evidence thereof. Fearing significant

²⁷ For a particularly comprehensive and thoughtful discussion of the impact of the Soviet collapse on India's military capabilities see Ramesh Thakur, 'The Impact of the Soviet Collapse on Military Relations with India,' *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.45, no.5 (1993), pp.831-50.

²⁸ On this subject, see Nicolas Blarel, 'Indo-Israeli Relations: The Emergence of a Strategic Partnership,' in Sumit Ganguly (ed.) *India's Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁹ Frederic Grare and Amitabh Mattoo, (eds.) *Beyond the Rhetoric: The Economics of India's Look East Policy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003).

American and multilateral sanctions which could have derailed his careful program of economic reform, Rao chose to defer the tests.³⁰

Despite the emergence of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led regime following the Indian general elections of 1998, the foreign and security policies of the country did not undergo a fundamental transformation. Such continuity was remarkable given that much of the BJP's leadership were known for their hawkish dispositions. The BJP-led government, however, did lead India to cross the nuclear Rubicon. Once again the explanation underlying the decision to test nuclear weapons can be found at three distinct levels. First, India's policymakers were alarmed at the ease with which the US managed to ensure the indefinite and unconditional extension of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995. Shortly thereafter, they failed to prevent the preferred draft text of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) from being reported to the UN General Assembly from the Conference in Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. They were especially concerned that a clause in the draft treaty would require some 44 states with on-going nuclear power programs to ratify the treaty before it entered into force. In turn, they were acutely aware that the global community cared little about the vast majority of the 44 states. The real object of pressure, indubitably, was going to be India.³¹

Confronted with the possibility of encountering significant constraints on its on-going nuclear weapons program, the BJP-led coalition chose to conduct a series of five nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998, thereby effectively ending India's posture of nuclear ambiguity. In the wake of the tests, a spate of the US-led multilateral sanctions followed. However, the bulk of them were lifted in about a year as their efficacy proved questionable as India managed to deftly weather their impact.

Was the decision to cross the nuclear Rubicon solely a function of the hawkish BJP's presence as the dominant partner of the ruling coalition as some have alleged? The evidence does not seem to support that facile conclusion. Narasimha Rao had actually contemplated a set of tests but faced with American pressure had chosen to defer them. Consequently, the tests cannot be attributed primarily to the BJP's assumption of political office.

The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) lost the national elections in 2004 and a Congress-dominated United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government came into office. The UPA regime did little or nothing to alter the course of India's nuclear weapons program. Indeed the UPA regime expended significant domestic political capital to negotiate and successfully reach a

³⁰ C. Christine Fair, 'Learning to Think the Unthinkable: Lessons from India's Nuclear Tests,' *The India Review*, Vol.4, no.1 (March 2005), pp.23-58.

³¹ For a discussion of India's pathway to the 1998 tests, see Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to Be a Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2000).

civilian nuclear accord with the US which all but recognised India as a de facto nuclear weapons state.³²

The Challenges Ahead

India's foreign policy has undergone nothing short of a fundamental transformation since the end of the Cold War. It has, for all practical purposes, abandoned its hoary commitment to nonalignment though some elements of India's political leadership deem it necessary to continue to pay public homage to the doctrine. In practice, however, the country has adopted a policy that is mostly pragmatic and designed to promote its conception of key national interests.

The abandonment of the pursuit of world order on an ideational basis is, without question, a move that will facilitate India's long-held dream of achieving great power status. Despite this welcome development, the country still confronts a set of challenges in its efforts to transcend the region and emerge as a significant actor in global politics. Four challenges in particular can be identified.

First, India's policymakers have not been able to articulate an alternative grand strategy for the country to replace its prior commitment to nonalignment. At best, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has stated that India's foreign policy is based upon 'enlightened self-interest'. This formulation, however, does not amount to even a semblance of a grand strategy. A country that hopes to play a major role in global affairs cannot be so bereft of ideas to guide its foreign policy. In effect, India's policymakers need to spell out a new vision of a global order barring a vague preference for multi-polarity.

Second, India's institutions of foreign policy making are not adequately equipped to deal with the demands of the enhanced role that it hopes to play in the international order. As it has been commented on elsewhere, even the size of the Indian diplomatic corps is miniscule given the tasks that it is increasingly expected to perform. A country of India's size and significance cannot operate an effective foreign policy with a diplomatic service, which has a mere 700 odd officers.³³ Additionally, the diplomatic corps does not have sufficient numbers of personnel with adequate training in either functional issues or regional knowledge. Such a paucity of adequate training is bound to hobble the country's efforts to effect changes in the global system.

In a related vein, India also lacks a cadre of university professors, independent analysts in think tanks and analysts who can proffer timely, reliable and policy-relevant advice to the foreign

³² Sumit Ganguly and Dinshaw Mistry, 'The Case for the US-India Nuclear Agreement,' *World Policy Journal*, Vol.23, no.2 (Summer 2006), pp.11-9.

³³ Daniel Markey, 'Developing India's Foreign Policy "Software"', *Asia Policy*, (8 July 2009), pp.73-96.

policy making apparatus. High quality training institutions in international relations and strategic studies are sorely lacking in the country and so the products of even major universities are, for the most part, downright mediocre. Few of these individuals possess the requisite training to provide careful, considered alternative perspectives, based upon thorough research, to policymakers. Consequently, even if the policymaking apparatus were so inclined its ability to tap into external sources of knowledge and advice are sorely limited.

Third, this inadequacy of functional competence and regional expertise will also adversely affect the country's ability to influence, let alone shape, at least three vital emergent global regimes. These are in the realms of non-proliferation, international trade and climate change. Negotiations over the future of all these three regimes will require extremely skilled, knowledgeable and professional personnel. It is far from clear that India has a surfeit of negotiators of such quality.

Fourth and finally, on a more substantive note, India will have to fashion long-term strategies to handle its fractious neighbour Pakistan, deal with its nettlesome smaller neighbours, cope with the rise of the PRC and fashion a stable relationship with the US. The successful management of these relationships is nothing less than pivotal for India's rise to great power status. The reasons thereof are not far to seek. In the absence of a working Indo-Pakistani rapprochement, the continuing differences will dissipate a significant amount of India's time and some material resources. Similarly, contentious relations with its smaller neighbours, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal will also keep India mostly confined to the region. Also, on-going differences with the PRC on the long-standing border dispute, competition with it over hydrocarbons in distant parts of the world and the quest for influence in Southeast Asia will require the forging of a coherent strategy and not a series of ad hoc and idiosyncratic responses.

Eventually, no relationship, for good or ill, is more important to India than that with the US. Despite hasty and ill-considered analyses of imminent US decline it will, in all likelihood, remain one the most significant actors in global politics over the foreseeable future.³⁴ Fortunately, thanks to India's willingness to dispense with its tired and rank anti-Americanism the relationship has acquired some ballast. Unlike during the Cold War, when it was all but bereft of substance, today it has important military, diplomatic and economic foundations. Changes in regimes in New Delhi or Washington, D.C. may well propel the relationship forward or retard its progress. However, barring some unprecedented setback, it is now hard to visualise how it could revert to the past. That said, a productive working relationship with the US on a host of global issues can facilitate India's rise.

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³⁴ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008).

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Mission, Money and Machinery: Indian Newspapers in the Twentieth Century

Robin Jeffrey¹

Executive Summary

This paper provides readers with the context for the remarkable and sustained expansion of India's daily newspaper industry since the 1980s and the acceleration of that expansion in the twenty-first century at a time when daily print journalism in much of the world has declined. Covering a hundred years of the daily newspaper industry, the paper focuses on three themes: the ideas and motivations of the people who create newspapers, the financing of those newspapers and the technology through which they operate. The time-frame divides itself into four periods, each with identifiable and significant characteristics. In the first (1900 to 1920), from the time of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon to the ascendancy of M. K. Gandhi, English-owned newspapers slowly introduced industrial practices and journalistic conventions as they had evolved in Britain. A few Indian-owned English-language newspapers took up some of these innovations, but no Indian-language newspapers adopted such practices. Profit and ideology co-existed, but the largest and most influential (mostly British-owned) papers were more concerned with profit than preaching.

The second period was characterised by high nationalism. It extended roughly from 1920 to 50 – from Gandhi's first non-cooperation movement to the achievement of independence. Ideology was not everything; but it was king. People published newspapers so that others might be won over to various causes. The distinction in India between a "newspaper" and a "views paper" is rooted in this period when Gandhi succeeded Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) as the most famous journalist in the country.

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The third period unfolded once independence was achieved. Nationalist passion evaporated. British-owned newspapers passed into Indian hands; most Indian-language newspapers developed into small-scale family businesses. Newspapers slipped into predictable gentility, part of India's would-be socialist system. For those already in the newspaper business, income was steady, but there were few incentives to invest.

The fourth period begins from the end of Mrs Gandhi's "emergency" and continues to unfold in the second decade of the twenty-first century. A newspaper revolution began in 1977 with the lifting of censorship. The marriage of computer type-setting with photo-offset printing enabled faster, more attractive newspapers to be produced in Indian languages. An impatient middle-class encouraged aggressive marketing of consumer goods; advertising, the lifeblood of profitable newspapers, grew. And from the 1990s, television and then cell phones added previously unimaginable possibilities to the ways in which ideas could be communicated. The profession of journalism expanded with the demands of television and the output of a numerous schools of media and communication. The veneer of Indian journalism began to change from Edwardian England to 1980s USA. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Indian print journalism appears to have a remarkably favourable medium-term future.

In January 1900, George Nathaniel Curzon, Viceroy of India (1899-1905; 1859-1925), no doubt received each morning in Calcutta a copy of the *Statesman*, the leading British daily newspaper of eastern India. On a typical morning, he might have read a hymn of praise to the steam engine as the machine that transformed the 19th century and glanced at the publication details of the newspaper: 'Printed and Published ... at the 'Statesman' Steam Press, 3, Chowringhee.'² The *Statesman* was reputed to have begun a transformation of Indian journalism by importing one of the first steam-driven presses in India and installing the first rotary press in 1907. Newspaper production in Curzon's day was moving from a trade for artisans to an industry for capitalists. Circulations were small. In 1908, the *Statesman* claimed to be the largest newspaper in India: it sold 10,000 copies a day.³ Curzon read no Indian language, though he could consult the Vernacular Newspaper Reports, a fortnightly distillation, prepared by bureaucrats, of Indian language newspapers. But Indian language newspapers had tiny print runs published from flatbed presses that Gutenberg would have recognised; British rulers viewed them as troublesome but not influential.

One hundred years later, K. R. Narayanan, President of India (1997-2002; 1920-2005), would likely have included in his morning's reading in the presidential palace in New Delhi, the *Hindu* of Chennai, which began publishing a New Delhi edition only a year or so earlier. Technology now allowed it to publish from a dozen centres, and it sold 800,000 copies a day. Narayanan read the *Hindu* out of habit. It pre-dated his own birth by 42 years, and he had worked for the newspaper when he was young. In 2000, as the President of India and a man comfortable in at least three languages and scripts, Narayanan would have also looked at the great Hindi dailies, which in the previous decade had become the circulation leaders in India – *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar*. By the 21st century, they were each selling about two million copies a day. And as a Malayali – a man from Kerala – Narayanan would probably have glanced at the two great Malayalam dailies, *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*, which together sold close to three million copies a day. The newspaper in India was a very different vehicle than it had been in Curzon's day when an English newspaper selling 10,000 copies was the most circulated voice in a country of 240 million people, of whom only a tiny fraction of a percentage read English.

This paper skims across a hundred years of the daily newspaper industry in India. Three themes persist: the ideas and motivations of the people who create newspapers, the financing of those newspapers and the technology through which they operate. Though a hundred years of newspaper history is huge and unruly, it divides itself into four plausible periods, each with

² *Statesman* (14 January and 20 June 1900), in Niranjan Majumder (ed.), *The Statesman: an Anthology* (Calcutta: The Statesman Ltd, 1975), pp.182-4, 186.

³ *Statesman* (19 July 1908 and 18 December 1932), in Niranjan Majumder (ed.), *The Statesman: an Anthology* (Calcutta: The Statesman Ltd, 1975), pp.250-1 and 425-6. The *Statesman* installed a new press in Calcutta capable of 80,000 copies an hour in 1932.

identifiable and significant characteristics common to each period. In the first (1900-20), from Curzon's time to the ascendancy of M.K. Gandhi, English-owned newspapers slowly introduced industrial practices and journalistic conventions as they had evolved in Britain in the era of Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922) contributing to the rise of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*. A few Indian-owned English language newspapers took up some of these innovations, but no Indian-language newspapers were able to afford such practices – nor did they want to follow them. Profit and ideology co-existed, but the largest and most influential (mostly British-owned) papers were more concerned with profit than preaching. The author called this period 'Growth of an Industry.'

The second period, 'Birth of a Nation', is characterised by high nationalism. It extends from Gandhi's first country-wide non-cooperation movement in 1920 to the achievement of independence (roughly 1920-50). Ideology was not everything; but it was king. People spent money to publish newspapers so that others might be won over to various causes, ranging from the Indian nation to a communist state or even, indeed, to foster allegiance to the British Empire (not the most popular cause but one which did offer rewards for those who espoused it). The fond distinction in India between a 'news paper' and a 'views paper' is rooted in this period when Gandhi succeeded Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) as the most famous journalist in the country. Tilak, father of the journalism of militant nationalism with *Kesari* in Marathi and the *Mahratta* in English, had been sent to prison for his 'seditious' journalism.

The third period, 'Bland New World', unfolded once independence was achieved. The nationalist passion, which had induced people to put their hearts, souls and wealth into newspapers, evaporated. British-owned newspapers passed into Indian hands; most Indian language newspapers developed into small scale family businesses, little different from running an oil mill or a grain dealership. Newspapers slipped into slightly tattered, predictable gentility, part of India's aspiringly socialist, apologetically capitalist system. For those already in the newspaper business, income was steady, but there were few incentives to invest in expansion or new equipment, and anything that had to be imported involved lengthy minuets with the bureaucracy for permits and quotas.

The fourth period, 'Brave New World', began from the end of Mrs Gandhi's 'emergency' and continues to unfold in the second decade of the 21st century. A newspaper revolution began in 1977 with the lifting of censorship. The marriage of computer type-setting with photo-offset printing enabled faster, more attractive newspapers to be produced in Indian languages. An impatient middle-class encouraged aggressive marketing of consumer goods; advertising, the lifeblood of profitable newspapers, thus grew. From the 1990s, television followed by cell phones added previously unimaginable possibilities to the ways in which ideas could be communicated. The profession of journalism expanded with the demands of television and the

output of numerous schools of media and communication. The veneer of Indian journalism began to change from Edwardian England to 1980s United States of America (USA).

Growth of an Industry: 1900 to 1920

The incentives to produce newspapers are ideology and profit – mission and money. Successful newspapers sometimes combine the two. Ideology can carry a newspaper for a time, but profit is essential for long-term survival. The oldest newspaper in India illustrates the pillar of profit. *Mumbai Samachar*, a Gujarati newspaper, first appeared in 1822 to provide commercial information to Gujarati-speaking traders around India's coast and the Arabian Sea. In 2008, its circulation was down to about 90,000 copies a day, the result, according to one observer, of the decline in numbers of Parsis who had been its primary base of readers.⁴ The key aspect of *Mumbai Samachar*, however, was that it brought profit to its owners by filling a need: information about prices and commercial conditions for Gujarati-speaking merchants. Speed was not essential, and politics was less important than commerce.

When Curzon arrived in 1899, printing in India was still using the techniques of Gutenberg and journalism was only just beginning to define itself as a profession. 'It was the day of the amateur', wrote Stanley Reed, who worked for the *Times of India* from 1897 to 1923, the last 17 years as the editor. Among the British, the *Pioneer*, which was based in Allahabad, was widely read across the subcontinent, arriving a few days after publication. The *Pioneer* was concerned with world news more than news in India, and was deemed 'a magazine rather than a newspaper.' Its circulation never passed 4,000 copies. The *Times of India* was 'produced direct from type [the Gutenberg way] on an obsolete flat-bed Middleton [press] ... which broke down at least once if not twice a week.' Its circulation was 3,000 a day.⁵ The leading British-owned daily was the *Statesman*, founded by the same Robert Knight who had created the *Times of India*; the *Statesman* was run by two of his sons. Its rotary presses were the first in India. Capable of 25,000 copies an hour of a 24-page paper, they printed from rounded plates cast from hot metal poured into curved paper-mache moulds, created by pressing the wet paper-mache mixture onto a flat bed of type.⁶ This was the mass production of industry, not the craft of individual artisans.

Print shops of any kind were relatively rare, though they had 'multiplied very rapidly in the last quarter of the 19th century' after the opening of the Suez Canal and the establishment of

⁴ *ABC* (July-December 2008) and Aakar Patel, *The News* (10 May 2009), www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=176791. Accessed on 23 September 2009.

⁵ Stanley Reed, *The India I Knew, 1897-1947* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), pp.30, 33.

⁶ *Statesman* (9 January 2007), in Niranjana Majumder (ed.), *The Statesman: an Anthology* (Calcutta: The Statesman Ltd, 1975), pp.241.

widespread railway and telegraph systems.⁷ In the 1880s, the Government of India identified just over a thousand presses. The same estimate put the number of newspapers in English at 127 and in Indian languages at 259.⁸ Average circulations were ‘somewhere between 250 and 300 copies.’⁹ The first print run of the *Hindu* in 1878 was 80 copies.¹⁰

For British people in India, as well as the *Statesman*, the *Pioneer* and the *Times of India*, there were the *Madras Mail* and *Madras Times*, the *Englishman* in Calcutta and the *Civil and Military Gazette* in Lahore. Substantial Indian-owned English newspapers were few. The *Hindu* in Madras began as a weekly, went tri-weekly in 1883 and became a daily in 1889.¹¹ In Calcutta, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* began in 1868 as a Bengali daily but famously switched to English to avoid the provisions of the short-lived Vernacular Press Act of 1878.¹² Calcuttans also had Surendranath Bannerji’s *Bengalee*. The *Tribune* began in Lahore in 1881.¹³ And two of the surviving pioneers of Indian language newspapers, *Deepika* and *Malayala Manorama* published for the first time in 1887 and 1889. By the end of the 19th century, there were said to be 390 ‘journals’ coming out regularly in Indian languages.¹⁴

What was a journalist? And what was a newspaper supposed to do? The definition of the profession had accelerated in Britain and the USA from the 1880s when ‘an ardent professionalisation of journalism’ began.¹⁵ The young men who produced the first edition of the *Hindu* in 1878, on the other hand, ‘had no idea of the responsibility ... its publication would involve, of how to conduct it, [or] of the expenditure to be incurred.’ They started the paper for ideological reasons: to reply to British-owned newspapers’ criticisms of the appointment of an Indian as a judge of the Madras High Court.¹⁶ ‘The journalism of the period’ in the Hindi and Urdu press, ‘was the journalism of the Pandits and literary personalities’, Bhatnagar concluded. ‘Few papers were connected with correspondents or reporters.’¹⁷ Stanley Reed found only

⁷ Ramratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2003; 1st published in 1947), p.483.

⁸ *Statesman* (27 January 1889), in Niranjana Majumder (ed.), *The Statesman: an Anthology* (Calcutta: The Statesman Ltd, 1975), pp.117-18.

⁹ Ramratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2003; 1st published in 1947), p.78. The Reports on Native Newspapers, or ‘Vernacular Press Reports,’ sometimes reported circulations.

¹⁰ Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *A Hundred Years of the Hindu* (Madras: Kasturi and Sons, n.d. [1978]), p.1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.4, 7.

¹² Robin Jeffrey, *India’s Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.129-30. J. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1955), p.187.

¹³ Prakash Ananda, *A History of the Tribune* (Chandigarh: The Tribune Trust, 1986), p.195.

¹⁴ Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *A Hundred Years of the Hindu* (Madras: Kasturi and Sons, n.d. [1978]), p.170.

¹⁵ Michael Schudson, ‘The US model of journalism: exception or exemplar?’, in Schudson, *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p.32.

¹⁶ Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *A Hundred Years of the Hindu* (Madras: Kasturi and Sons, n.d. [1978]), p.1.

¹⁷ Ramratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2003; 1st published in 1947), p.171.

slightly more professionalism when he arrived from Britain at the *Times of India*: ‘there was a tranquil leisureliness in the journalism of the nineties.’¹⁸

Politics dragged newspaper circulation behind it, sometimes assisted by the possibility of profit. In the period before the First World War, the political excitement that accompanied the partition of Bengal in 1905 in eastern India and Tilak’s trials and imprisonment for his Marathi writings in *Kesari* in 1898 and 1908, propelled demand. Newspapers expanded, invested and reduced their prices. In Lahore, the *Tribune* became a daily in 1906 and cut its price to two annas.¹⁹ The *Times of India* installed rotary presses just before the war, dropped the cost of the paper from four annas to one anna and quadrupled circulation in three days.²⁰ The Knight brothers at the *Statesman* had already recognised that ‘a new reading public was growing up in the thousands of matriculates from the universities’; they had installed rotary presses and cut the price to an anna at the beginning of the new century and ‘must be given the credit of the pioneer of popular journalism in India’, according to Stanley Reed.²¹

In percentages, literacy figures appeared deplorable – 5.4 per cent of 238 million people could read and write in 1901. Nevertheless, this amounted to 13 million potential readers of a newspaper, and given that 5,000 copies constituted a very large print run from the flatbed presses that prevailed across India, this was a market that outstripped supply – as the *Times of India*, *Tribune* and *Statesman*, among others, recognised.

Table 1: Population, crude literacy rates and number of literates, 1901-2001

Year	Population in millions	Crude literacy rate in per cent	Number of literates in millions
1901	238	5.4	13
1911	252	5.9	15
1921	251	7.2	18
1931	279	9.5	27
1941	319	16.1	51
1951	361	16.7	60
1961	439	24	105

¹⁸ Stanley Reed, *The India I Knew, 1897-1947* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), p.33.

¹⁹ Prakash Ananda, *A History of the Tribune* (Chandigarh: The Tribune Trust, 1986), p.195. As a weekly in the 1880s, the paper had cost four annas (p.193).

²⁰ Stanley Reed, *The India I Knew, 1897-1947* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), pp.38-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.35.

1971	548	29.4	161
1981	683	36.2	247
1991	846	42.8	362
2001	1029	55.3	569

Source: *Census of India* for relevant years.

People who published newspapers in Indian languages faced various challenges. Technology was one. Gutenberg-style printing requires small metal shapes: letters that represent sounds. In the Roman alphabet, about 70 shapes will supply most needs – 26 letters in upper and lower cases, numbers from 1 to 10 and some punctuation marks. But Indian languages form composite symbols to represent composite sounds. In English ‘p’ plus ‘r’ becomes ‘pr’. In Indian languages, a new symbol – neither ‘p’ nor ‘r’, but a combination of the two – is required. Up to 900 different metal shapes would be necessary to do justice to some languages. But making types is expensive, and corners had to be cut. Print in Indian languages could be unattractive to the eye and sometimes unrecognisable to those unaccustomed to corner-cutting conventions. Publishers also had to shape language. Whose style was to be used? ‘It was not easy in those days to conduct a daily newspaper in the Tamil language’, S. Natarajan wrote. *Swadesamitram* ‘contributed to the development of the Tamil language by expressing modern world events and ideas in a language ... easily understood.’²² In Hindi, a battle had begun to determine just what the language of north India ought to be. ‘Standardisation of language had not taken place’ by the beginning of the 20th century, wrote Ramratan Bhatnagar ruefully in 1947. ‘The tendency of reverting to dialects was so great that there were many papers which could only be enjoyed by a limited circle of readers.’²³ This shaping of language – of legitimising some forms and excluding others – intensified over the next fifty years and continues in the 21st century.²⁴ Newspapers play a crucial role: old guards seek to preserve ‘chaste’ and ‘pure’ conventions and styles; successful mass newspapers often celebrate the argot of the streets.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, only four Indian language newspapers that currently survive in the 21st century existed: *Malayala Manorama* and *Nasrani Deepika* in Malayalam, *Kesari* in Marathi and *Mumbai Samachar* in Gujarati. Their combined circulations did not

²² J. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1955), p.105.

²³ Ramratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2003; 1st published in 1947), p.117.

²⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.99-102. For discussion of a vast theme, see Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940. Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Alok Rai, *Hindi Nationalism* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001).

exceed 10,000 copies. However, in the 1920s, Gandhi's *Young India*, an English weekly, begun in 1919 and achieved print runs of 40,000.²⁵

Birth of a Nation: 1920 to 1950

Gandhi's message of militant nationalism, propagated in part through his skill as a communicator, changed Indian journalism, along with a substantial growth in the number of literates to 50 million potential newspaper readers (Table 1). By the time of independence and Gandhi's assassination, European dominance of the newspaper industry had almost vanished, and newspapers in Indian languages were increasingly becoming businesses, rather than social and political missions.

The Gandhian era also produced a generation of journalists drawn to the industry by idealism. As they matured and India struggled towards independence, they defined and shaped Indian journalism. Some of that era set out to be journalists. J. N. Sahni, who edited the *Hindustan Times* from 1926-33, went to the USA to do a journalism qualification at the University of Michigan.²⁶ Dr N.B. Parulekar, who founded the Marathi daily *Sakal*, had done a PhD at Columbia University. Having worked in the USA, Sahni was dismayed at 'the mechanical limitations of newspapers in India' and 'realised that the readers wanted more news and better presentation.'²⁷ Parulekar's *Sakal* was ridiculed because it reported on vegetable prices in the Pune bazaars and closely covered local events; previously 'news' had been about distant wars and politics. The national cause was essential for both Sahni's *Hindustan Times* and Parulekar's *Sakal* – and for a host of other publications that grew from the 1920s. Sahni went to jail in the civil disobedience movement in 1932, and the circulation of the *Hindustan Times* soared on the back of the national movement to 30,000 copies produced on ancient presses.²⁸

Newspapers founded in this period, particularly those in Indian languages, owed much to ideology- one incentive to commit journalism (profit is the other). *Aj*, the oldest of surviving Hindi dailies, was founded in 1920 to support the Gandhian movement. Swaminath Sadanand's legendary *Free Press Journal*, founded in 1930, was a model of such newspapers. It was 'not so much a business venture as a cause', but aimed 'at the common man as its pricing policy and writing style proclaimed in every issue.'²⁹ Sadanand promoted the national cause aggressively

²⁵ Anu Bandhyopadhyaya, *M. K. Gandhi: Author, Journalist, Printer, Publisher* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1994), p.14.

²⁶ Milton Israel, *Communications and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920-47* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.52. J. N. Sahni, *Truth about the Indian Press* (Mumbai: Allied, 1974), pp.11-22.

²⁷ J. N. Sahni, *Truth about the Indian Press* (Mumbai: Allied, 1974), pp.31-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.91, 98.

²⁹ Jaikumar Karnani, 'Foreword', in *The Saga of a Newspaper: Fifty Years of Free Press Journal* (Mumbai: Indian National Press, n.d. [1981]), p.21.

and added entertaining sweeteners like extensive sports coverage to the daily diet of politics and nationalism. After independence, he died broke and broken, but many of the people who worked for the *Free Press Journal* helped to define the meaning of Indian journalism.³⁰

The evolution from 1910 of the Associated Press of India (API), forerunner of today's Press Trust of India, highlighted new pressures exerted by commerce and nationalism – and the potential of new technology. API eventually became a subsidiary of Reuters in 1919 and a tool for British governments in disseminating their versions of the Gandhian national movement. But API developed out of India-wide interest in news of the First World War and in national politics and from the fact that an increasing number of newspapers looked for ways to fill their pages frugally but with timely news. 'Very often', one old editor recalled, 'there was not enough news to fill the available space.'³¹ API offered its clients a steady flow of telegraphed news at relatively cheap rates. Nationalists like Sadanand attempted to set up rival agencies but were thwarted by newspapers' parsimony and imperial penalties. Nevertheless by the late 1930s, API was providing copy to scores of Indian language papers as well as its large English language clients. National newspaper institutions fostered national thinking – even those like API that were not intended to do so.³²

By the time Ian Stephens, newly promoted editor of the *Statesman*, still the premier newspaper in India, attended his first meeting of the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference in October 1942, most of the key figures were Indian, and Indian language newspapers like *Tej* and *Janma Bhoomi* played an important part in the tempestuous discussions.³³ Stephens calculated 'several thousand publications in the country, most of them negligibly small.' He also noted the two inter-connected motivators of newspaper production: ideology and income. By the end of September 1942, though many newspapers had stopped publication in August to oppose the government's suppression of the Quit India movement, 'commercial need ... soon compelled reopenings', and no more than 50 remained closed, 'only one ... a newspaper of standing.'³⁴ The commercial need was inescapable. Durga Das noted the founding of three fiery nationalist newspapers in the 1920s, none of which could 'survive the fierce competition of the time'.³⁵

³⁰ M.V. Kamath, '21, Dalal Street', in *The Saga of a Newspaper: Fifty Years of Free Press Journal* (Mumbai: Indian National Press, n.d. [1981]), p.30.

³¹ Sham Lal, 'Foreword', in *George, Pothon Joseph's India* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1992), p.5.

³² Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York: John Day, 1969), pp.40-2. S.C. Bhatt, *Indian Press since 1955* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1997), pp.40-1. Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.42. Ramratan Bhatnagar, *The Rise and Growth of Hindi Journalism, 1826-1945* (Varanasi: Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2003; 1st published in 1947), p.181.

³³ Ian Stephens, *Monsoon Morning* (London: Ernest Benn, 1966), pp.47-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

³⁵ Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York: John Day, 1969), p.109.

Gandhi's ascendancy after 1920 provided a powerful impulse to ideologically driven newspapers. Gandhi himself was an outstanding communicator, and his publications in this period, *Young India*, *Navajivan* and *Harijan*, were central to the Congress and the national movement. They were eagerly awaited, widely read and readily able to find the funds to sustain them. Other idealistic nationalist publishers, such as Sadanand, had a more difficult task. They had to build readership, keep the British at bay and pay the bills.

One of the survivors that managed both to fulfil its nationalist ideals and stay solvent was *Aj* of Varanasi, founded in 1920 by a wealthy commercial man, Shiv Prasad Gupta (1885-1944). Gupta, however, had finances from other sources to support his newspapers. Among the survivors of the period were *Ananda Bazar Patrika* in Bengali (1922), *Mathrubhumi* in Malayalam (1924), *Sakal* in Marathi (1932), *Dina Thanthi* in Tamil (1942) and *Dainik Jagran* in Hindi (1942).

The commercial pressures that mould newspaper industries manifested themselves in the associations formed to guard the interests of newspapers and their proprietors. The Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) was founded in 1939, the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference (AINEC) in 1940 and the Indian Languages Newspaper Association (ILNA) in 1941.³⁶ The creation of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) in 1948 to collect reliable circulation figures symbolised the supremacy of business over ideology after independence. To sell advertisements, newspapers needed to be able to proclaim to advertisers the number of eyes that would see an advertisement. Commercial advertisements (as opposed to government advertising which may be a cross between a bribe and a dole) go to newspapers with the greatest number of prosperous readers, and no major newspaper can survive for long without a steady stream of advertising. The feisty nationalist newspapers of pre-1947 either became cash-conscious businesses after independence or failed. The *Bombay Chronicle*, the legendary nationalist paper whose editor B.G. Horniman (1873-1948) had been deported by the British government in 1919, wound up in 1959.

English language newspapers passed out of European hands or stopped publishing. *The Englishman* of Calcutta, founded in 1821, folded in 1934.³⁷ The *Pioneer* was sold to Indian businessmen in the 1930s.³⁸ And the *Times of India* famously came into the hands of Ramakrishna Dalmia (1893-1978) in 1944. 'To Dalmia', wrote D.R. Mankekar, 'a newspaper plant was no different from a cement ... factory. Making profit ... was the sole motivation.'

³⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.131-2. J. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1955), p.249.

³⁷ *Statesman*, (27 March 1934), in Niranjana Majumder (ed.), *The Statesman: an Anthology* (Calcutta: The Statesman Ltd, 1975), p.436.

³⁸ G. N. S. Raghavan, *The Press in India* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1994), p.110.

Dalmia also liked to use his newspapers to promote ideas of varying idiosyncrasy, but he relied on his editors to maintain the paper's circulation.³⁹ Dalmia lost control of the paper and went to prison in 1956 for fraud, and the paper passed into the hands of his son-in-law Shanti Prasad Jain (1911-77) and his family.⁴⁰

The passion that lured young men⁴¹ to journalism during the nationalist period dispersed after independence into various movements, goals and ideals. 'During the pre-independence period', M. V. Kamath wrote, 'it was easy to distinguish between right and wrong, what was patriotic and what was not. The British were wrong; the Congress was right.'⁴² The change was apparent within a few years. The first Press Commission noted in 1952 that 'newspapers are no longer run as a mission, but have become commercial ventures.'⁴³ Such ventures could well reflect the passion of their proprietors, as Dalmia's proclaimed affection for the cow suggested. Ram Nath Goenka, owner of the *Indian Express* chain, similarly used his newspapers to pursue causes dear to him. But Goenka was 'a stingy paymaster' who ran his newspapers like a 'Marwari shop', and though they were intended 'to serve the cause', they were also required 'at least to break even'.⁴⁴

When India became independent in 1947, the literacy rate was 17 per cent. About 300 daily newspapers sold fewer than 2.5 million copies a day; close to 30 per cent of those newspapers were in English, a language read by no more than six or seven million in a population of 361 million. Fewer than 15 per cent of dailies were in Hindi, the soon-to-be national language spoken by 150 million.⁴⁵ Yet national newspaper institutions and networks had developed, and among the small elite that created independent India's institutions in the 1950s, newspapers, particularly in English, were a constant concern. Men who had entered journalism to support the national movement were about to create a unique brand of Indian journalism. They brought to their newspapers a pride in independence, sympathy for Nehru's vision of non-alignment, a preoccupation with national politics and an ability to practise journalism within the tight budgets provided by the commercial families that controlled major newspapers.

³⁹ D. R. Mankekar, *Sheer Anecdote* (New Delhi: Allied, 1983), p.173. Nothing is to be learned from the psychedelic Neelima Dalmia Adhar, *Father Dearest: the Life and Times of R. K. Dalmia* (New Delhi: Roli, 2003).

⁴⁰ Neelima Dalmia Adhar, *Father Dearest: the Life and Times of R. K. Dalmia* (New Delhi: Roli, 2003), pp.140-1.

⁴¹ There were almost no women working as regular newspapers people during the nationalist time. Rama Jha, *Women and the Indian Print Media* (New Delhi: Chanakya, 1992), pp.5-6.

⁴² M. V. Kamath, *A Reporter at Large* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002), p.205.

⁴³ Mohit Mitra, *A History of Indian Journalism* (Kolkata: National Book Agency, 1993; first published 1969), p.15, quoting *Report of the Press Commission* (1954), p.482.

⁴⁴ B.G. Verghese, *Warrior of the Fourth Estate: Ramnath Goenka of the Express* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2005), pp.319, 193.

⁴⁵ S.C. Bhatt, *Indian Press since 1955* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1997), pp.6-7.

Bland New World: 1950-1977

‘The light has gone out of our lives’, Nehru said after Gandhi was murdered. Indian journalists often give the impression that the light of journalism steadily dimmed after independence in 1947. ‘In my time’, one wrote, ‘journalism was a mission, not a profession. It was a means of serving the nation.’⁴⁶ The refrain continues with the laments about the decline in the role of the editor and the rise in importance of proprietors and their business managers. There is little new or uniquely Indian in this. Even in the glory days of the nationalist movement, ‘our increments depended on the whims of the proprietor, who could hire or fire young men at his sweet will.’⁴⁷ A critique of the United States (US) journalism, published in 1993, had the plaintive title: *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom*.⁴⁸

Indian newspapers after independence reflected the refashioning of the Indian state – the ‘Nehruvian model’ in which the state deployed scarce resources to create equality and reduce poverty. Print media was seen as important in this process – though, remarkably, television and radio did not get similar attention.⁴⁹ Governments spent considerable energy in analysing the press, which politicians and policy-makers often concluded was hopelessly in thrall to commerce and capitalism. Between 1950 and 1977, Indian governments set up two Press Commissions (1952 and 1977), an inquiry into small newspapers (1964), and a fact-finding committee into newspaper economics (1975). Far less attention was paid to radio and television, largely because governments already controlled them and the elites in power were not familiar with these new media. But everyone in the elite of newly independent India read newspapers, even though newspaper penetration in the 1950s and 1960s was fewer than 10 dailies for every 1,000 people. Newspapers fell into the comfortable mould of bridled capitalism that characterised Indian business enterprises after 1947. Governments complained about the newspapers’ lack of commitment to a socialist India; newspaper managements complained about government controls and regulation; but each learned to live with the other. Newspapers enjoyed steady and predictable government advertising and found ways to profit in an undemanding, urban environment.

The newly independent state took over the role of the colonial government in attempting to tame and manage newspapers. The first amendment to the constitution which was passed in June 1951, only six months after the constitution’s inauguration, curtailed the freedom of the press by enabling governments to ban publication of materials deemed to endanger the interests of the

⁴⁶ N. G. Jog in R. Srinivasan (ed.), *Crusaders of the Fourth Estate in India* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1989), p.15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.15-16.

⁴⁸ Doug Underwood, *When MBAs Rule the Newsroom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ Robin Jeffrey, ‘The Mahatma Didn’t Like the Movies and Why It Matters: Indian Broadcasting Policy, 1920s-1990s’, *Global Media and Communication*, vol.2, no.2 (2006), pp.207-27.

state. This was followed in October 1951 with a Press (Objectionable Matters) Act.⁵⁰ In response to the protests of journalists, many of whom had spent their careers playing cat-and-mouse with the British, Nehru's government set up a Press Commission to examine the role of the press in free India, and out of the Press Commission, two bodies emerged: the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) in 1956 and the Press Council in 1966.⁵¹

Attempting to map and measure newspapers across India, the Press Commission of 1954 estimated there were 320 dailies with a total circulation of 2.5 million.⁵² A rough calculation then suggests (Table 2) there were perhaps eight dailies for every 1,000 Indians. English was the largest newspaper language in the country, with daily circulations of close to 700,000, which would translate into a newspaper for every two speakers of English. Malayalam, the language of Kerala, had the next highest rate of penetration: 15 dailies for every 1,000 Malayalam speakers. For the national language, Hindi, the calculation was three dailies for 1,000 speakers.

⁵⁰ Sharad Karkhanis, *Indian Politics and the Role of the Press* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981), pp.84-7. Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.183-5. The Press (Objectionable Matters) Act lapsed in 1956.

⁵¹ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.188. C. P. Mathen, *I Have Borne Much* (Madras: Ampthill, 1951). The composition of the commission hinted at the compromises that a newly independent government had to make. Among the members was Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, who as the diwan (minister) of the princely state of Travancore had closed down *Malayala Manorama* in 1938 and done his best to ruin the proprietors.

⁵² *Press Commission* (1954), Part 1, *Report*, pp.15, 17.

Table 2: Daily circulations, number of speakers of a language and estimate of dailies per thousand speakers, 1951

Language	Number of daily newspapers	Daily Circulation in '000	Estimated speakers in '000	Dailies per '000 speakers
Assamese	1	3	5000	0.6
Bengali	7	240	25100	10
English	41	697	1100	634
Gujarati	23	187	16300	11
Hindi	76	379	150000	3
Kannada	25	72	14500	5
Malayalam	21	196	13400	15
Marathi	26	191	27100	7
Oriya	3	43	12200	4
Punjabi	9	23	n.a.	
Tamil	12	168	26600	6
Telugu	6	98	33000	3
Urdu	70	213	n.a.	
TOTAL	320	2510	324300	8

Source: *Press Commission (1954), Part 1, Report, pp.15, 17.*

Such calculations are rough and raw, but they suggest trends that other indicators help to confirm. At independence, the newspaper was a thoroughly urban medium, except for Kerala. The dominance of English language newspapers and their penetration among English speakers (Column E of Table 2 and Figure 1) was based on sales in the great cities. Similarly, the fact that Gujarati and Bengali were the two Indian languages – after Malayalam – in which people were most likely to read a newspaper resulted from their prevalence in the metropolises of Mumbai and Kolkata. Circulations were small: 240,000 copies a day for 25 million Bengali speakers; fewer than 190,000 copies a day for 16 million Gujarati speakers. Yet this was more than three times the penetration for Hindi, the national language, which had no great city to call its own and published an estimated three daily newspapers for every 1,000 Hindi speakers.

What explains the front-running place of Malayalam, the language of Kerala? Malayalam newspapers were the most prevalent in India among their language group – 15 dailies per thousand Malayalam speakers, five times the penetration of Hindi. Politics drove newspaper circulation in Malayalam. Kerala, of course, had one essential quality for newspaper consumption: literacy, the highest rates in India. Moreover, by 1951, Kerala had had three

celebrated suppressions of politically provocative newspapers – *Swadeshabhimani* in 1910, *Malayala Manorama* in 1938 and the *Deshabhimani* in 1948. By later standards, the circulations of these newspapers were small. In the 1940s when the Congress government shut it down, the Communist *Deshabhimani* was printing no more than 8,000 copies a day.⁵³ It paid the bills through its cover price, donations and occasional appeals to its readers. *Malayala Manorama*, on the other hand, was commercial venture from the start. It was founded as one of the first joint-stock companies in south India by the Kandathil family, established Syrian Christian merchants and estate owners.⁵⁴ *Malayala Manorama* installed its first rotary press only in 1950, but by the middle of the decade, both it and *Mathrubhumi* were selling more than 50,000 copies a day.⁵⁵ In Kerala, the intense political mobilisation, carried on by the Communist Party of India, the Congress and various smaller parties and social movements, is consistent with the argument that political action drags newspaper circulations behind it. The producers of those newspapers may be either keen commercial people who sense opportunity, political zealots who seek followers or a combination of the two. The sense of mission and ideology that drove Indian journalism in the pre-independence period endured in Kerala in the contest between communists and their opponents.

Though most of journalism lost the ideological fuel – Indian independence – after 1947, newspapers became a comfortable business for many existing publications. Proprietors now behaved in much the same way as other Indian capitalist enterprises at the beginning of the ‘socialist experiment’. Competition was discouraged, government advertising was regular and reliable for established newspapers, and the selling price of the paper, even with modest circulations, went a long way to covering the cost of production. The *Hindustan Times*, for example, sold for one anna (one-sixteenth of a rupee) in 1938 and two annas by 1946.⁵⁶ It reached two and a half annas (about 16 per cent of a rupee) in 1952 and stayed there until the late 1960s.

What was ‘news’ in the era after independence? Local news, which later became the vital ingredient of Indian language newspapers, was thin. Mankekar relished the fact that the Delhi edition of the *Times of India* when it began in 1950 has ‘six local reporters as against no more than one or two of our rivals, the *Hindustan Times* and the *Statesman*.’⁵⁷ ‘News’ was the activities of the legislatures and politicians and what came in on the wire. ‘Indian journalism’,

⁵³ For the Kerala story, Robin Jeffrey, ‘Testing Concepts about Print, Newspapers and Politics: Kerala, India, 1800-2007’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.68, no.2 (May 2009), pp.476-8.

⁵⁴ *Story of Manorama* (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama, 1968), p.9.

⁵⁵ *Annual Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India 1958* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958), p.38.

⁵⁶ Prem Shankar Jha (ed.), *History in the Making: 75 Years of the Hindustan Times* (New Delhi: Hindustan Times, 2000).

⁵⁷ Mankekar, *Leaves*, p.175.

wrote Mankekar, ‘was largely politics.’⁵⁸ The *Hindustan Times* dominated the Delhi market with sales of 32,000 a day.⁵⁹ The grey, serious English language dailies of the 1960s, and their skinny, badly printed Indian language contemporaries, rarely went to the village for news. Exceptions, such as *Sakal*, the Marathi daily of Dr Parulekar, were ridiculed for grassroots reporting.⁶⁰

National institutions established in the 1940s, like the Press Trust of India, made newspapers into hinges of the Indian nation after independence. The spirit is captured in the line in English on the masthead of *Mathrubhumi*, the great Malayalam daily, founded to promote the Gandhian nationalist movement: ‘The National Daily in Malayalam’. Sentiments about being part of a national profession and a nationwide endeavour acquired institutional substance. The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) was founded in 1939, the All-India Newspaper Editors’ Conference (AINEC) in 1940, the Indian Languages Newspaper Association (ILNA) in 1941 and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) in 1948. The AINEC brought editors together in an informal club, just as the two associations brought together publishers and owners. And by auditing and certifying circulations, the Audit Bureau helped to create a national advertising market by providing a mechanism to estimate the value of an advertisement in a particular publication: how many copies did a publication sell?

However, for the daily maintenance of newspapers as hinges, loosely fastening together a disparate country, the news agencies were crucial. The Press Trust of India (PTI), taking shape out of the Associated Press of India in 1949, provided enough news on the teleprinter to fill the skimpy newspapers of the time.⁶¹ ‘All the news [the *Free Press Journal* of Mumbai] needed came from the *Press Trust of India*’, wrote M.V. Kamath.⁶² The country-wide sharing of PTI’s stories, and those of its smaller cousin, the United News of India (UNI), oiled India’s hinges every day. Copy arrived – and still arrives – in English to be translated on the desks of individual newspapers into every language from Assamese to Urdu. Syndication, which Durga Das claimed to have pioneered in 1959 with the India News and Features Alliance (INFA), served a similar function by bringing national columnists to audiences all over India.⁶³

Censorship and control of the media took a new form after independence. The British had struggled to control newspapers. The failed Vernacular Press Act of 1878 (abandoned in 1882) was one of the best known examples, but variations were used throughout the national movement, particularly in 1910 and 1930. Tilak’s writing in *Kesari* had led to his imprisonment

⁵⁸ Mankekar, *Leaves*, p.308.

⁵⁹ Mankekar, *Leaves*, p.175.

⁶⁰ Robin Jeffrey, *India’s Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.89.

⁶¹ S. C. Bhatt, *Indian Press since 1955* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1997), p.42.

⁶² M. V. Kamath, *A Reporter at Large* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002), p.190.

⁶³ Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York: John Day, 1969), pp.358-9. M. V. Kamath, *A Reporter at Large* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002), p.721.

and symbolic martyrdom, and Sadanand of the *Free Press Journal* ‘had to face a jail sentence’ which put ‘a halo round his head’ in the 1930s.⁶⁴ After independence, Nehru’s government confronted the chaos of partition and a communist insurgency. The first amendment of the Indian constitution in June 1951 curtailed the right to freedom of speech. Indian governments have sought to guide and control the media ever since, most notably when full censorship was imposed during Mrs Gandhi’s cumbersome ‘emergency’ of 1975-77.⁶⁵ The amended constitution gives governments the potential to prevent stories from being run and to penalise publications that ignore instructions.

Table 3: Expansion of daily newspapers since independence

	1952	1977	1991	2007
Number of dailies who reported to the Registrar of Newspapers for India	330	603	923	2,337
Circulation of dailies reporting to the Registrar, '000	2,500	10,672	24,290	98,837

Sources: *PII*, 1978, pp.11, 52, 135; 1992, pp.9, 45; 2006-07, p.31.

In the first 30 years after independence, newspapers proved a comfortable business, manufacturing a scarce product for a limited market. They grew slowly (see Table 3), and English remained the largest selling language. Signs of a more competitive environment emerged in the 1960s in Kerala, the hotbed of Indian newspapers, when *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi* opened additional publication centres in each other’s territory. Just before Mrs Gandhi proclaimed the ‘emergency’ in 1975, other indications of change were in the air. Ramoji Rao started the trend-setting *Eenadu* in Telugu on ancient presses in Vishakatapatam in 1974, and *Dainik Jagran* and *Aaj* started publication centres in each other’s territory in 1974-5.⁶⁶ The censorship of the ‘emergency’ proved a pressure-cooker: once it was removed, publication energy overflowed. The new government permitted the import of modern equipment. Publishers began the switch to computers and offset printing and opened new publication centres to bring their newspapers closer to new readers. New kinds of publications came into their own (the news magazine, *India Today*, founded in 1976, was one example). Advertisers and publishers fell into each other’s arms, the former searching for new markets and the latter full of good news about how their publications could penetrate such markets in small towns and rural India. After the

⁶⁴ M. V. Kamath, *A Reporter at Large* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002), pp.196-7. J. Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1955), p.211.

⁶⁵ G. N. S. Raghavan, *The Press in India* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1994), pp.138-42.

⁶⁶ Robin Jeffrey, *India’s Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.81-5. For distinctions about rare, scarce and mass media, see Robin Jeffrey, ‘Testing Concepts about Print, Newspapers and Politics: Kerala, India, 1800-2007’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.68, no.2 (May 2009).

emergency', the bland new world of post-1947 seemed to become, at least for newspapers, exciting and brave.

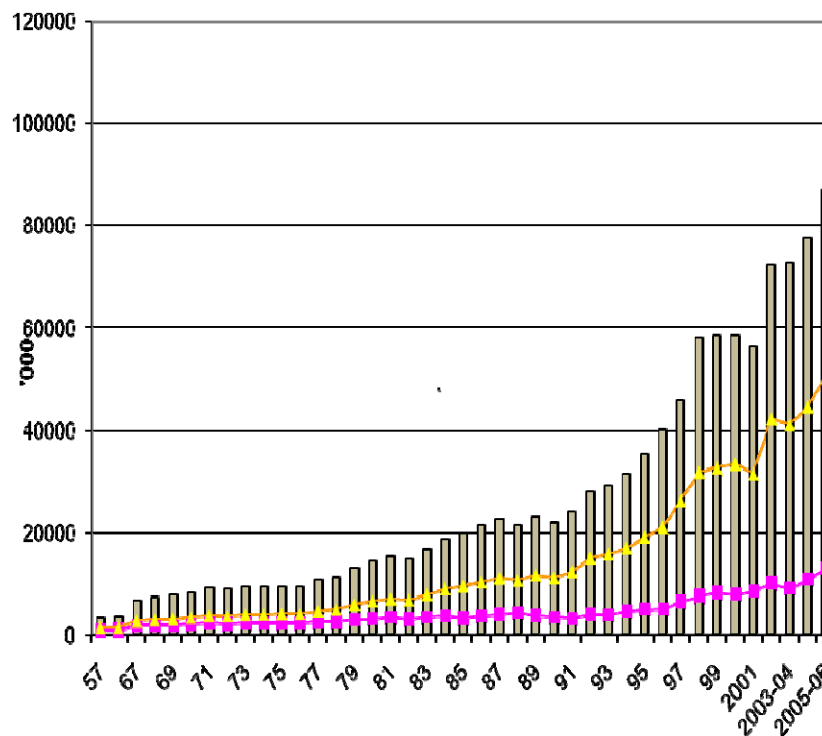
Brave New World: 1977 and After

The explosion in newspaper circulations at the end of the 'emergency' seemed dramatic then, though paltry in comparison to the first decade of the 21st century. The significant landmark came in 1979 when the circulation of Hindi dailies exceeded that of English for the first time by a few thousand copies.⁶⁷ For the first 32 years of independence, the remarkable fact had been that English, a language of no more than five per cent of the population, sold more newspapers each day than the national language spoken by more than 40 per cent of the population.

A widening involvement of people in politics – the 'excesses of the emergency' were catalytic for many – produced circulation increases, and the growth of advertising compelled proprietors to reach out to new readers and rewarded those who did. Until the 1980s, markets in Indian languages did not seem worth an advertiser's rupees. But from the end of the 'emergency', proprietors of Indian language newspapers began to succeed in their campaigns to show their effectiveness as advertising media. As production of consumer goods grew, so did the advertising industry, and the golden days before commercial television found rich advertising revenues flowing to newspapers that could demonstrate their readership. The incentive and the resources to expand had arrived, even for Indian languages.

⁶⁷ By 28,000 papers, according to RNI figures – 2,997,000 for Hindi and 2,967,000 for English.

Figure 1: Daily newspaper circulations, 1957 to 2007



Bar = all dailies; Line of triangles = Hindi dailies; Line of squares = English dailies

Source: *Press in India* for relevant years.

Daily circulations more than doubled from 9.3 million papers a day in the dreary depths of the ‘emergency’ in 1976 to 19.7 million copies a day in 1985. More than six million of those papers were in Hindi, which by now had nearly doubled its lead on English.⁶⁸ These notable increases were eclipsed in the 1990s. Circulations nearly trebled – from 21.9 million in 1990 to 58.3 million in 1999. By 2007, they reached 97 million copies a day, an increase of close to five times in 17 years. More than 40 per cent of the circulation is now in Hindi.

A great political and social story lies behind this expansion. Large numbers of lower status people in India’s Hindi heartland were becoming both literate and politicised. The rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh is perhaps the most dramatic example of a process that has gone on at varying speed across India. Newspaper readership is a cart: politicisation pulls the cart like bullocks in the shafts while advertisers and marketers push the cart from behind. This expansion of newspaper sales also needed the imagination and investment of proprietors who detected opportunities and were eager to profit. Owners of Indian language

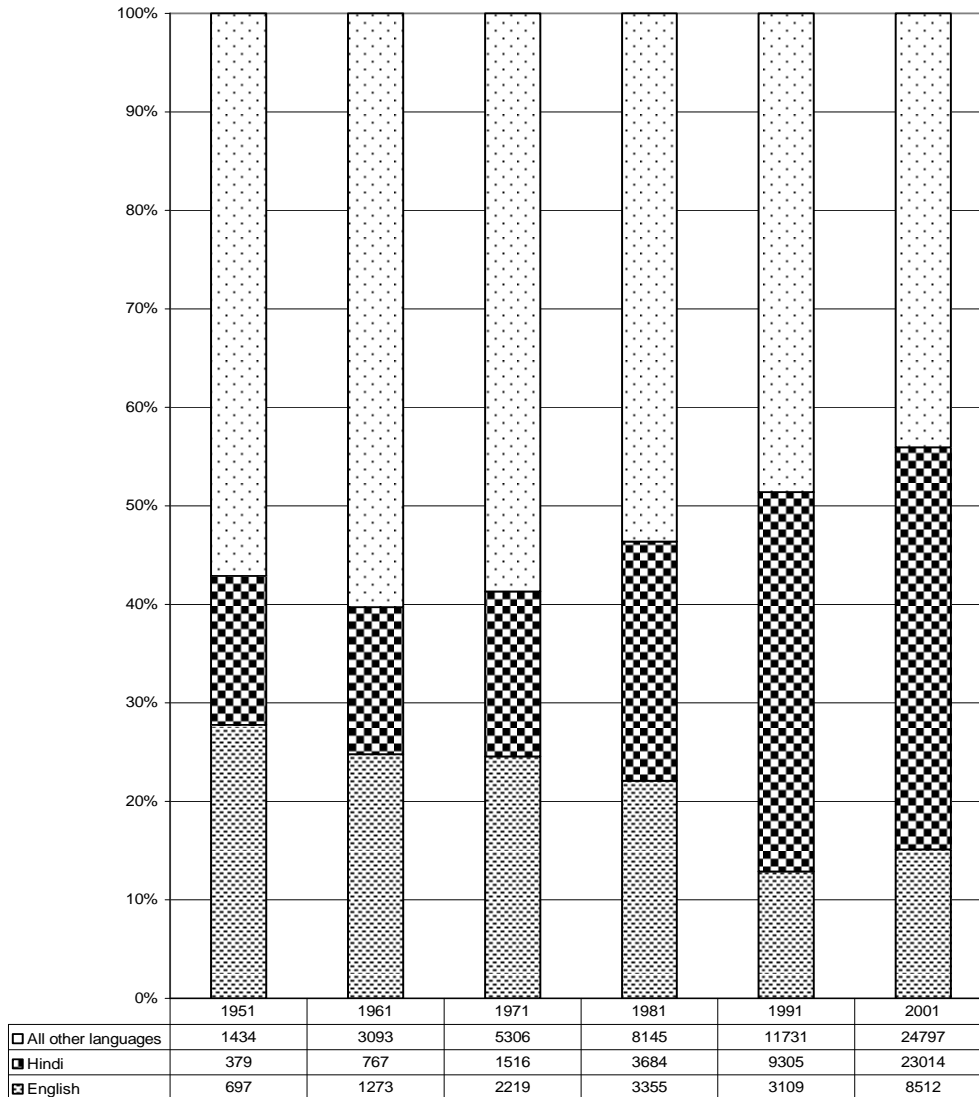
⁶⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *India’s Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.46-7.

newspapers, especially Hindi, had to convince advertisers that readers of Indian language newspapers had purchasing power. They could do this only after showing substantial circulation figures that no producer of small item consumer goods could ignore. This job of convincing that began in the 1970s flowered from the 1990s as proprietors pushed their news gathering, printing and distribution operations into smaller towns. They localised both news and distribution, and readers, increasingly mobilised for politics, bought the newspapers. Not all newspapers succeeded or survived; some of the ‘grand old names’ of Indian language publishing failed – *Andhra Patrika* in Telugu and *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in Bengali are examples. But others, like *Eenadu*, *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar*, expanded spectacularly. The Hindi story is captured in two remarkable books, Sevanti Ninan’s *Headlines from the Heartland*, which paints the big picture across north India, and Per Stahlberg’s *Lucknow Daily*, a finely etched portrait of life on a Hindi daily in a state capital.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Sevanti Ninan, *Headlines from the Heartland: Reinventing the Hindi Public Sphere* (New Delhi: Sage, 2007) and Per Stahlberg, *Lucknow Daily: How a Hindi Newspaper Constructs Society* (Stockholm: Stockholm Studies in Anthropology, 2002).

Figure 2: Hindi and English daily circulations as percentage of total daily circulation in all languages

Hindi and English as % of Circulation in All Languages



Source: *Press in India* for relevant years.

Critics sometimes lament the ‘gossip-at-the-village-well’ coverage of local events that has been a part of the recipe for the expansion of Indian language newspapers. There is no doubt that people like to read about, and see pictures of themselves. Has this localisation destroyed a unified public sphere? At its best, the coverage of local news, particularly in Indian language newspapers, means that rural people have never known so much about their world and never had better means of making their grievances known than they have had since the 1980s. At its worst, as Mrinal Pande writes, the emphasis on localisation – of news, advertising and publication – ‘opens the

floodgates to paid news', rounded up by poorly paid local stringers deriving income from selling space in the newspaper, which sometimes masquerades as editorial copy.⁷⁰ At the top of such a pyramid, owners have done deals with politicians for relentlessly favourable coverage before elections.⁷¹ In the 2009 general elections, it appears that some candidates paid very large sums to some newspapers in return for wide and favourable editorial coverage, and many candidates were offered 'packages' – happy stories in return for even happier payments to the newspaper.⁷²

Ethics, advertising, training and judgement are staples of newsroom debates.⁷³ Gandhi refused to accept advertising for his publications in the era of nationalist and ideological zeal. He was said to have lost Rs 26,000 in publishing *Indian Opinion* in South Africa, but 'he knew that he would not be able to serve truth and remain independent if he accepted advertisements.'⁷⁴ The men who came of age prior to independence and created the models for post-independence journalism were products of their experience in the journalism of the national movement, but they were also aware of their place in an international English language tradition, of Northcliffe, Hearst, Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* and Ben Hecht's *The Front Page*. Durga Das, Pothan Joseph, M. V. Kamath, D. R. Mankekar, Frank Moraes and K. N. Sahni saw themselves as newsmen of the world, 'possessed [of] a sly and cynical sense of humour which improved in quality in direct proportion to the quantity of spirituous nourishment ... imbibed.'⁷⁵ What constituted a journalist was open to question. The people who made the profession before and after independence had often stumbled into it. Kamath was a young chemist who wanted to write. He pestered the *Free Press Journal* of Mumbai for a job, and when he finally met the legendary editor, Sadanand, the latter told him: 'My dear young man, you have come to the wrong place. This is a newspaper office, not a pharmaceutical laboratory!' But he got the job and his salary dropped by 15 rupees to Rs 100 a month in the 1940s.⁷⁶ 'How many editors and distinguished reporters in England have ever passed through the portals of a university?', Durga Das' mentor used to ask.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Mrinal Pande, 'Operating above the fault lines', *The Hindu* (17 March 2010), www.beta.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article248212.ece?homepage. Accessed on 18 March 2010.

⁷¹ P. Sainath, *The Hindu* (30 November 2009), www.beta.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/articles57019.ece?css. Accessed on 30 November 2009.

⁷² For a survey of the issue, brought to light by P. Sainath in *The Hindu*, see Sevanti Ninan, 'Who will bell the cat', *The Hoot* (April 2010), www.thehoot.org/web/home/story.php?storyid=4394&mod=1&pg=1§ionId=19&valid=true. Accessed on 20 April 2010.

⁷³ 'You can't buy a journalist with a meal', was a line I used to hear in Canada in the 1960s; 'but you might with a restaurant'.

⁷⁴ Anu Bandyopadhyaya, *M. K. Gandhi: Author, Journalist, Printer Publisher* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1994), p.13.

⁷⁵ Mankekar, *Leaves*, Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York: John Day, 1969), p.263

⁷⁶ M. V. Kamath, *A Reporter at Large* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002), p.189.

⁷⁷ Durga Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York: John Day, 1969), p.38. This was K. C. Roy, founder of API. At school, Das spent his pocket money on a subscription to the *Tribune* of Lahore.

The expansion of media industries from the 1990s produced many more journalists and newspapers, many of them coming out of media schools of the sort that Das' mentor deplored. In 2010, a cursory Web survey found more than 100 journalism and media programs in various institutions.⁷⁸ The old school of Indian journalism detected at least two major flaws in the way the industry developed. First, the proprietors of Indian language publications increasingly put themselves in the editors' chairs. They became publisher-editors and devalued 'real' journalists. Second, as the industry grew, it hired more people. For Indian language newspapers, these people were often stringers who had no training. One practitioner argued that 'in the Hindi media, it has become a habit to shamelessly publish false information ... there is no accountability – not to the readers, to society or even to one's own organisation. Frequent transfers, postings, new contracts – all these have become a pastime for senior journalists.'⁷⁹ With the expansion of Indian language newspapers from the 1980s, stringers became essential both to mop up local news and to keep the costs of news gathering low. Stringers were not new. R. K. Narayan captured his own early life in *Talkative Man*, a novella about the stringer of Malgudi.⁸⁰ But the needs of an expanding industry multiplied their number, made it even less likely that they would have any training and increased the likelihood that they would be selling advertising in the newspaper and – their critics say – picking up gratuities of one kind or another along the way. They are also vulnerable. The murder of a stringer for an Indian language newspaper in a small town does not generate national outrage.⁸¹ Taberez Neyazi captures the various pressures on local part-time correspondents in his rich account of life at one of *Dainik Bhaskar's* publication centres.⁸²

⁷⁸ www.indiaedu.com. Accessed on 16 May 2010. Delhi had 14 such programs, Maharashtra 13 and Karnataka 12.

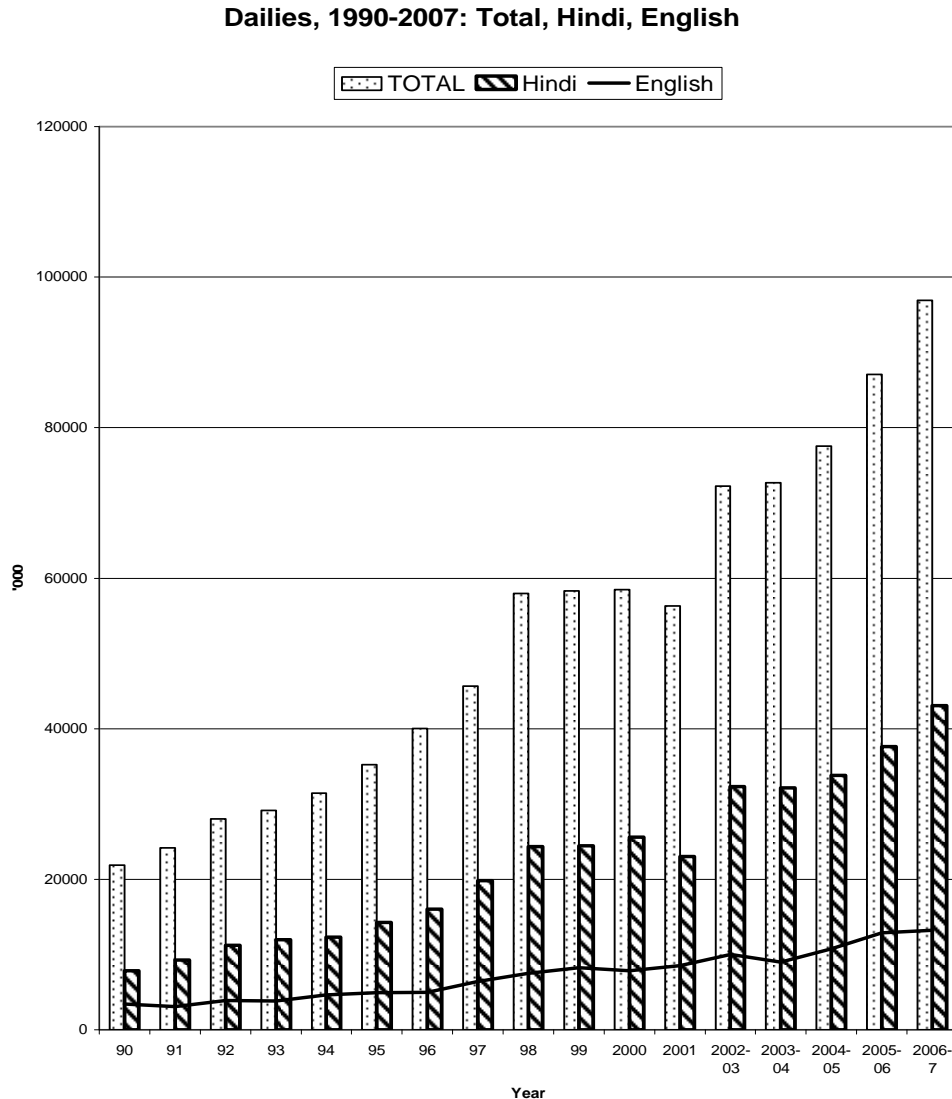
⁷⁹ Harivansh, 'Prabhat Khabar: an experiment in journalism', in Nalini Rajan (ed.), *Practising Journalism* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), p.59.

⁸⁰ R. K. Narayan, *Talkative Man* (London: Heinemann, 1986).

⁸¹ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.248.

⁸² Taberez Neyazi, 'Media Convergence and Hindi Newspapers: Changing Institutional and Discursive Dimensions, 1977-2007', *PhD thesis, National University of Singapore* (2009).

Figure 3: Daily circulations, 1990 to 2007, total, Hindi and English



Source: *Press in India* for relevant years.

The expansion of private television channels after 1992 increased demand for ‘journalists’ and ended the easy and prosperous era for the advertising departments of Indian newspapers. In 1990, Indian television consisted of the government-controlled Doordarshan and its tightly managed, tediously cautious newscasts. Within a decade after satellite television opened up the skies, India had more than 50 news channels alone.⁸³ Though advertising expenditures grew massively, the share of newspapers shrunk, as television channels became fierce and powerful competitors. The largest publication chains like *Dainik Jagran* or the *Times of India* (to name only two) started their own television channels. The ‘mushroom growth of journalists’ that the

⁸³ Nalin Mehta, *India on Television* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2008).

late S.P. Singh identified in 1993⁸⁴ doubled or tripled in the next decade as the new medium gobbled up established print journalists and camera-friendly young reporters. If there were 25,000 journalists in India in the early 1990s, it would be reasonable to suggest there were close to 100,000 when the global recession began in 2008.⁸⁵

When Curzon read the *Statesman* in Government House, Kolkata, at the beginning of the 20th century, changes in media technology and the practice of journalism in India had begun. However, the steam-driven rotary presses of the *Statesman* seem a paltry, snail's-pace innovation when contrasted with the fast changing media world in which K. R. Narayanan lived as President of India a hundred years later. And even Narayanan's world changed fundamentally after his death in 2005. In 2002, the year he retired as President, India had fewer than 50 million telephones; in January 2010, it had more than 580 million.⁸⁶ The future of newspapers and 'journalists' in an age of digitised electronics, in which a cell phone makes every person a potential reporter and photographer, is unpredictable. One practitioner in 2010 believed that 'the growth prospects for the print media in India look very good in the near term and probably good in the medium term', but that the reliability of their reporting and the integrity of their journalism would determine the extent to which Indian newspapers would do well in the future.⁸⁷ The new media, in which every person is her or his own publicist, presents challenges and opportunities uncannily like those that Gandhi identified at the height of the nationalist movement. 'Let us break the idol of machinery and leaden type', he wrote – and that has happened since the 1980s. 'The pen is our foundry and the hands of the willing copyists our printing machine.'⁸⁸ Perhaps in the 21st century, India will substitute cell phone for pen. He continued: 'Let everyone become his walking paper and carry the news from mouth to mouth. This no Government can suppress.'⁸⁹ Governments can, to be sure, close down mobile phone networks for a time, as in Iran, and terrorists can blow up mobile phone transmission towers, as in Afghanistan; but in the new era of media, the Gandhian vision presents a stimulating, unsettling possibility to which daily newspapers will have to respond.

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⁸⁴ Interview, S. P. Singh, New Delhi, 21 February 1993.

⁸⁵ Robin Jeffrey, *India's Newspaper Revolution*, 2nd edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.128 recorded 34,000 journalists on 963 dailies that returned such information, out of 2,374 registered dailies. If the average of 35 journalists per daily is applied to all 2,374 registered dailies, we get a figure of more than 80,000. This excludes, of course, the television industry and its employees and journalists who work for periodicals.

⁸⁶ Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, 'Telecom Subscription Data as on 31st January 2010', www.trai.gov.in/pressreleases_list_year.asp. Accessed on 12 March 2010. See also TRAI, *Annual Report, 2008-09* (New Delhi: TRAI, 2009), p.40.

⁸⁷ N. Ram in *The Hindu* (20 April 2010), www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscri/print.pl?file=2010042061701300.htm. Accessed on 20 April 2010.

⁸⁸ 'Young India', in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol.25 (12 January 1922), p.428.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Anu Bandyopadhyaya, *M. K. Gandhi: Author, Journalist, Printer Publisher* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1994), p.20. I have not been able to find this portion of the quotation in the CWMG, though Bandyopadhyaya has the passage in quotation marks.

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WTO AND RTAs: HOW THE ‘SPAGHETTI-BOWL’ IMPACTS ON GLOBAL ‘TRADE-MEAL’

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury¹

Asia has experienced an explosion of regional trade agreements (RTAs) in recent years particularly in East and Southeast Asia. Production and institutions across these regions have become further integrated due to these RTAs. The domain of integration now extends to South Asia with India and other South Asian economies getting connected to East and Southeast Asia through formal trade arrangements. Proliferation of RTAs has revived the debate on multilateralism and regionalism. While most regional economies figure in the multilateral framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), their pursuit of RTAs has raised questions over whether they repose greater faith in regional trade networks. The Economics and Trade Policy research cluster at ISAS organised a workshop at Singapore on 20 October 2010 on ‘Trade Policies in South Asia and Southeast Asia : Encouraging Regionalism?’ that examined different aspects of the theme including comparative dimensions of trade frameworks, bilateral trade relations and country perspectives on regional trade. The papers are being brought out by ISAS as a working paper series. This paper is the first in this series.

ABSTRACT

The WTO generates more passions in debates or discussions on it than most other international organisations. This is largely because, more than most other bodies, it is concerned with the daily bread and butter issues affecting the common man. It is also because many do not see it as very different from the ‘rich man’s club’ it replaced, the General Agreement on Tariffs and

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Trade (GATT). In reality, however, it is different, both in terms of mandates and membership. It is based on certain principles championing free-trade, and it lays down agreed rules for trade in goods and services. It has also acknowledged the role of 'development' in fostering trade, and the 'uneven playing field' that many members confront. While it was meant to enforce universal norms, over time, a large number of RTAs and cross-regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have been threatening to erode its effectiveness.

This 'spaghetti' or 'noodle-bowl' phenomenon is receiving impetus from the impasse created in the current 'Doha Round' of Trade Negotiations. Asian RTAs are, however, more politically-driven, and therefore should be seen as WTO-consistent. In fact, concepts such as the massive FTA of the Asia-Pacific, to be realized by 2020 as discussed at the APEC Summit in Yokohama in November 2010, will be a powerful factor in stabilizing Trans-Pacific political and strategic relations. As of now, they are not seen as threatening 'core' WTO principles, though a modicum of their erosion is inevitable, and WTO rules allow for such regional FTAs, under certain conditions. Indeed, they are helping the growth of an Asian consciousness and integration at a time when the continent is being seen on the 'rise', leading perhaps someday to the fruition of the concept of an 'Asian Home'.

INTRODUCTION

Few global bodies generate the kind of passions that the WTO does. A decade ago, the streets of Seattle, where the WTO Ministerial Conference was being held, were reminiscent of the streets of Paris during the epochal '*les jours de Mai*' in 1969 with thousands of screaming protesters, smoke bombs and shattered window-panes. That occurred because the WTO's decisions influence the daily bread and butter issues of the common man in both developed and developing worlds in ways much more than that of any other multilateral organisation; and because its detractors see it, albeit unfairly, as having altered little from that of its predecessor, the GATT), which was widely, and fairly, seen as a 'Rich Man's Club'. The fact that the two (the WTO replaced GATT in 1994 as a result of the Uruguay Round of Global Trade Negotiations) are different is not only reflected in their mandates (GATT dealt only with trade in goods while the WTO also includes newer challenges in the trade area such as services and intellectual property) but also in the fact that while GATT was smaller (128 member nations), the WTO membership is nearly universal (153, representing over 97 per cent of global trade, including the 'market-Leninist' economy of China which held GATT in contempt).

However, the universal and global multilateralism to which the WTO aspires is being confronted with the phenomenon of burgeoning RTAs or other kinds of plurilateral FTAs. There are countries, which doubtless find these more profitable. This paper examines the impact of RTAs and FTAs on the global multilateral system as reflected in the WTO. Most experts, while debating whether these compete with or complement the multilateral trading system, nonetheless appear to agree that the former present ‘major implications’ for the latter.² Jagdish Bhagwati has christened the proliferation of RTAs as the ‘spaghetti bowl problem’, referring to the intertwined agreements.³ The Asia-Pacific version terms it the ‘noodle bowl’.⁴ Prior to addressing the subject of the Asia-Pacific RTA and its relationship with the WTO, it would be appropriate to address the issues of this most powerful world body’s role in global trade.

The near universality of WTO has occurred mainly due to three reasons: First, due to the rapid pace at which the world economy is globalising through international trade and free flow of investments; second, due to the shift in trade policies brought about by the gradual adoption of market-oriented policies with many developing countries replacing import-substitution with export-oriented policies; and finally, due to the fact that such open policies prompted multinational corporations to obtain their components and intermediate products from low-cost locations, and therefore relocate there, a phenomenon requiring complex rules. The result was a WTO that rested upon a tripod. It comprised one, the Multilateral Agreement on Trade in Goods (including GATT 94 and associated Agreements); two, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); and three, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS). The WTO itself has the Ministerial Council at the apex as the supreme decision-making body, meeting every two years and sustained by three manifestations of the Organization. First, the General Council comprises Permanent Representatives, having two more *avatars*, a Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to do just that, i.e. settle disputes and a Trade Policy Review Body (TPRB) to examine and advise on WTO-consistency of the trade policies of its members. Then there is a set of Committees, each focused on a major mandate of the body. The structure is serviced by a small but powerful Secretariat with a paltry budget of only US\$500

² Gary P. Sampson, ‘Compatibility of Regional and Multilateral Trading Agreements: Reforming the WTO Process’, *The American Economic Review*, Vol.86, no. 2 (May, 1996), p.88.

³ See, for instance, Jagdish Bhagwati, ‘Reshaping the WTO’, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Jan/Feb 2005).

⁴ Robert Scollay, ‘The WTO in the ‘noodle bowl’ world’, Paper presented at Session 4 of *Asia-Pacific Trade Economists Conference* (Bangkok: 2-3 November 2009).

million (less than the figure set aside by the World Bank for Staff travels), but nevertheless it exerts enormous influence.⁵

PRINCIPLES BASING THE SYSTEM

The WTO system is based on certain principles. With regard to the first of the tripod legs on which it stands, the Multilateral Agreement of the Trade in Goods, there are four basic rules. First, protection can be provided to domestic production against foreign competition only by tariffs; the use of quantitative restriction is prohibited though there are exceptions. Second, those tariffs should be reduced and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) eliminated, with the tariffs so reduced bound against any increases being listed in each country's schedule. Third, all members must be given the 'Most Favoured Nation' (MFN) status or equal treatment. However, there are some exceptions, such as those envisaged under the RTAs, seen by some as the bane of the WTO, and those under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) schemes, which are politically more acceptable. Finally, 'national treatment' is to be accorded to all, i.e., no distinction is to be made between imported and domestically produced goods, both in the matter of the levy of internal taxes and in the application of internal regulations.

Trade in services, the second leg of the tripod, covers economic activities ranging from banking, insurance and telecommunications, to recreational, cultural and sporting subjects. The WTO has identified well over 150 service sectors, their characteristics being invisibility and intangibility, as opposed to the visibility of goods as trading commodities. Services comprise over 25 per cent of all trade that takes place nowadays. GATS has established a framework for discipline in the four modes in which transactions in services occur (Mode-1, cross-border supply; Mode-2, consumption abroad,; Mode-3, where suppliers move to the territory of the consumers to provide their services and Mode 4, which is movement/presence of natural persons). The two principles of MFN and National Treatment also apply to services as they do to goods with suitable modifications.

The third of the tripod's legs, TRIPS, is also governed by certain principles. It must be noted that the objects of intellectual property are the creation of human mind. The rights of the creators of innovative or artistic works are known as Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs). These include

⁵ For an analysis of the structure and influence, see Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, 'The WTO and Its Future: The Slow 'Dhow' to Doha?', *Daily Star, Dhaka* (27 August 2001).

copyrights, patents and industrial designs. They also cover trademarks and other signs of product distinction, which build consumer loyalty and loyalty for their marks and brand names. The TRIPS complements Agreements developed by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In particular, it prescribes minimum standards and periods for which protection should be accorded to IPRs. It also extends MFN and National Treatment principles. Standards of protection laid down are legally enforceable.

The multilateral legal instruments, which constitute the WTO system, are treated as a ‘single undertaking’. This means that, in one stroke, all are subject to the provisions of the Agreements and must implement prescribed rules (with varied responsibilities, as some WTO members are eligible for ‘Special and Differential’ treatment because of their low level of development). Over time, four groups linked by common interests, have evolved: developed countries, developing countries, least developed countries (LDCs), and economies in transition. They often meet separately to determine their respective negotiating positions. It is noteworthy that the member-states of the European Union (EU) speak as one unit through the European Commission at the WTO. Decision-making in the WTO is by consensus, which means in theory any member can exercise the power of veto. In reality though all shots are called by the strong and the powerful, meeting in the so-called ‘Green Room’, under the aegis of the head of the Secretariat, the Director General, currently Pascal Lamy of France. (Though negotiating ‘skill’ may have at times reduced the power gap between the rich and poor countries, as evidenced in the role played by the author in the appointment of the Director General in 1999).⁶ There has been talk of something akin to a Trade Security Council, but this is well beyond the rim of the saucer.

DOHA DEVELOPMENT ROUND AND THE AFTERMATH

The current WTO negotiating round is named after the Qatari capital, which hosted the Ministerial Conference that initiated it in November 2001. The addition of the word ‘development’ was designed to placate the developing world and to signal acknowledgment by the WTO of the close links between trade and development. The developing countries did not quite buy it, as later events demonstrated. As of 2008, the talks had stalled over differences on a

⁶ Hilary Clarke, ‘Focus: Trade Wars – The superpower elite that Sidelines the Poorest nations’, *Independent* (18 July 1999). The author was able to broker a deal in which the term of the Director General-ship was split between Mike Moore of New Zealand and Supachai Panitchpakdi of Thailand. In doing so, he was able to break an impasse that had held up substantive work in the WTO for months and caused a chasm to develop between the industrial and developing countries.

variety of issues such as agriculture, industrial tariffs, non-tariff barriers (NTBs), services and trade remedies. The most significant are those between the developed countries led by the United States (US), EU and Japan, and the developing world led by China, Brazil, India and South Africa. Not so insignificant are also the gaps between the US and Europe, particularly on subsidies that both see as being used as trade barriers by the other. Later in 2008, after the breakdown, intense negotiations were held between the US, China and India in order to agree on negotiating modalities, but not much progress could be achieved.

The basic issues in the Doha round are as follows. The EU wants to cover a comprehensive range of issues, largely to facilitate 'give and take' in negotiations across a broad spectrum. This would take the talks far beyond the minimal so called 'built-in agenda' of agriculture and services. It would seek to include 'new issues' such as investment, competition and environmental policies. The US is less enthusiastic about environment and competition policies, and totally opposed to any reforms of the 'anti-dumping' rules that enable a country to place tariffs on cheap foreign products, which are allegedly being 'dumped' in its domestic market at prices lower than the cost prices of the products.

The developing countries are reluctant about anything that can be used, or abused, by developed countries as 'disguised protectionism'. Many of them would like to carve into stone the principle of 'special and differential treatment' for their products. There are also other problems they would like to be addressed. While tariffs in industrial countries are indeed low after the previous Uruguay Round(average of 3 - 5 per cent), the products that are of interest to developing countries such as clothing, textile, footwear, and foodstuffs still face very high tariffs, at over 100 per cent. A more pernicious feature is that of 'tariff escalation', by which manufactures are charged progressively higher in relation to stages of processing, thus discouraging upgradation along the manufacturing value chain. The developing countries have a so called 'positive agenda' of their own for which they receive intellectual support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The 'mother of negotiating battles' is being fought in agriculture. Progress of liberalisation on this item is very slow. Tariffs remain high and trade has not expanded in any appreciable way. This is because some key countries protect this sector passionately for a variety of reasons, often other than economic. Hundreds of billions of dollars are being provided as support to the farmers in the EU, the US and Japan. The rationale behind this, particularly in the EU and Japan is the 'multi-functionality' of agriculture, which provides benefits such as environmental protection, food security and rural culture (preservation of the beauties of the French countryside, for

instance) that cannot be measured in pure economic terms. Pitted against this position is the so-called Cairns Group (named after that Australian town), comprising of some developed and also developing countries with keen interest in agricultural trade and who demand drastic changes in this area, in favour of liberalisation. It should also be noted that in some other developing countries, such as those in South Asia, agriculture provides most rural livelihood (as evidenced in the protests by Indian farmers), and ‘non-trade concerns’ in this sphere which are very much categorically political imperatives.

THE GENESIS OF RTAs

In recent years there has been a proliferation of RTAs. Of course they come in different waves, usually mixing political and economic goals. Indeed the EU is among the most important RTAs with multiple goals. In fact, between 2000 and 2007, 185 such arrangements were concluded. A number just under half of the 374 that were done in the whole of the twentieth century.⁷ Out of these, most have been concluded by the Asia-Pacific Region (234), followed by Europe (232) and then by the Americas (166). Indeed, at the APEC Summit in Yokohama in November 2010, it was announced that, by 2020, a massive Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) will eliminate trade barriers on both sides of the Pacific.⁸ It may be stated here that the WTO allows for such derogation from its principles through GATT Article XXIV and GATS Article V, though the language has been kept deliberately vague. The Doha round actually vetted those, only adding some clauses to ensure ‘transparency’, the broad rule of the thumb being don’t ask too much, don’t tell too much.⁹ This has irked free-traders like Bhagwati who has claimed, ‘This is a fool’s way of doing business. Not only does it destroy the efficient allocation of resources, but it flies in the face of the fact that today it is becoming almost impossible to define whose products are whose. It is hard to believe that the sensible men in charge of trade policy today... are damaging the world trading system through discriminatory PTAs as much as the

⁷ Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, ‘Fitting Asia-Pacific Agreements into the WTO System’, Paper presented at a Joint Conference of The Japan Economic Foundation and the Pearson Institute for International Economics, Washington DC (27 November 2007). Later statistics on the numbers are also derived from this presentation.

⁸ ‘Turning dream into reality’, *New Straits Times* (15 November 2010).

⁹ Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Jeffrey J. Schott, ‘Fitting Asia-Pacific Agreements into the WTO System’, Paper presented at a Joint Conference of The Japan Economic Foundation and the Pearson Institute for International Economics, Washington DC (27 November 2007). Later statistics on the numbers are also derived from this presentation.

protectionists did in the 1930s'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the fact is that RTAs have come to stay, and expand.

ASIAN RTAs

The growth in Asian RTAs was a product of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. When the response from the IMF was inadequate, Japan called for an Asian Monetary Institution. The Chiang Mai Initiative was a watered down version of the same. Hence, economic and political regionalism went hand in hand. Ironically China, after it joined the WTO in 2001, became the chief contributor to the 'noodle-bowl' phenomenon, first by linking up with Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which to date had shown little positive intra-trade inclinations as evidenced in the ASEAN+1 framework in 2002. This occurred, despite the belief that China's 'WTO membership status also meant that Beijing agreed to treat all WTO member nations equally, meaning that the same tariffs and the same regulations had to apply equally for everyone'.¹¹ Eventually, however, it entered into similar arrangements with many others; the thrust appeared to be political rather than economic, in many ways, looking like a bid for regional leadership. As an analyst has observed: '...The recent East Asian Regional Arrangements are less threatening to the world trade system than they appear. They do not threaten the MFN tariff structure in a meaningful way, and if they can promote trade facilitation this will likely benefit Asia traders from all countries. The major threat is political rather than economic, if the struggle for Asian leadership becomes disruptive to harmonious relations. Non-Asian policy makers should worry more about soothing these antagonisms than about the economic threat of regionalism.'¹²

SUPACHAI, LAMY WEIGH IN

Acknowledging that RTAs are an inevitable reality, trade-policy realists feel that that the aim should therefore be to evolve a *Modus Vivendi* between multilateralism and plurilateral-bilateral arrangements in trade. Since, in the WTO, the head of the Secretariat is always considered a key

¹⁰ Jagdish Bhagwati, 'Reshaping the WTO', *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Jan/Feb 2005).

¹¹ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Picador, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p.139.

¹² Richard Pomfret, 'Asian Regionalism: Threat to the WTO-based Trading System or Paper Tiger?', *Vox* (22 June 2007), <http://voxeu.org/index.php?q=node/309>. Accessed on 27 September 2010.

player, it is important to examine their views on this emerging trend. The immediate past Director General Supachai Panitchpakdi commented, “The emergence of diverse and relatively complex regional regulatory structures can reduce trade policy options for WTO members and seriously hinder multilateral trade negotiations. In a world of scarce resources it is clear that the increased resources required for negotiation and administration of agreements at the regional level, may divert attention away from efforts at the multilateral level. Also, as RTAs proliferate and their scope broadens to include policy areas not regulated multilaterally, the risks of regulatory confusion, distortion of regional markets and severe implementation-al problems are likely. This will be to the detriment of all members, but small countries which already suffer from limited negotiating leverage and capacity will be disproportionately affected”.¹³

The solution he proffers is for sustained efforts to be made in the Doha Round.

The current Director General of the WTO, Pascal Lamy, is also naturally concerned. To bring the RTAs into consonance with multilateralism, he has suggested four ways. First, the Doha round should be brought to a successful closure, since it would also further reduce the scope for discriminatory trade policy, not to mention all the other benefits from trade cooperation that would induce governments to enter into these kind of negotiations. Second, to fast track the transparency decisions negotiated in the Doha Round and make it operational as it would help the understanding of different RTAs. Third, to operationalise the negotiating mandate under Doha to examine the WTO rules governing regionalism. Finally, to look systematically at the characteristics and design of RTAs, not only in terms of legal compliance questions but also in terms of whether their architecture will, more or less, be likely to foster multi-lateralisation in the future.¹⁴

CO-EXISTENCE

It seems that if the WTO and its component bodies like the TPRM monitor the phenomenon closely, it could work to buttress multilateralism. In a much earlier study, Kemp and Wan looked at such possibilities theoretically with regard to customs unions. They have said, ‘...There is a big incentive to form and enlarge a customs union, until the world is one big customs union, that

¹³ Supachai Panitchpakdi, ‘The Doha Development Agenda: Challenges Ahead’, *Fourth EU-ASEAN Think Tank Dialogue*, (European Parliament, Brussels 25-26 November 2002). *WTO News: Speeches- DG Supachai Panitchpakdi*, http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/spsp_e/spsp07_e.htm. Accessed on 24 August 2010.

¹⁴ Pascal Lamy, ‘Proliferation of Regional Trade Agreements Breeding Concern’, *WTO News, Speeches- DG Pascal Lamy* (10 September 2007), http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/sppl_e/sppl67_e.htm. Accessed on 24 August 2010.

is until free trade prevails.”¹⁵ This is unlikely to happen anytime soon because much depends on how these agreements are drafted. Another analyst, Whalley, correctly assesses that ‘if the content of these RTAs remain vague, the agreements primarily are diplomatic arrangements negotiated for geopolitical linkage rather than significant economic impact’.¹⁶

Indeed, almost each and every member of the WTO belongs to one or several RTAs. Each RTA is different and the WTO members do not perceive these as threatening WTO’s core principles. This is where pragmatism appears to be triumphing over pure theory. The RTAs accommodate aspirations of some members more directly and the merger of this phenomenon with WTO values would enhance the image and effectiveness of the WTO with most members. This WTO-plus perspective would therefore be more acceptable than a pristine and narrow WTO. The global body provides many useful services. First, the Ministerial Conference meets every two years, and the General Council more regularly, to provide a forum for members, both weak and powerful, to deliberate on issues of global interest. Second, the TPRM actually renders immense service through ‘peer-reviews’ to sharpen and hone their trade policies; the DSB has actually helped resolve some key trade disputes, though a methodology would need to be evolved for poorer countries to use this costly mechanism more effectively. Third, the theoretical acceptance of the principle that trade is linked to development is a positive advance in globally acknowledged norms by developing countries. Finally, the WTO also provides effective technical assistance to countries that require it.

So, in the foreseeable future both the WTO and the RTAs are likely to continue to coexist. Neither can or does seek pre-eminence over the other, as indeed should be the case. But if globalism in trade norms is to hold forth, the Doha Round should be brought to a closure. Its remaining in limbo helps none. The negotiations will continue to be long and arduous but if there is a hill to climb waiting will not make it any smaller.

¹⁵ See, for this quote and further argument on this line, M.C. Kemp and H. Wan, ‘An Elementary Proposition Concerning the Formation of Customs Unions’, *Journal of International Economics*, Vol.6 (1976), pp.95-8.

¹⁶ John Whalley, ‘Recent Regional Agreements: Why so many, Why so much variance in form, Why coming so Fast, and Where are they headed?’, *CESIFO Working Paper No.1790, Category 7: Trade Policy* (August 2006), presented at CESIFO Venice Summer Institute (July 2006).

A FINAL WORD ON ASIAN REGIONALISM

There is also a growing sense of Asian regionalism that is somewhat distinct from relations with the WTO. This merits serious examination. The initial '*primum movens*' was economic as political relations were still murky. Of course, the concept of Asian regionalism or indeed Asian integration gained traction following the crisis of 1997 and 1998. The Ewes a good model and the success of the single European currency set a good example. During the Asian Development Bank (ADB) meeting in Hyderabad in 2006, the two issues discussed were the agglomeration of Asian economies culminating in the Asian Free Trade Area, and the formation of an Asian Monetary Union with a single currency. Both proposals converged into one single objective: an Asian Economic Union.

But there is a flip side of the coin from Europe. The EU comprises countries with homogenous characteristics and with the same social and religious fabric. There is a large element of economic, political and cultural cohesion. Asia is far more diverse and disparate. In Europe, which has lived through the Westphalian State system for over three and a half centuries, national borders, over time, have assumed less importance. On the other hand, Asian states are still at a point in time where, politically and intellectually, they are stressing distinctiveness rather than commonality vis-à-vis one another to underscore individual sovereignty. Also in Europe, the three major players Britain, France and Germany, have largely made up their differences. Whereas in Asia, can the three major actors- the Japanese Godzilla, the Chinese Dragon and the Indian Elephant tango together? (This is of course metaphorical for in this dance two is the requirement, and three is a crowd.)

Nonetheless, there is a remarkable sense of burgeoning Asian-ness. Today the phenomenon of the 'rise' of Asia is being witnessed particularly that of the two Asian 'mega-states': China and India. Some would even argue that the Asian Age has come upon sooner than expected. In 1935, the Japanese economist Kaname Akamatsu had developed a multi-tiered hierarchical 'flying geese model' to demonstrate how industrialisation travels from developed to developing countries. Can the flying geese paradigm be applied to Asian integration, with the big countries leading and the small ones following? Can the Asian groupings like ASEAN, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) come together, someday, under the umbrella of a single 'Asian Home'? It is true though that the consciousness of being Asian is beginning to take root among the people of the region. The concept of the loose Asian Home is just an idea, but

one that surely deserves some attention. As the mighty poet and Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had said, ‘You cannot cross the sea by standing at its edge and staring at the water’!