

Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Ashutosh Misra

Chairman and Publisher: Dr. Ram Mohan



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Institute for Australia India Engagement
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WEBSITE DESIGN & MANAGEMENT
Cosmos Media
www.cosmosmedia.info

DESIGNER
Cosmos Media

PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION
Star Promotions

ADDRESS
India News
Unit 49, 391, WICKHAM TERRACE,
Ground Floor, Spring Hill,
Brisbane, QLD – 4000

WEB: www.indianews.com.au
FACEBOOK: https://www.facebook.com/indianewsaustralia



Note from the Editor

As the successor of Indian News Queensland, India News Australia began its journey in July 2020, amidst the debilitating global shutdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which till date has inflicted trillions of dollars in losses to the world economies and millions in human losses. At a time when the pandemic was swallowing businesses after businesses, rendering industries bankrupt, blocking international travel, disrupting supply chains and claiming millions of jobs, India News fortnightly came to life — the first Australian-based India-focused full-fledged newspaper, which went beyond merely showcasing community events, unlike scores of monthly community magazines and newspapers which carry more advertisements and photographs than actual news. This needed a change and facelift.

Undeniably, there was once a time when community magazines played a vital role in providing the rapidly growing Indian diaspora with a plethora of information on grocery stores, cultural events, contacts for tradies and small businesses, and above all, profiling the achievements of the movers and shakers in the community. Today the Indian diaspora has crossed the 700,000 mark in Australia, and 60,000 in Queensland, and are appointed in leadership positions across various sectors— business, education, energy, entertainment, health, hospitality, medicine, energy, public service and sports among others. The community members also head many leading corporates such as Bravus Mining, Mahindra Automotive, Springfield Group, TCS and more, and their contribution to the Australian and state economy cannot be overlooked. The diaspora organises several high-impact public events such as Diwali celebrations at King George Square in Brisbane and Holi festival at Seventeen Miles Rock in Brisbane and Springfield in Ipswich, Annakut at the Queensland Parliament and the coveted IBACA Awards across several states. In sum, the community has come of age and plays a critical role in the growth and progress of Queensland and Australia.

In this backdrop, the need for a serious and impactful media publication was felt, to influence and shape public policy, strategic-thinking, policymaking and public and academic debates and

convey the mood and perspectives of the Indian diaspora. And thus, India News Australia was born. This compendium vindicates the rationale behind India News' establishment.

As Australia and India bolster their business and trade relationship, underpinned by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement signed between Canberra and New Delhi, India News will have an important role to impart in enriching new initiatives, informing new ideas and carrying messages for/from both sides.

It was a great honour to build India News Australia from scratch with some amazing colleagues, and write the unnamed editorials for every edition on contemporary issues. We have been very fortunate to have received timely and invaluable contributions from diplomats, academics, sportsmen, military officials and strategic analysts for lead editorials and special features on a wide variety of themes—foreign policy, education, security, economy, energy, diaspora affairs, sports, law, diplomacy and international affairs. The compendium is a perfect Kaleidoscope of events that transpired around us, at the bilateral level and in international relations, in 2021.

I must emphasise that the success of India News Australia and the publication of this compendium would have been impossible without the stellar support of our Chairman and Publisher Dr. Ram Mohan; Mr Manu Kala, one of the directors; members of the editorial board— Prof. Shaun Star, Prof. Prasad Yarlagadda and Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha; Ms Priyadarshini Rana (Victoria Bureau Chief); members of the India News YouTube Team Mr Kartik Pratap Singh (director), Mr Agastya Yeturi (cinematographer) and Mr Nishit Chandan (special correspondent); the designing team led by Mr Harpreet Bhagirath; and our institutional partners the Australia India Business Council and the Institute for Australia India Engagement. Last but not the least, we also thank our business sponsors especially the Springfield Group, Bravus Mining, Dosa Hut, Mirch Masala, Sankalp and Star Promotions among others.

The compendium quite aptly justifies our motto— Keeping You Ahead. Happy reading!
Thank you. April 2022

Dr. Ashutosh Misra
Editor-in-Chief

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Editorials

Anil Wadhwa-led Australia Strategy initiates Jugalbandi with Peter Varghese’s India Strategy, Jan 1-15, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 13



Anil Wadhwa

The much-awaited India’s Australia Strategy led by former Indian diplomat and Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa is released. Commissioned by the Confederation of Indian Industries, in conjunction with KPMG and the Ministry of External Affairs, the Australia strategy was launched on December 18 in New Delhi. Speaking at the launch of the strategy report entitled, “Enhancing India Australia Bilateral Economic and Trade Relationship”, Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry and Railways, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, “India’s opening up of engagement and activities with Australia is a great morale booster for the entire world, especially during the current crisis.” The report is expected to complement the Peter Varghese led “An India Economic Strategy to 2035: Navigating from potential to Delivery”



Peter Varghese

experiences have informed the two incisive strategies which auger well for companies, traders, agriculturists, entrepreneurs, educationists among others in opening up new vistas of trade, supplies, research and development and investments opportunities.

At the launch of the report a buoyant Simon Birmingham, former Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment observed that the new strategy will bolster exchanges in technology and cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing and robotics and waste management and thereby catapult the “comprehensive strategic partnership into an upward bilateral and trade trajectory with India”. He had led a trade delegation to New Delhi in February, before the lock down, and as tensions grew with China he said, “Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India.” The report assumes greater

salience as Australian looks to diversify businesses from China.

The historic virtual summit on 4 June between the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Prime Minister Narendra Modi proved a shot in the arm for the Strategic Partnership, now upgraded as “comprehensive”. Both sides have formalised over 20 MoU last June covering some of these areas during the Modi-Morrison virtual summit. Their two-way trade has risen from \$13.6 billion to \$30.4 billion in 2018, but it is still below their full potential. By 2035, both sides aim to double their bilateral trade and Australia seeks to bring India in its top 5 trading partners (currently 8th).

Ambassador Anil Wadhwa has very aptly provided the context for the report saying, “Changed geo-political relations offer some great opportunities for both countries.” But there should be no doubt that the two reports provide only the board road map and since bulk of the recommendations in both reports are based upon the pre-COVID-19 geopolitical and global settings, some recalibration and adjustments will be required on both front across several sectors. There is much to be achieved in terms of ironing out differences over Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, but the finalisation of the two strategies is a potent symbol of prevailing mutual understanding for taking bilateral ties into a higher orbit. Rapidly altering geopolitical realities are only making it more urgent.

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Racism won't vanish – how we respond matters, Jan 16–31, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 14

Racism is as old as the history of human societies. The modern states have responded appropriately: legislatively and normatively and so to have sporting codes and institutions. However, we cannot wish it away. It will remain amongst us in one form or the other.

What happened at the Sydney Cricket Ground during the third Australia-India test match to Muhammad Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah is highly deplorable, but not surprising. A group of spectators were rounded up by the police following Siraj's complaint and were asked to leave the venue, quite rightly.

Racism in sports has risen by 67% in 2018, in professional sport – soccer, basketball, boxing, cricket, golf, motorsport and tennis. Remember how Jesse Owens and other athletes, faced similar experiences during the 1936 Olympics in Germany, held under Adolf Hitler's "Aryan-race only" formula? Interestingly, contrary to popular belief that Hitler refused shaking hands, Jesse said it was actually the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt who refused to meet him. Imagine that?

Recall Zinedine Zidane's headbutting act after being racially slurred by Marco Materazzi during the France and Italy match in the world cup. An Algerian sculptor has even built a sculpture to immortalise the headbutting. Tiger Woods was also subjected to a racist jibe from a veteran golfer after his 1998 major win, and so did Magic Johnson in basketball.

Coming to cricket, Hashim Amla, Moeen Ali and Jofra Archer in recent years have received racist slurs. In Australia, Anthony Mundine in boxing and Adam Goodes and Lewis Jetta in the Australian Footy League have their own tales to tell.

It is a depressing thought that racism has come to plague the Border-Gavaskar trophy since the 2008 "monkey-gate" saga involving Harbhajan Singh and Andrew Symonds. Later, some Australian fans also allegedly received racist taunts from the Indian spectators during the Australian tour of India.

Fortunately, the 2018-19 tour of India to Australia remained unblemished, racism has again raised its ugly head at the SCG, where some seem to have had one beer too many and crossed the thick red line of human and sporting code of conduct.

The moot point is that racism will feature periodically involving players, officials, referees and spectators. Therefore, what matters is how we respond. It is heartening to see how strongly Cricket Australia, International Cricket Council and Australian cricketing legends responded. CA Board said, "While we await the outcome of the investigation by NSW Police, Cricket Australia has launched its own enquiry into the matter," emphasising its zero-tolerance policy towards abuse of cricketers by the crowd. It is learnt that the



police won't be pressing any charges, but CA can decide independently under its Anti-Harassment Code whether the behaviour warrants a lengthy ban or some sanction. The ICC too has condemned the incident strongly. Michael Hussey, Shane Warne, Ricky Ponting and other commentators have condemned the incident, saying that the Australians should be thankful that the Indians visited under the shadow of Covid to make this summer enjoyable. Siraj, who lost his father during the tour, has received an all-round support from the larger Australian community. This is how racism must be addressed: unequivocally and strongly. Because what matters is how we respond as a society.

Wonder Downunder: When rookies became stars, Feb 1-15, 2021– Vol 1 Issue 15

Undoubtedly, the India-Australia cricketing rivalry has become the most intensely contested rivalry in modern day cricket. The 2020-21 Border-Gavaskar Trophy and India's tour of Australia is a case in point in which India won both, the test and T20 series 2-1, while Australia clinched the one-day series 2-1. At the start, few imagined that the series will conclude the fireworks at 'Fortress Gabba' in Brisbane, creating history and leaving an indelible mark on cricket tragiocs on both sides for posterity. Australia is in India's debt for coming to play despite stiff Covid restrictions this summer.

The series has raised the bar with outstanding individual performances and giving birth to new heroes in the world of cricket. The series was packed with on and off the field drama, offering plenty of masala to the grapevine and media for their stories. After the end of limited over euphoria, shock and awe scripted the tale in the pinkball test in Adelaide. From a position of strength at one stage, India's dramatic collapse within an hour for a paltry 36 (their lowest ever) left the team and fans stunned. The team was written off by the cricketing greats predicting a 4-0 whitewash. To add to India's miseries, Captain Virat Kohli's returned to attend to the birth of their first child, further denting India's morale and prospects. As Indians vented their frustrations at Kohli, a group of never-say-die rookies emerged from the ashes in Adelaide, under the leadership of their replacement Captain Ajinkya Rahane, whose calm and assertive leadership, bowling and fielding decision-making and aggressive batting would become the stuff of legends.

India put up an unmatched fight led by debutant Shubhman Gill, newcomer Muhammad Siraj, and Shardul Thakur and spinner Washington Sunder who stunned everyone with their 123-run partnership at Gabba to stay in contention. After the humiliating pink-ball Adelaide loss, India beat the Australians in Melbourne by eight wickets, propelled by the Captain Rahane's century, Ravindra Jadeja's cameo and Jasprit Bumrah's firepower. Debutant Shubhman Gill's aggressive stroke-play against the Aussie gave a huge fillip to India's campaign.

Next, India's perseverance was subjected to an acid test in Sydney. After four days of roller-coaster battle India was required to see-off day 5—an uphill task—most believed. But led by Gill's 50, the gritty batting display by R. Ashwin and injured Hanuma Vihari, allowed India to see off 131 overs and secure a valiant draw, deflating the Aussie morale completely.

The chit-chat between Captain Tim Paine and Ashwin in the dying hours of SCG test had set the stage for a high-tension battle at the "Fortress Gabba", where Australia hadn't lost in 32 years. India, plagued with debilitating injuries to Muhamamd Shami, Umesh Yadav, K.L. Rahul, Vihari, Ashwin, Jadeja and Bumrah, was struggling to even field a fit XI. The backbenchers and net bowlers were summoned, such as debutant Thangarasu Natarajan. Australia put an imposing total of 369 and 294 asking India to chase 328 runs to win. Amazingly, India's rookie team, made battle-ready over the years by Rahul Dravid, bowled the Australians out in both innings, led by Siraj's fifer, a record in itself.

On day 5, facing a massive 328 to chase, the Indian fan army hoped for the weather to



rescue the team. And the clear blue skies scripted a miraculous and historic victory, led by Shubhman Gill's 91, Pujara's defiant batting braving multiple body-blows, and a swashbuckling 89 not out by Rishabh Pant. The resultant match and series win is being described as one of India's greatest triumphs, made more remarkable by extreme odds against which it was cliched. Even some Aussie fans became an internet sensation overnight for their "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram" chant.

The series will be remembered for Siraj sticking with the team despite his father's unfortunate demise and leading the charge in the absence of Bumrah and Shami; Gill emerging as India's rockstar opener; Washington and Shardulas all-rounders; Pant the x-factor; and Captain Courageous Ajinkya Rahane's leadership. Pant's first innings failure and heroics in the second is a lesson that life gives second chances, and one must grab it with both hands. The rookies turned into stars overnight and in the face of adversities their courage came shining through. Team India, take a bow!

Vaccine Maitri: India's 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam' diplomacy draws global praise, Feb 16-28, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 16



The title-phrase is derived from the Hindu scripture the Upanishads, meaning the world is one family. For centuries, the phrase has shaped India's spiritual and egalitarian outlook and, during contemporary independence, the country's diplomatic and foreign policy contours. This ancient philosophy characterised India's fight against Covid-19 in the initial phases of the pandemic outbreak and now in distributing the vaccine to the needy nations.

Notwithstanding a 17% of the world population (1.3 billion) to look after and an underdeveloped public healthcare, India's inspirational leadership with a humane touch to help others, is winning hearts and minds globally. In early 2020, when the nations were looking inwards, PM Narendra Modi had held marathon telephone conversations with hundreds of head of states including – in Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, EU, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Maldives, Nepal, Oman, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, (State of) Palestine, Sweden, Thailand, Uganda, UAE, UK, US and Vietnam – to discuss joint strategies against Covid-19, and offering necessary support in the crisis. A lesser-known fact is that on 26 February last year a special Indian air force flight had carried 15 tonnes of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to Wuhan

at the request of President Xi Jinping. On return, it ferried 76 Indians, 23 Bangladeshis, 6 Chinese, two nationals each from Myanmar and Maldives, and one each from South Africa, USA and Madagascar – all stranded in 'ground-zero'.

In April 2020, PM Modi had also spoken with the BRICS foreign ministers to share India's anti-Covid measures including, Arogya Setu disease surveillance portal, Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief fund (PM Cares), SAARC Covid-19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX) and pharmaceutical assistance extended to other countries. Subsequently, India supplied Hydroxychloroquine and anti-pyretic paracetamol to over 150 countries, including 25 nations in Africa alone. So much so that President of Brazil compared PM Modi with the legend of Hanuman, the monkey god in Hindu mythology, who had carried Sanjeevani (medicine) from the Himalayas to save the life of Lord Rama's wounded brother, in the battle against the demons in Lanka. India has also provided grants-in-aid valued at around Rupees 80 crore to 82 countries.

Come 2021, being the world's pharmaceutical hub, the Serum Institute of India developed the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, producing 2.5 million doses per day, which has enabled the country to help its neighbours and 25 other countries. Besides, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and Afghanistan, now Indian made vaccine is being sent to Bahrain, Brazil, Morocco, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles and the UAE. According to India's Ministry of External Affairs, 24 million vaccine doses have been set aside for 25 countries in the month of February. Interestingly, Canada is not included. It is believed that at the heels of recent misgivings over the farmer's protest, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau reached out to PM Narendra Modi to secure vaccines supplies, and was assured of all necessary help by the latter. According to the MEA spokesman Anurag Srivastava, "As of date (12 Feb.), we have supplied a total of 229.7 lakh doses to the global community."

Additionally, over 200 million doses will also be sent to the World Health Organisation, for distribution in the poorer countries. Yaroslav Trofimov and Bellman in a piece in the Wall Street journal titled, "In Covid-19 Diplomacy, India Emerges as a Vaccine Superpower". The New York Times wrote, "India, the unmatched vaccine manufacturing power, is giving away millions of doses to neighbours friendly and estranged", and "Acting East. Acting fast," is how Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's foreign minister described India's Vaccine Maitri diplomacy drive by the 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam' philosophy.

Build India literacy for a lasting relationship, March 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 17



In 2012, Ken Henry was delegated by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard to develop the 'Australia in the Asian Century White Paper 2012' which recommended Australia expanded its strategic net in Asia, engaged with Indonesia and rising power India, and shaped the future of the region. The Varghese report too said that engaging India was no more an option, but a necessity. But importantly, both reports recognised that policy-making is not a purely government task but a joint exercise involving academics, scholars, artists, analysts and institutions that possess the knowledge and expertise on the region and regional matters. Varghese went a step ahead to posit that the 'Australian government neither has the capacity nor the inclination' to implement the strategy on its own. Therefore, for the long-term future of bilateral relations, creating Constituencies of Country Champions is paramount, so as to shape strategic thinking, influence policymaking policies and facilitate people-to-people interactions on a sustainable basis. This requires a three-pronged approach. In the immediate term, focussing on people and institutions possessing the requisite country expertise, lived experiences and professional linkages. In the intermediate term, drawing upon the recommendations of research

works and government reports, notably, the Melbourne Declaration on educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008, which noted, "India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become 'Asia literate', engaging and building strong relationships with Asia". And in the long-term, encouraging schools and universities for introducing courses and programs on India; not only support the existing institutions specialising on India-Australia studies, but also creating new ones. The United States and Singapore are two examples where people and institutions possessing country expertise have played a vital role in shaping strategic thinking, lobbied as peace advocates during testing times, and bolstered a vibrant and well-informed Constituency of Country Champions. Now, Australia must solve its Asian literacy (term "Asian literate" was coined by Stephen FitzGerald in his essay 'National Education Policy and Asian Studies', 1988) conundrum, which has fuelled debate among academics and policymakers for decades. FitzGerald considered Asian literacy central to Australia's performance, something that Lee Kuan Yew also endorsed saying that knowing Asian values did not mean becoming Asian, but developing the ability to engage better. Asian literacy is not just language proficiency. It is about understanding values, customs, traditions, socio-political and cultural nuances to decode how a nation thinks and acts in one way or the other. It requires familiarising oneself with Asian history, values and culture early in school, alongside developing language skills and undertaking country visits as a part of immersion programs or other study visits. Unfortunately, a steady decline across Australian primary and secondary schools in Asian language and history teaching has made Australia knowledge-deficient on Asia, especially India and Indonesia. During school dropoff/pickup hours it is common to see Asian kids conversing with their Asian parents in English, rather than in a native language. While English learning is equally vital, developing Asian multilingual proficiency and country knowledge would trigger intellectual curiosity in young minds, which can be tapped and satiated by universities later. Of all the higher degree institutions, Hindi course was being offered only at the Monash University and that has also now been reportedly shut. That is the state of Asia/ India literacy in Australia.

Coming of Age of the Quad, March 16-31, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 18

The announcement by the US president Joe Biden to hold the first Apex level virtual summit of the Quad members should be seen as a watershed in the history of the formation, since its inception in 2007. For over a decade, the formation's evolution into a formal entity has been impeded by India's and Australia's bilateral sensitivities towards China. But not anymore. In the wake of Australia's trade tensions with China triggered by the former's demand for an inquiry into the origins of the Covid-19 outbreak, and on the other hand, India's military confrontation in Ladakh with China, the inhibitions of the two seems to have dissipated considerably. Their renewed willingness to stand up to China's coercion and authoritarian ways has provided a fillip to Quad's growing formalisation as a regional counterweight to China. Now both Australia and India seem to be on the same page with US and Japan in adding ballast to Quad for ensuring a free, open and rule-based Indo-Pacific. Quad's evolution is being seen as a rising "concert of democracies", which Australia has described as an "anchor of peace and stability in the region". On the US front the positive development is the continuation of Trump's hard stance vis-à-vis China now under Joe Biden, who in one of his presidential debates had described Xi Jinping as a "thug". Now the decision to hold the formal virtual summit of the four Quad members, US, Japan, Australia and India is an extension of that assertive policy posturing towards China.

The agenda for the inaugural Quad virtual summit is quite wide including Covid-19



Courtesy_Deccan Herald

strategy, vaccine production, climate change, supply chain disruptions, critical and emerging technologies and maritime security, but it may well be the case of downplaying any “anti-China” signalling. Although, there is no denying that China is the elephant in the room in the burgeoning resolve of the Quad members.

The 12 March virtual summit symbolises a push back from regional democracies, including some the ASEAN members, against China’s trade and territorial authoritarianism, and ensure a peaceful and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific. Whether, the Quad will turn into some kind of NATO type military alliance is too early to anticipate.

But the growing unanimity among the Quad members to build some kind of a collective arrangement to secure the region against future Chinese misadventures has certainly evoked interest among other regional powers. South Korea too has expressed its desire

to join the Quad in a “transparent, open and inclusive” manner is a case in point. It shows the unease among regional powers, especially democracies, against China’s regional hegemony and territorial muscle-flexing. It is an indication that South Korea and several ASEAN members now seem inclined to support the Quad, if not join immediately, owing to their own troubled relationship with China over the years. It is understandable that unlike the four Quad members, other regional states may be wary of a military or economic backlash from China, but nonetheless, the havoc that Covid-19 has caused across world economies, and China’s territorial aggrandizement in the Indo-Pacific, many states may gradually lend their support for a stronger Quad as a counterweight to China. In short, the inaugural virtual summit of the Quad members is nothing short of a watershed.

Indian diaspora poised to shape Australia-India ties, April 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 19



The Australia Indian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is witnessing a meteoric rise since the virtual summit of Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison transpired in June 2020. The summit was held amidst the global havoc caused by Covid-19, and as the world economies suffered a brutal battering from the pandemic, tensions with China spiralled dramatically. While Australia demanded an inquiry into the origins of the outbreak of the pandemic infuriating Beijing, Indian troops on the other hand were also locked into a bloody battle in the Ladakh sector with the People’s Liberation Army.

The cumulative effect of the two developments spurred Australia and India to deepen their bilateral ties and strategic engagement within the framework of Quad in the Indo-Pacific. The first virtual summit of the Quad leaders on 12 March has further brought Australia and India even closer. Strategic analysts on both sides are in agreement that Australia India bilateral business and trade ties will benefit from their growing cooperation in the Quadrilateral framework. In this context, the Indian diaspora in Australia has now a critical role to play in complementing business and trade ties and complementing the core objectives of the strategic partnership.

Numbering over 700,000, constituting 2.8% of the Australian population, the Indians are the fourth largest and the fastest growing migrant community here. Around the years 2001-2017 around 400,000 people migrated to Australia. Of the 700,000 Indians 88% are of the working age and 61% are in full-time and 27% in apart-time employment. This makes them the second highest tax-paying migrant community after the UK-born

migrants, contributing over \$12 billion to the Australian economy. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Hindi is the largest spoken language in the community, followed by Punjabi, Malayalam, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Marathi, Kannada and Bengali.

The Indian students contributing \$6.6 billion to the Australian economy forming the second largest international cohort constituting over 15% of the Australian university enrolments.

While these are impressive statistics, the role of the Indian diaspora remains still way below their potential. According to Surjeet Dhanji in a recent article in the Indian Express, “Australians of Indian origin account for 0.5 per cent of representatives in the federal parliament, 0.7 per cent in the Victorian state parliament, and even lower proportions for local councils in New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria. They are doing relatively well in the NSW state parliament, where they account for 1.5 percent of elected representatives”. In order to shape bilateral ties and Australia’s policy towards India, this record needs to improve considerably.

Similarly, the diaspora also needs to build their prominence in the corporate sector as well. Peter Varghese in his India Economic Strategy to 2035 observed, “Most Indian diaspora business in Australia are SMEs, and they too have the capacity to be meaningful drivers of economic integration with India”. But having said that Indian corporates Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, HCL, Cyient, NIIT, iGATE (now part of CapGemini) and the Adani Mining (now named Bravus) are bolstering India’s footprint into the big corporate world.

Indian community organisations are now playing an even larger roles, attracting a larger turnout, of both Indians and non-Indian communities, in organising and celebrating major public events like Holi and Diwali across Australia, and enriching the multicultural ethos of Australia.

In sum, the Indian diaspora has a major role to play in building India literacy not only in the cultural realm but also in business, trade, academia and strategic realms. This will not happen on its own, and the diaspora leaders depending on their individual expertise in various fields will have to push harder to build new academic and research programs and institutional collaborations, set up new businesses, host larger public events, assist Australian businesses in doing business with India, and also fight for a greater pie in the Australian politics. The constellation of bilateral, regional and global opportunities have never been so favourable, something the diaspora cannot afford to let slip away.

Let us not lose perspective in judging Modi’s India, May 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 21



The Indian High Commission in Canberra has issued a stern rejoinder in response to The Times (UK) report by Philip Sherwell, “Modi leads India into a viral apocalypse”, re-published in the Australian dated 26 April. The displeasure of the High Commission is quite understandable.

The Times report has lambasted Narendra Modi for a “slow domestic vaccination roll out”, “ill-equipped health system”, “lax protection”, “pandemic fatigue” and “promotion of economy over containment”.

Frankly speaking, every leader and country can be held guilty on these charges. Not long ago, we had seen a total collapse of the healthcare system in the advanced economies, including the United States, UK, France, Germany and even Australia to some extent, in the face of the dramatic covid-19 outbreak.

The images of people putting tents on the streets in the US, aircraft carriers and public parks being turned into make-shift hospitals, and UK subjecting its citizens to a complete lockdown bringing life to a standstill are still fresh. Reports of ambulances being bumped off in Australia from hospitals, the Ruby Princess fiasco, and the recent the AstraZeneca roll out confusion do not paint a very promising picture either.

For the records, while Australia is struggling to vaccinate the entire population, India recorded the fastest vaccination roll out, vaccinating over 140 million people, and has now been reportedly conducting 1.3 million tests daily. In 2020, when the West for all its

economic might and health facilities was struggling to protect its people, India driven by its Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam (world is one family) philosophy despatched personal protective equipment, hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol to over 150 countries, including China (Wuhan) and has lately, exported 66 million vaccines to over 80 countries in desperate need. Ironically, now Modi is being pulled up for this humane gesture as well.

Not many know that India does not feature in the top 10 countries recording high mortality rates for every 100,000 inhabitants. It includes countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium and others.

Let us also not lose the perspective of how a deeply divided polity since 2014 in India has led to such human catastrophe.

In March 2020 when PM Modi announced the lockdown, he was labelled as a heartless dictator for triggering a mass-migration of laborers by the same international media which is now calling him an “anti-lockdown” leader.

In March 2020, when Modi called upon the countrymen to stand united to pay gratitude to the frontline workers and law enforcement agencies by clapping and lighting lamps, his detractors in India and abroad ridiculed him.

Subsequently, when the government issued directives to put on masks and practice social distancing, people roamed with impunity saying they have developed herd-immunity and India has very low mortality rate.

In the latter half of 2020 when vaccination manufacturing gained pace in India, it was labelled as a “BJP vaccine” and therefore should be boycotted.

Amidst all this, when the farmers agitation broke out, hundreds of thousands of people thronged the Singhu border and scaled the ramparts of the iconic Red Fort in a display of mass hysteria. Then celebrities, journalists and political opponents joined the protests flouting all Covid-safety norms. Then Covid was least of the concerns, but now election rallies and religious congregation are being labelled as a ‘super-spreader’.

A recent Right to Information request has revealed that the Government of India had disbursed funds to the state governments to set up oxygen manufacturing plants in January itself, but states like Delhi were sleeping over it.

In this context, why is the world aghast when India sits on a Covid time-bomb? For now, the least we can do is not lose the perspective of India’s deeply divided polity, demographic bulge and the West’s own failings.

Queensland needs long-term India strategy as Premier provides timely assistance, May 16–31, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 22

As India grapples with the relentless battering from the double mutant covid-19 virus, the global community has been deeply moved by the sufferings that have made headlines in the international press. India's federal and state response to deal with over 400,000 daily cases has been impeded by shortage of hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and critical oxygen supply needed for the covid patients.

To ensure these services the Indian government has been working at a war footing to boost oxygen availability by train, air and road. The Indian Air Force C-17 aircrafts have undertaken non-stop sorties carrying cryogenic containers in collaboration with India Inc. from Europe and Asia. Over 450 cylinders, oxygen plants, ventilators and concentrators have been flown in from the UK, France, Germany, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Germany. Even the Czech firefighters have donated 500 oxygen cylinders to India. The United States has now approved of the supply of raw materials used in developing corona vaccine in India, after the initial dilly dallying. India's PMCARES fund has made budget allocation for 551 dedicated Pressure Swing Absorption medical oxygen generation plants inside public health facilities to boost oxygen availability.

The India Inc. and the Confederation of Indian Industries has recommended to the government to enforce nation-wide lockdown, based on an online survey in which 67.5% favoured a nation-wide lockdown while nearly 80% rated the situation as uncontrollable. India has announced vaccination for over 600 million people aged between 18 and 44, in addition to over 180 million vaccinated so far. Besides, over 1.7 million tests are being conducted in India daily as well.

In response to the India's covid-crisis and to lend a helping hand, the Queensland State Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk invited key Indian community leaders, including India's honorary Consul Mrs Archana Singh, India News Editor in Chief and Institute for Australia India Engagement CEO Dr. Ashutosh Misra, GOPIO Gold Coast President Mr Pradeep Gorasia, Australia India Business Council Treasurer Mrs Amritha Zachariah, Islamic College of Brisbane CEO Mr Ali Kadri and Federation of Indian Community of Queensland Mr Shyam Das among others.

The Premier was accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Steven Miles, Treasurer Cameron Dick, Multicultural Minister Leanne Linard, Tourism and Sport Minister Stirling Hinchliffe, Assistant Minister for Hydrogen Development and the 50% Renewable Energy Target by 2030 Lance McCallum, Assistant Minister for Treasury Charis Mullen and Member of Parliament Jessica Pugh.

At the end of the meeting the Queensland Premier announced a \$2 million help to the Australian Red Cross Regional Coordinator Mr Collin Sivalingam to be used in India to fight Covid. This timely assistance has been widely welcomed by the Indian community.

From here on the Queensland government needs to engage with India on a short- and



courtesy_IANS

long-term basis. In the short term of course, it needs to provide all the necessary financial and medical assistance to India, strongly oppose the federal government's decision to penalise returning Indian Australians with imprisonment and fine and provide emotional support to the Indian community.

In the long run, the government needs to enrich its India engagement strategies by drawing diverse perspectives at the following levels:

Local Consulate and Indian High Commission at the government-to-government level; Australia India Business Council, local Indian businesses and leaders at the business and trade level;

FICQ, GOPIO and other community organisations at the community level; and Institute for Australia India Engagement, Indian Medical Association, professional associations, academic institutions, and media houses such as India News, at the strategic and policy level.

This will help the government develop a robust and well-informed long-term India strategy.

Australian embassy bids Kabul adieu, June 1–15, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 23

After two decades of presence in the restive Afghanistan, Australia has announced the closure of its mission. The announcement comes at the heels of the withdrawal of the US troops ordered by President Joe Biden.

Following the September 2001 attacks, Australian Defence Forces had set foot on the Afghan soil in 2001 under Operation SLIPPER to support the Afghanistan government as a part of the NATO Resolute Support Mission. The operations lasted until 2011 after which Operation HIGHROAD rolled out which included the Headquarter Task Group Operations, Headquarters Resolute Support, Kabul Joint Command, Role 2E Medical Facility and Special Operations Advisory Group, NATO Special Operations Component Command — Afghanistan and the Afghan General Command of Police Special Units Special Forces.

Between 2001 and 2012, 38 ADF forces were killed and 240 injured in the security operations.

The Australian decision is triggered by security threats and safety of the diplomatic and support staff following the US troop withdrawal. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that the decision to shut the embassy has been taken "in the light of the imminent and international military withdrawal from Afghanistan...[and the US withdrawal] brings with it an increasingly uncertain security environment where the government has been advised that the security arrangements could not be provided to support an on-going diplomatic presence".

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne in a meeting with the Chair of the High Council for National Reconciliation, HE Abdullah Abdullah tried to assuage the concerns of the Afghan authorities saying, "We will continue our close friendship, and support our shared aspiration of peace, stability and prosperity. We will continue our development assistance program to work to preserve the significant gains made by the Afghan people, in particular advancing the rights of women and girls".

The Australian decision has unleashed security fears amongst the 103 current and 70 former Afghan staff who were employed by the Australian mission. Fearing for their lives from a potential life-threatening reprisal from the buoyant Taliban, many of these Afghans have applied for an Australian visa on humanitarian grounds, which currently hangs in a limbo. The opposition in Australia has expressed its disappointment saying that it was not consulted before the government took the decision to shut down its mission, and advised Scott Morrison to speed-up the visa process to rescue the current and former Afghan staff.

The Australian conundrum is indeed complex, and quite understandably not easy to resolve without serious repercussions for either side. On the one hand the security risk for the remaining 80 ADF troops and the mission staff remains very high, the withdrawal on the other hand exposes the Afghan staff as a target for the Taliban. There are discussions in Canberra going on the feasibility of moving the mission inside the US complex from where the US embassy had operated since 2001. Also, setting up a regional mission in the Middle East is being considered to facilitate a fly-in fly-out type of



diplomatic operation, which Australia had in place between 1969 and 2006.

Moving inside the US complex makes Australia an extension of the American schema eroding any trace of autonomy in the Australian decision-making, a tag that Canberra has long struggled to shrug off. Similarly, a fly-in and fly-out mission would not have the same level of effectiveness and control over the local operations and humanitarian support that Australia is providing so far, as a local mission.

But frankly speaking, the blame cannot rest entirely on Canberra, and the Afghans should have been fully aware that sooner or later international troops would withdraw, and therefore, they needed to be prepared to face this day. The Afghan National Security Forces and successive regimes in Kabul should have been anticipating this day and preparing in all earnest to take on all responsibilities post-withdrawal. For the US, NATO and Australian troops their perpetual presence was never on the cards, and therefore, they cannot be blamed for their decisions, having paid a colossal human and financial cost over two decades.

For now when sceptics question whether all the sacrifices made were worth it when the Afghans had to be left in the lurch leaving the job 'incomplete', Washington, Canberra and Brussels will struggle to provide a convincing answer.

India rallies ‘one-world cry’ at the G-7 summit, June 16-30, 2021-Vol 1, Issue 24



The most powerful and influential of global groupings, the Group of 7 (G-7), comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States met at Cornwall, the hub of green technology in the UK. The group was previously known as G-8 until Russia was suspended in 2014 over the annexation of Crimea.

This year apart from the European Union representatives, India, South Korea and Australia were invited as well. The choice of the invitees is noteworthy, as the 2021 summit is being portrayed as the Coalition of Democracies to “counter and compete” with China. The US National security Advisor Jake Sullivan minced no words when he said that “China represents a significant change to the world’s democracies”. Following the Covid outbreak, the world’s leading democracies have been demanding a more transparent and rule-based order, in a veiled attack on China’s authoritarian ways in engaging with neighbours, specially in the Indo-Pacific, and inability to provide a convincing explanation to the origins of the virus.

India, as the world’s largest democracy, has been deepening its ties with the West in recent years, including the G-7 members. As a natural ally for the West, India defends “shared values from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation and infodemics and economic coercion,” said P. Harish, MEA Secretary (economic relations).

As a special invitee, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered his address in the “Open Societies and Open Economies” session championing the “One Earth, One Health” approach aimed at forging global unity and solidarity to counter the pandemic. He also emphasized on the need to keep raw materials for vaccines easily accessible. India’s

vaccine production was impeded in the middle of the third wave due to shortage of raw materials from the US, causing misgivings between the two sides briefly.

It is important to underline here that India which currently battles with the third wave—had supplied PPEs, medicines and vaccines to over 135 countries—driven by its Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (world is one family) global philosophy. The shortage of vaccines in the wake of the third wave has been widely criticized by Modi’s critics and the opposition, but in his G-7 pitch, PM Modi again upheld these ideals.

PM Modi also said, “tech companies and social media platforms” to ensure a “safe cyber environment”, triggered by his government’s deepening differences over regulatory issues with Facebook, Twitter and other social media and technology companies.

PM Modi reminded that for preventing future pandemics a lot rests on the shoulders of ‘democratic and transparent societies’, which conforms to the G-7 approach towards building a new, transparent, rule-based and peaceful post-Covid world order. In the Cornwall G-7 summit, China has been reprimanded over human rights violations in Xinjiang, crackdown on the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and tensions in the Taiwan Straits. Taiwan, which could not become a member of the World Health Organization owing to China’s opposition, is quite pleased with the Taiwan-friendly sentiments characterizing the G-7 summit.

The G-7 members have proposed a minimum of 15% of tax at place of sales, and not where the multinational companies are physically based. In sum, the summit is significant for addressing issues related to international security, global economic recovery, covid 19 recovery and tax avoidance by big multinational companies.

Queensland’s budget aimed at saving lives and creating jobs, July 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 25

The Queensland Government recently presented its budget which according to Treasurer Cameron Dick will create more jobs in the state leading to faster economic recovery, as the state goes under another three-day snap lockdown. The budget has allocated \$3.34bn under Queensland Jobs Fund focused on investment attraction and industry development to attract the investment needed to drive on-going growth, and provide wider economic and employment benefits; \$52.2bn under the infrastructure program over the next four years creating over 46,500 direct jobs in 2021-22; \$22.2bn on health during 2021-22 for creating a world-class health system, which is critical for effectively managing the pandemic; \$18.3bn under education and training during 2021-22, including \$460mn toward targeted investments in flagship skills and training and employment programs Skilling Queenslanders for Work and a revitalised Back to Work program; \$14.2bn on economic support initiatives, \$6.1bn in concessions and lowering cost of living and \$1.9bn on social housing and homelessness investment over the next four years.

Under the 2021-2022 budget targeted measures have been announced to support small businesses and regional economies. The Queensland Government says that the Economic Recovery Plan will continue to support businesses, workers, families and communities across the state, and the government has successfully handled the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in the state, putting the \$360bn economy on the path to a robust recovery. Over the 10 years, by 2024-25 the government will have supported over \$110bn in infrastructure works, as per the Plan.

The government appears to be very buoyant about the economic rebound, lowering debt and increasing jobs for Queenslanders. As per the budget figures the net debt in 2021-22 is expected to be touching \$9.69bn, which is below the 2020-21 forecast, which has resulted from higher revenue, lower expenses [including the savings identified in the Savings and Debt Plan, and a material increase in the value of investments held in the newly established Queensland Future Fund (Debt Retirement Fund estimated to be valued around \$7.7bn by the end of 2020-21)].

The budget figures show employment recovery of all the jobs lost during the pandemic, and the same is now forecast to grow by 2¼ per cent in 2020-21 and 3 per cent in 2021-22. The unemployment rate is also low at an estimated 5¼% by June quarter 2022 and reaching 5% by June quarter 2025. The budget also demonstrates that employment in Queensland has rebounded to be 54,900 persons higher in April 2021 than its pre-pandemic level in March 2020, and 253,200 persons higher since the depths of the pandemic in May 2020. The treasurer has said that Queensland has recorded the strongest employment growth of any jurisdiction since March 2020.



According to the government figures the economic forecast and recovery are promising and impressive, but there remains the large unknown in terms of what scale of impact would the pandemic have vertically and horizontally, on the economy under the second wave, as Queensland goes into a three-day lockdown again. The government’s fundamental strategy comprising a hard response to the pandemic based on shutting borders and enforcing lockdowns although intensely debated seems to have been paying the dividends. The cyclical process of safeguarding lives leading to economic and business activities, which in turn creates more jobs and revenue, helps the government address its primary concern — safeguarding lives.

That racism unites people more than it divides is heartening, July 16–31, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 26

Racism is as old as the history of human societies. Modern states have responded appropriately: legislatively and normatively and so to have sporting codes and institutions. However, we cannot wish it away. It will remain amongst us in one form or the other.

Racism in sports has risen by 67% in 2018, in professional sport – soccer, basketball, boxing, cricket, golf, motorsport and tennis. Remember how Jesse Owens and other athletes, faced similar experiences during the 1936 Olympics in Germany, held under Adolf Hitler's "Aryan-race only" formula? Interestingly, contrary to popular belief that Hitler refused shaking hands, Jesse said it was actually the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt who refused to meet him. Imagine that?

Recall Zinedine Zidane's headbutting act after being racially slurred by Marco Materazzi during the France and Italy match in the world cup. An Algerian sculptor has even built a sculpture to immortalise the headbutting. Tiger Woods was also subjected to a racist jibe from a veteran golfer after his 1998 major win, and so did Magic Johnson in basketball.

Racism again raised its ugly head in the aftermath of the Euro 2021 final between England and Italy in which England lost 3-2 in the nerve-wrecking penalty shootout after extra-time ended with a 1-1 score line. The pain of losing the final was in itself heartbreaking for England, but the barrage of racist slandering and attacks on the three key English players, Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka was even more excruciating, drawing widespread condemnation. The trio had narrowly missed the penalty kick, costing England the cup.

The upset English fans in a fit of rage not only resorted to vandalism and rioting outside the Wembley Stadium, but went on to target the three players with racist attacks, leaving them heartbroken, and the nation and sporting world in shock. While the loss was in itself brutal for the team, more so for the three players, being singled out on racial grounds was too much to bear for them, as well as for other English supporters. But, it was a touching sight to see the brave England captain Harry Kane embracing the players to console them, speaking volumes about his leadership.

In the post-match madness, a large group of highly agitated England supporters reportedly defaced the murals of Rashford in his suburb of Withington, in south Manchester.

Appalled by the racist attacks, hundreds gathered to throw their support behind the trio, repainting and restoring the defaced mural of Rashford. The gathered supporters also took the knee at the Stand Up to Racism demonstration.

#SayNoToRacism and #BlackLivesMatter has been trending on the social media ever since, in solidarity with the players, which is a powerful symbol of racism uniting people more than dividing them. BBC reported that the 61-years old Karen Reismann, protested despite being fined £10,000 for breaching Covid rules during a National Health



(Bukayo Saka, Marcus Rashford and Jadon Sancho)

Service pay protest. Another NHS worker Felicite Sora, who recently moved to UK from France shared that the French player Kylian Mbappe was also subjected to racist attacks after he missed the penalty for France in the competition. She said that she joined the solidarity protest with her six-year old son to instil in him the need for standing up to such incidents of racism. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has condemned the racist attacks unequivocally and thrown his weight behind the team, especially the trio. The Greater Manchester Police is now reportedly investigating the incident of the defacing of Rashford's mural. Ed Edward, the co-founder of Withington Walls said that the perpetrators need more education than any punishment. According to the BBC, the crowdfunding page has raised over £34,000 which will go toward painting more such murals, said Edward.

The message in all this here is that racism will raise its ugly head periodically involving players, officials, referees and spectators, therefore, what matters is how we respond. It is heartening to see in the latest instance how people have stood up against racism. This is how it must be addressed: unequivocally and strongly. Because racism won't vanish, so what matters is how we respond as a society.

Olympics 2032 coming to the “deserving” Brisbane city, August 1–15, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 27

21 July was a historic day when out of the 80 Indian Olympic Committee (IOC) members, three abstained, five voted “no” and 72 voted “yes”, granting the hosting rights to Brisbane, the capital of the Sunshine State of Queensland, Australia. The large crowd that had gathered at the South Bank in Brisbane — including former Olympian Nat Cook, Sports Minister Stirling Hinchcliffe, Education Minister Grace Grace among others, Brisbane City Councillors, local artists, community leaders and enthusiastic locals — jumped in unison with joy, as soon as the news broke out and fireworks lit the majestic Brisbane skyline.

People choked with emotions, clapping and hugging each other celebrating the historic success for Brisbane and South East Queensland. Frankly speaking, the feeling of Brisbane becoming the third city after Melbourne (1956) and Sydney (2000) to be bestowed upon this honor is still sinking in.

An ecstatic Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that it was a “coup for the nation”, and a “historic day not just for Brisbane and Queensland, but for the entire country”. Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk from Japan also said that it was a “historic day and all Queenslanders can be proud of this historic moment”. Brisbane's Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner who had accompanied the Premier and Australian Olympic Committee President John Coates to Tokyo said this was the “best opportunity that our city, our region and our state has had in generations.” Thomas Bach, President of IOC backing the IOC's decision said that “Brisbane was a deserving host city”.

What seems to have clicked Brisbane the deal was the successful hosting of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, the high-profile 2014 G-20 Summit, previous hosting experience in 1956 and 2000, and above all the efficient handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throw into the mix, the existing sports facilities and venues, public transport network and infrastructure, law and order apparatus, flora and fauna, tropical climate and Australia's global reputation as a sport loving nation.

It will be fair to posit that the success has come after years of planning wherein the three levels of the government — federal, state and council worked in unison to back the bid at every step.

It is now being anticipated that the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics will transform Brisbane's destiny just as the Sydney Olympics did after the 2000 Games. Federal Minister Richard Colebeck said that the Games will be held in an “affordable, beneficial and sustainable manner for Queensland and Australia”. In the run up to the Games several international sporting events will be held to upgrade Brisbane's current infrastructure



and capabilities to organise the Olympics 2032 in a grand manner.

KPMG's estimate suggests that the Games will yield \$8.1 billion for Queensland and \$17.6 billion for the federal exchequer in terms of economic and social benefits. Ted O' Brien, the Prime Minister's representative backing the bid says the Games will give an enormous boost to 'construction, services, retail and hospitality sectors in Queensland and further augment the social benefits, health and wellbeing, social inclusion and accessibility for people with a disability'.

In sum, Brisbane 2032 Games will change the city's and State's fortunes for time memorial. And cherry on the cake — from 2032 onwards Brisbane will earn the tag of an Olympic city!

Firdaus’ paradise Kashmir embraces a new life, August 16–31, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 4

As India celebrates its 75th year of independence, Jammu and Kashmir has completed two years of the passing of the historic Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019 (abrogating Article 35A and amending Article 370 to alter J&K’s special status).The erstwhile state has experienced the following key path-breaking changes ever since, proving local, regional and international propaganda baseless and misguided.

Governance

Now central laws are applicable, including the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2007 etc.

Grassroot democracy

District Development Council elections were held in October –November 2020 with a 51.7% voter turnout. The Panchayat Act has been amended creating the 3rd tier of panchayats at district level and 44 digital village centres established at panchayat level to provide internet access to rural areas and access to government e-delivery services. First ever Block Development Councils elections were held in October 2019 with a 98.3% voter turnout. Women now benefit from reservation and under the Back to Village program over 15,000 loans, including 4600 loans for women entrepreneurs, have been disbursed.

Over 70,000 ration cards were seeded with the Aadhar Card, while 50,000 families were covered under the state-sponsored health insurance schemes. The new integrated grievance redressal and monitoring system received 85,000 grievances and addressed over 90% satisfactorily.

Infrastructure development

Under the \$US 7.5 billion PM’s Development Package, 54 projects have been identified, of which 20 projects have been completed or substantially completed, including an all-weather 8.45 km long hi-tech tunnel between Qazigund and Banihal, Rambagh flyover in Jammu and Indian Institute of Technology, Jammu. 13 more projects will be completed by the 2022-23 end. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link project and the world’s highest railway bridge being constructed over the river Chenab.

Power generation capacity is being doubled, with 3000 MW to be added by 2024-25. Pakal Dul (1000 MW) and Kuru (624 MW) hydroelectric projects have begun already and 100 % household electrification achieved and over 180,000 rural households are to be given functional household tap connections by March 2022.

Industrial development

J&K Industrial Development Policy 2021-30 has been notified and Industrial Land Allotment Policy 2021-30 adopted to allocate land to 15 industrial projects worth \$US 200 million.

Employment opportunities and skill training



Over 2000 people have been employed and 15,000 new vacancies created. New public-private partnership based centres for invention, innovation, incubation and training will provide training to unemployed engineers. Two IT parks will also be built in J&K.

Social inclusion

Social security schemes now include over 270,000 additional people, including transgender people for the first time to grant pension benefits.

Health

Free and universal healthcare insurance scheme has been extended to all residents. Seven new medical colleges and hospitals, including two AIIMS, two cancer institutes, bone institutes and child hospitals, are being constructed. Over 85% healthcare workers have been vaccinated and 100% vaccination of 1st dose (45+ years) in nine out of 20 districts delivered. Two new 500-bed specialty COVID hospitals have been established and special monthly pensions/scholarships are being disbursed to families who have lost their breadwinners to COVID-19.

Education

50 new colleges are being established to educate over 20,000 additional students and translation of textbooks in local languages of Dogri, Hindi, Kashmiri and Urdu for primary schools has commenced. Under the PARVAZ scheme tutoring and guidance is being provided to students for civil services and other competitive examinations.

Agriculture

Government of J&K will receive National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) investment worth \$US 230 million into apple, walnut, cherry and pear plantations over the next five years. Three cold storage clusters will also be constructed.

Sports

\$US 26 million have been allocated under the PM’s development package for upgradation of sports infrastructure which includes two Khelo India Khelo centres of excellence in Jammu and Srinagar.

Undoubtedly, Firdaus’ paradise has turned a new leaf, deflating all false propaganda that was being peddled against the historic August 2019 decision.

DFAT’s review of India strategy is timely and well-founded, September 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 5

India Australia Comprehensive Partnership has gained momentum and intensity since its upgradation during the inaugural virtual summit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison on 4 June, 2020. The key objective was to recalibrate bilateral engagements in light of the rapidly altering regional geopolitics, international business and trade disruptions, and the opportunities that Covid-19 has presented for both sides. In this regard, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has launched a timely review of the India Economic Strategy to 2035 authored by Peter Varghese, largely in the pre-Covid context. Although many of the recommendations of the report still hold ground, there is definitely a need to devise new strategies and action-plan as a way-forward.

In the altered global context, it is imperative that Australia and India put together the following time-bound action plan to maximise returns at the bilateral level:

1. In the first year dialogues must be undertaken at the ministerial level in different sectors;
2. In a maximum six months, existing Working Groups need to be galvanised and new ones formed to take action upon the recommendations of the two reports. Sub-working group must be formed and tasked to dish-out the details of the consultations and recommendations;
3. All ministerial departments must act in unison and diligently until business relationship gains a momentum of its own;
4. Yearly review of these dialogues and consultations must be undertaken to identify progress, bottlenecks and future action-plan and ideally be shared with the apex leadership on both sides to enable an informed and productive discussion in summit meetings;
5. Sector specific dialogues and consultation must be held under the Free Trade Agreement talks to address the issues of Rules of Origin and trade barriers urgently;
6. Trade talks will be complex and challenging, and businesses on both sides need to become thick-skinned while structural impediments and bureaucratic delays are ironed out. There is also a need to spread risk and diversification in Australia’s business and trade ties by engaging with India;
7. Focusing on impact sectors — sports and education -- will help create a conducive and positive atmosphere on both sides and shape positive public opinion. Herein, bringing back 18,000 stranded Indian students to Australia, addressing the gaps and recommendations in India’s New Education Policy 2020, and promoting sporting exchanges and collaboration to strengthen India’s \$400 million sports ecosystem must be considered seriously; and
8. More efforts are required to bolster India literacy amongst business and trade organisations in Australia, and vice versa.



Domestically, there are a range of strategies which Australia may incorporate in its policy-making to bolster India strategy:

1. There is a need to open up, if not change, the mindset of the stakeholders in Australia for doing business with India;
2. Sharing success stories and India’s changed economic scenario with business is necessary to convince them why it is no more business as usual in India. Also, India’s business credentials have become stronger which needs to be shared with Australian stakeholders;
3. Collaborations and consultations must move beyond the track-I level, with non-government stakeholders inter alia, academic institutions, small businesses, community associations and policy institutes to gather wider and diverse inputs and suggestions and incorporate them in profiling India’s improved credentials on the one hand, and enriching Australia’s India strategy on the other; and
4. As FTA negotiations gather steam, there is a strong case for organising a high-level business conclave, something like the Raisina Dialogue, involving business leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, legislators and diplomats to augment Australia’s awareness about India.

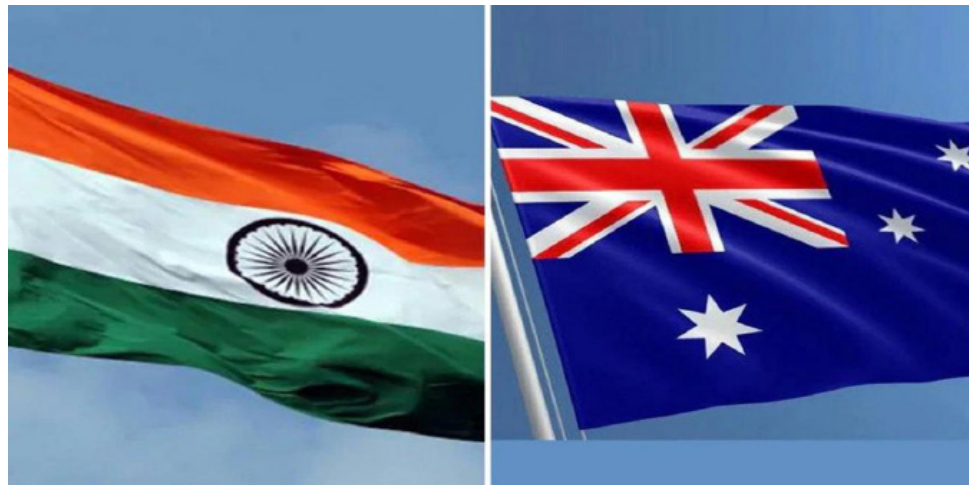
While Covid-19 has battered the world economies, claimed millions of human lives and undermined international relations among major powers causing anxieties amongst their regional partners in the Indo-Pacific, it has also opened up a whole new vista of opportunities as well. Australia and India must make a virtue out of a necessity and not let this opportunity slip. That they have acted diligently and purposefully to sit on the drawing board to strategise how best to smother the impact of Covid-19 and their strained ties with China, is heartening. It is time to turn adversities into opportunities.

Sport as an impact sector will strengthen Aus-India ties, September 16-30, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 6

Australia as a sport loving nation has a pivotal role to play in this regard. It encourages an outdoor lifestyle in the community to achieve a work-life balance and connect physical and mental fitness with nature and sports. Australia's leadership in sporting excellence is respected globally. During his visit to Australia in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined Australia's contribution and leadership in sports and recommended bolstering bilateral cooperation in sport. Peter Varghese's report An India Economic Strategy to 2035 also mentioned, "India already looks to Australia as a model in sports for achieving results. Supporting India's sports agenda can help Australia entrench positive relationships with India government and businesses". India's growing \$350 million Khelo India Khelo sports ecosystem beholds enormous opportunity for Australian stakeholders, which the AIBC can help facilitate.

Following Prime Minister Modi's 27 September 2014 speech in the United Nations General Assembly, India's stellar leadership in yoga has been recognised by the United Nations, declaring 21 June as International Day of Yoga. India's proposal had received the support and co-sponsorship of 177 nations, a record. Images of mass yoga events from around the world make the headlines every year and Australia can benefit from India's excellence in yoga. An MoU in sports cooperation exists between the two sides signed in 1999 that needs to be expanded and include the wellness industry.

India's sport ecosystem currently faces several challenges, inter alia, inefficient resource allocation; social and economic inequalities; inadequate sporting infrastructure; organisational, regulatory and administrative inefficiencies; gender discrimination; and corruption across sporting codes. Over the years Australia has been addressing some of these challenges through training to Indian officials in sports administration, sports education, sports science and capacity building to several Indian sports departments, associations and federations. Spearheaded by the Australian Sports Commission, Australia has been contributing to 'increasing the capacity to planning and conducting quality sport-based activities' and



contributing to the 'locally identified development priorities' which is encouraging the participation of marginalised children and youth in sports and using sports to improve livelihoods.

Corruption in sports remains a potent challenge to many nations including India, which can benefit from best practices in preserving integrity in sport from Australia, where sporting codes, regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies work closely to preserve integrity in sport. As India's global footprint in sport expands it needs to constitute policy mechanisms and sport practices to keep sports clean.

The 2021 tour of the Indian women's cricket team to Australia is a timely and a great opportunity to build sports engagements further and create a more conducive atmosphere for the larger Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Sport as an impact sector has a key role to play in shaping perceptions on both sides, and together, both sides can leverage sport to create a better future for bilateral ties.

Fans and Queensland embrace cricket opportunity to spread cheer, October 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 7

The 2021 tour of the Indian women's cricket team to Australia is a timely and a great opportunity to build sports engagements further and create a more conducive atmosphere for the larger Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Sport has a key role to play in shaping perceptions on both sides, and together, both sides can leverage this sector to create a better future for bilateral ties. The India versus Australia Women's International Cricket Series 2021 kicked started in an impressive manner in Mackay on the 21st of September. Queensland has embraced the opportunity of hosting the series with both hands, after Victoria and New South Wales were ruled out as the venues for the series, due to the Covid-outbreak and extended lockdowns in the states. The three one-day internationals in Mackay were all sold out events which demonstrates how eager the fans are in going out to have some fun, especially in regional Queensland, amidst continued Covid-19 battering in other states. However, Queensland too, has currently recorded new cases of covid which may result in a lockdown, and make the remainder of the matches crowdless events, which will be a shame. But such is the uncertain nature of the affairs we all live in in the present times. The first game in Mackay saw Australia beat India with a huge margin on the 21st, but India came back strong and gave a tough fight to the hosts on the 24th in the day and night game. The drama of the last ball being declared a no ball generated a lot of controversy and debate over its merit, but in the end Australia managed to cross the line. Nevertheless, the fight up put up by both sides in the second match is a potent reminder of the quality of the contest that both the top sides in international cricket deliver for the fans to cherish. Then, on the 26th, seething from a narrow defeat in the second game, saw India firing all cylinders and beating Australia in another nail-biter in the last over, with the veteran Jhulan Goswami hitting the winning runs much to the joy of her teammates and Indian fans on the ground. For making the matches in Mackay such a grand spectacle, the Mackay Cricket Association, the Great Barrier Reef Arena and Queensland Cricket deserve a special appreciation for making the ground ready for matches and in such a short notice. The facilities and ground conditions would make any top cricketing venues in the world proud, for which the ground staff, Queensland Cricket and Cricket Australia deserve our commendations. Also, institutions like the Australia India Business Council, Institute for Australia India Engagement and media partner India News also deserve praise for creating a



buzz around the matches and publicizing it for the local, national and 1.3 billion fans in India. The series is being very keenly followed by cricket fans and has generated immense positivity in bilateral relations at a time when Australia India Comprehensive Partnership is witnessing a major upswing. As the two teams prepare for the one-off test match and three T20s at the Metricon Stadium in Gold Coast, the fans on both sides can be assured of an entertaining summer of cricket. Thanks to our women in Blue, and in Green and Gold, for enduring the pains of the covid bubble and ensuring a safe and uninterrupted entertainment for all. As our women take so much trouble in spreading cheer, supported by the State government, we all as fans must play our part in extending all the necessary support and gratitude to our champion women cricketers.

India vs Australia: International Women's Cricket Series ends on a high, October 16-31, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 8

The 2021 tour of the Indian women's cricket team to Australia ended on a high and deepened bilateral ties further. The series kick-started in an impressive manner in Mackay on the 21st of September after Queensland embraced the opportunity for hosting the series, following Victoria and New South Wales being ruled out as the venues for the series, due to the Covid-outbreak and extended lockdowns in the states. The three one-day internationals in Mackay were all sold out events which demonstrated how eager the fans were to go out and have some fun, especially in regional Queensland, amidst continued Covid-19 battering in other states.

Aiming to make the matches in Mackay a grand spectacle, the Mackay Cricket Association, the Great Barrier Reef Arena and Queensland Cricket deserve a special appreciation for making the ground ready for matches and that too, at such a short notice. The facilities and ground conditions would make any top cricketing venues in the world proud, for which the ground staff, Queensland Cricket and Cricket Australia deserve our



commendations.

Then the two teams came to Gold Coast for the one-off test match and three T20s at the Metricon Stadium. Unfortunately, the test match and the first T20 were washed out by rain without a result. The remaining two T20s were hard-fought and both sides put up a strong show, much to the delight of the fans on the ground. In the end, Australia emerged better of the two teams. In the words of former Australian cricketer and current commentator Lisa Sthalekar, "Both teams played tough cricket, and India challenged Australia to the fullest. But Australia was able to win key moments and that separated a quality team from a good one". Thanks to our women in Blue, and in Green and Gold, for enduring the pains of the Covid bubble and ensuring a safe and

uninterrupted entertainment for all.

India News in conjunction with Queensland Cricket, Cricket Australia, Australia India Business Council and the Indian Community of Gold Coast covered the series to publicize it widely for the local, national and 1.3 billion fans in India. The excitement continues as the Indian fans will now be able to see some of the Indian players in action in the Women Big Bash League (WBBL). These include Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues (Melbourne Renegades), Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma (Sydney Thunder), Shefali Verma and Radha Yadav (Sydney Sixers), Richa Ghosh (Hobart Hurricanes) and Poonam Yadav (Brisbane Heat).

Stronger business and trade ties will shape Aus-India strategic partnership, Nov 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9

India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles Piyush Goyal, and Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Government of Australia Dan Tehan MP met in New Delhi to discuss ways to speedup negotiations towards formalizing India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

Some of the sticky points include resolving tax-related issues concerning the Indian software firms in Australia, and boosting the two-way trade between the two countries. The immediate outcome of the meeting was a shared commitment to conclude the full CECA agreement by end-2022 and an interim agreement by December 2021 to boost and liberalise trade in goods and services. In the meeting both Ministers recognized that having a balanced trade was key to expanding trade and investment flows for both economies, and strengthening a rules-based international trading system.

At the strategic level, India and Australia remain committed to building and strengthening a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open, and inclusive multilateral trading system furthered by the World Trade Organization.

Currently, Australia and India bilateral trade rests at AUD\$30 billion which is way below their potential, and in order to make India one of the top three trading partners (currently 7th) of Australia by 2035, CECA is vital. Australia imports petroleum products, medicines, polished diamonds, gold jewellery, apparels among other items from India, and India imports coal, LNG, alumina and non-monetary gold from Australia. In the services sector, India exports travel, telecom and computer, government and financial services, and relies on education and personal related travel from Australia.

It is important to highlight that much of the intensity in their bilateral engagements in recent months has been driven by Australia's growing tensions with China over the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, Hong Kong crackdown, alleged foreign interference in Australia's internal political functioning, tariff wars and impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the one hand, and India's military tensions with China in Doklam and Ladakh, on the other hand.

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in an interview with a policy think-tank in Australia said that he takes great satisfaction in how the Australia-India bilateral relationship has deepened in the last year and a half. As two cricket playing Commonwealth members, both share interests and values and their ties should be



independent of their respective relationship with China, he said.

It will not be an exaggeration to submit that the Australia-India ties that elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in June 2020 have reached a historical high and are poised to transform into a significant relationship in the Indo-Pacific. Be it Australia choosing to divert agricultural exports to India from China or the deepening maritime cooperation and the evolution of Quad, both sides have demonstrated a firm resolve to shape the post-Covid order. Australian Senator Simon Birmingham, who led a trade delegation to New Delhi in February, had said, "Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India." The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade itself has observed that India's youthful population and diversified growth trajectory present significant opportunities in education, agriculture, energy, resource, tourism, healthcare, financial services and infrastructure among other areas. Both sides have formalised over 20 MoU last June covering some of these areas during the Modi-Morrison virtual summit. Their two-way trade has risen from \$13.6 billion to \$30.4 billion in 2018, but it is still below their full potential. By 2035, both sides aim to double their bilateral trade and Australia seeks to bring India in its top five trading partners (currently 7th).

This is the new India, November 16-30, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9



The Padma Awards have been conferred upon the awardees in India since 1954 in three categories: Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service), Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher order) and Padma Shri (distinguished service). Over the last seven decades 3225 awardees have received these honours from the President of India. But the 2021 awardees have made bigger headlines and attracted much wider publicity on social media for being largely obscure and unknown but deeply and passionately devoted to their cause. The awardees range from a man curing elephants, a fruit seller who built a school from his meagre earnings, a former revenue officer who founded libraries for tribal children, a tribal woman who has planted over 30,000 trees to a botanist who translated a 17th century Latin botanical treatise.

It is the new India where many ordinary citizens with bare minimum resources, negligible social status and poor educational background have been recognised for their passion and selfless commitment to their life mission.

Some of the key awardees who received the award from President Ram Nath Kovind are:

Himmatram Bhambhu (Nagaur, Rajasthan): For raising a forest with 11,000 trees on 25 bigha land and planting more than 500,000 trees, and saving the flora and fauna from poachers.

Harekala Hajabba (Mangalore, Karnataka): A humble fruit seller who built a school for the children from his life earnings.

Madhu Mansuri Hasmukh (Jharkhand): A folk singer known for 'Gaon Chhodab Nahi' song who made a mark in the development sector as well.

Prof. K.S. Manilal (Kerala): A botanist and taxonomist who researched, translated and annotated Hendrik van Rhee's 17th century Latin botanical treatise, and documented extensive details of Kerala's 700 indigenous plants and discovered 14 species with the help of his students.

Sathyanarayanan Mundayoor (Arunachal Pradesh): A former revenue officer-turned educationist, founded 13 libraries as a part of the Home Library Movement in remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh, creating awareness and interest for decades in tribal children.

K. Munusamy (Villianur village, Puducherry): A terracotta artist known for making miniatures as small as 1.5 inches and dramatic life-size terracotta statues and training hundreds in the art.

Bata Krishna Sahoo: A fish farmer who with his earnings trained college students and farmers in spawn production.

Dr. Kushal Konwar Sarma: The 'Elephant Man of India' or the 'elephant surgeon', a veterinarian and Professor of Surgery and Radiology at the College of Veterinary Science in Assam who has treated 600 plus elephants and saved 140 rogue bull elephants over the decades.

The Awards have certainly taken a new meaning and chosen those who over the years have been overlooked and not been recognized for their work. It is the new India definitely where now even the ordinary and obscure citizens can hope to be felicitated for their passion and work.

India's Constitution Day celebrated globally, December 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 10



India is celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav commemorating 75th year of India's independence. In India and across the world the Indian government is organising a series of events to celebrate India's constitutional and cultural journey over the last 75 years, and it is a great way to share India's culture and soft power appeal with the wider world and Indian diaspora.

On 26 November, a number of events were celebrated in the Indian Parliament and also around the world, including in Australia. What is so special about 26 November? 26 November is celebrated as the Constitution Day in India because the Constituent Assembly that was formed in 1946, led by Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, adopted the Indian constitution to replace the Government of India Act of 1935 and Independence Act of 1947.

The struggle to demand a Constituent Assembly was being made since 1930 by the Indian nationalists and the Indian National Congress, in a protest against the Simon Commission, and the British were convinced that nothing short of granting rights to Indian nationalists to draft the constitution would satisfy them. This is how the constitution was adopted on 26 November 1949 and came into force two months later, on 26 January 1950, which is celebrated as India's Republic Day.

26 November is also etched in India's memories and of liberal democracies around the world because on this fateful day in 2008, 10 terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Toiba from Pakistan, unleashed three days of mayhem and bloodshed across the Mumbai city. It was a brazen attack on India's democracy, freedoms and liberal ethos, killing 175 including 2 Australians, Douglas Markell and Brett Taylor, and injuring 300 others. Ever since, 26 November has also become synonymous with India's fight against extremism,



authoritarianism and cross border terrorism, driven by the perpetrators of an extremist ideology who do not believe in democracy, liberalism and civic freedoms.

Similarly, today the world is also passing through a critical transition, when the liberal democracies realise the need to defend the principles of democracy, freedom and civil liberties to build a stable, secure, transparent and a rule-based world order. The concert of democracies or D10, including the world top 10 democracies have been diligently working during the last couple of years to build a transparent and accountable rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific. It is in this context that the Australia-India Strategic Partnership and QUAD become a game changer critical cog in the region.

It is heartening that India News in conjunction with the Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE), Indian High Commission, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade organised a hybrid event on the "Role of Constitutional Democracies in Shaping the Emerging World Order". The event featured outstanding panellists: Suneeet Mehta, Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Canberra; Ian Biggs, Australian Deputy High Commissioner to India; Michael Feller, Director, India political section, North and South Asia Division, DFAT; Lalitha Kumaramanglam, former Chairperson of National Commission for Women from New Delhi; Yogesh Joshi, Research Fellow, Institute for South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore; Archana Singh, Honorary Consul Queensland, Government of India; Shaun Star, Director, Centre for India Australia Studies, Jindal Global University; and Ashutosh Misra, CEO, IAIE and Editor in Chief India News and National Chair Sports Australia India Business Council.

A Tall General bids adieu with other Bravehearts, December 16-31, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 11



Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat

India's first Chief of the Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat tragically died on 8 December in a Mi-17V5 helicopter crash in the hills near Coonoor district in Tamil Nadu, along with his wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 other defence personnel onboard. The dead included CDS' Defence Adviser Brig Lakhbinder Singh Liddar, Group Captain Varun Singh, Staff Officer Lt Col Harjinder Singh, Wing Commander Prithvi Singh Chauhan, Squadron Leader Kuldeep Singh, Junior Warrant Officer Rana Pratap Das, Junior Warrant Officer Arakkal Pradeep, Havildar Satpal Rai, Naik Gursewak Singh, Naik Jitendra Kumar, Lance Naik Vivek Kumar, Lance Naik B Sai Teja is on life support in the Military Hospital at Wellington and all efforts are being made to save his life. Expressing grief at the tragedy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "I am deeply anguished by the helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu in which we have lost Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and other personnel of the Armed Forces. They served India with utmost diligence. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. Gen Bipin Rawat was an outstanding soldier. A true patriot, he greatly contributed to modernising our armed forces and security apparatus. His insights and perspectives on strategic matters were exceptional. His passing away has saddened me deeply. Om Shanti. As India's first CDS, Gen Rawat worked on diverse aspects relating to our armed forces including defence reforms. He brought with him a rich experience of serving in the Army. India will never forget his exceptional service." Vice President Venkaiah Naidu also tweeted, "Deeply shocked by the tragic death of Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, his spouse Smt. Madhulika Rawat, senior officials of the armed forces & others in a helicopter crash in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu." Homage poured in from around the world. The US defence secretary Lloyd Austin described Gen Rawat as a "valued partner". He said, "General Rawat left an indelible mark on the course of the US-India defence partnership and was at the centre of the Indian armed forces' transformation into a more jointly integrated warfighting organization." Russian Ambassador to India Nikolay Kudashev said Russia lost "a very close friend." [Gen Rawat] played a big role in promotion of our bilateral special and privileged strategic partnership. Grieving together with India. Goodbye, friend! Farewell, commander!" The European Union's ambassador to India Ugo Astuto, also condoled, along with General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan's Army Chief who had served with Gen Rawat in a UN peacekeeping mission in Congo in 2008. Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi called the accident an "unprecedented tragedy". Sun Weidong, China's Ambassador to New Delhi conveyed "deep condolences on the sad demise of CDS General Bipin Rawat, his wife and other victims in the helicopter crash". Bhutanese Premier Lotay Tshering described the tragedy as heart aching. Barry O'Farrell, Australian High Commissioner to India, conveyed condolences and noted that Australia-India relationship thrived during General Rawat's tenure. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in a statement in the Parliament said, "With profound grief and heavy heart, I stand to convey the unfortunate news of the crash of the military helicopter in the noon of 8th December 2021, with India's first Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat onboard...A tri Service enquiry regarding the incident has been ordered by Indian Air Force, headed by Air Marshal Manvendra Singh, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Training Command." General Bipin Rawat was appointed India's Army Chief on 31 December, 2016 and then first CDS on 1 January, 2020 and was slated to be in the position until March 2023.

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Lead Editorials

India's Australia Economic Strategy report: Heralding historic opportunities, Jan 1-15, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 13



Anil Wadhwa

By Ambassador (retd) Anil Wadhwa : I am personally delighted that the Australia Economic Strategy report, which I have been working on along with the CII and KPMG teams over the past two years, was released on 18 November 2020 in the presence of the Ministers Piyush Goyal, and Simon Birmingham and several stakeholders in the bilateral relationship. It complements the Australia India Economic Strategy led by Peter Varghese in 2018. The Australia strategy is informed by 100s of think tanks, states, government ministries, businesses and universities in India and Australia.

It has identified 12 key sectors namely mining, services and startups, pharmaceuticals, health care and medical technologies, education and skills, agribusiness, infrastructure, power and

renewable energy, railways, gems and jewelry, automotive spare parts, and tourism, witnessing collaboration already. It crystal gazes for opportunities in emerging areas like labor intensive services, defense, sports, textiles and textile designing, digital gaming and animation, water management and commercial ferries/shipbuilding, space and education technologies – all of which are expected to gain increased relevance.

The altered regional and global geopolitics presents excellent prospects for enhancement of bilateral economic ties in some critical areas. Disruptions in global and regional value chains are a potent reminder to rely on trustworthy partners believing in the Rule of Law. Ministers Piyush Goyal and Simon Birmingham announced a Resilient Supply Chains initiative with Japan on 1 September. In this context, in India, the pandemic has underpinned a number of reforms, and incentives have been announced for boosting manufacturing. These will attract further investments from Australia and bolster trade. The Australia-India agreement on cooperation on critical minerals and rare earths is especially relevant, as these two countries have complementarity of interests; while Australia is keen to find alternative export markets for its minerals, India needs rare earths for its advanced manufacturing sector and for its e-mobility programme. The new mining policy in India will renew the scope for diversification and expansion of the existing resources partnership through mining and processing of critical and strategic minerals.

400 million Indian youth need training by 2022 and Australian VET sector has a huge opportunity in training curriculum, aligning Indian accreditation and assessment to global standards, and improving trainer quality. Opportunities for sustainable solutions for water and water recycling across India and in immunology, vaccine development, circular economy, surface coal gasification, and waste-to-wealth processes have emerged for Australian companies. Australia is ideally placed to partner in grains management, rationalization of costs and logistics driven by the ongoing bilateral agri-based programmes. Australian Super funds and infrastructure companies can enter the highways and toll roads sector. The defense and space related companies as well as shipyards in Australia and India are buoyant at new opportunities.

Australia has announced massive investments in its cyber security wherein India can complement with tech pool as per Australian requirements. The Indo-Australian scientific collaborations in research & development, manufacturing equipment and identifying

treatments to face global health emergencies is expanding. Australian investments and technology have been identified for collaborations in food technology and processing in the dairy sector. 100% FDI has now been permitted in India for renewable energy projects, which can be availed by Australian companies. India needs to pumped storage projects to manage large scale integration of RE and grid balancing which will be of deep interest to Australia. Australian investments in India's heritage and religious tourism, eco and coastal tourism and hospitality can secure huge returns once global travel normalizes.

Both can also collaborate to integrate e-learning solutions into existing curriculums and in enabling teachers to develop online curricula. Australian businesses will benefit immensely from opportunities and market in India for scaling up technologies in med tech, health tech, Edu tech and EdTech. Australian and Indian companies should collaborate in digital gaming and animation, textile designing, sports technologies and equipment, auto components, renewable energy and power, healthcare, and clinical trials. India has reduced corporate tax rate to 25%, and rolled out the production Linked Incentive (PLI) in electronics and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), as well as Phased Manufacturing Plan (PMP). PLI has now been extended to 10 more sectors including battery manufacturing, auto components, network products, textiles, food processing, solar photovoltaic cells etc. Genomics, artificial intelligence, 5G, robotics and drones are all on the radar. Overall, India has identified 24 focus sectors in manufacturing in which Australian companies can collaborate.

But the following steps are now necessary. First, under the directions and supervision of the two Ministers of Commerce and Industry and Trade, both sides need to form a special working group comprising officials from foreign and other ministries and organizations to review implementation of the two reports on a 6-monthly basis. Their task will be to identify trade and investment barriers, facilitate businesses engagements across federal and state levels, and ministries. This will also include looking at issues like easing of visas and other consular issues, taxation, banking, phytosanitary and other regulatory barriers. Second, relevant departments in both countries must be committed and supportive, allocating requisite funds for dissemination of information and contents in the reports. This report contains several pointers and recommendations for action by various ministries in India. Third, India and Australia should seriously look at their Free Trade Agreement negotiations, stalled due to RCEP. There are huge mutual gains from its realization and will also help them align their Resilient Supply Chains initiative with Japan. Fourth, big businesses on both sides must explore the investment route to drive trade traffic. The business-to-business linkages need strengthening through periodic meetings between trade bodies and associations, and sector specific, specialized business dialogues. The CEOs Forum between the two counties must be revived with the right partnership and specific working groups to operate during the intersessional period with recommendations. Fifth, we recommend that à la Australia India Strategic research fund, both sides should start a joint start up and innovation fund as well as a humanities and social sciences collaboration fund with a modest contribution of US \$10 million by each side over 5 years for each of these funds. Sixth, post-pandemic, both should diligently work towards starting direct flights between major commercial and tourist hubs which will help increase trade, investments, and tourism. Finally, India must strengthen manpower in the Indian Embassy and Consulates, explore opening new Consulates in Adelaide and Brisbane, strengthen CII's presence, and revive Indian tourism offices in Australia to lend institutional push to the implementation and follow up on the report's recommendations.

**Ambassador Anil Wadhwa has served as Secretary (East) in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and as Ambassador to Italy, Thailand, Oman and Poland. He is the Chairman of India's Australia Economic Strategy Report task force.*

A 'water-shed' indeed: India-Australia water partnership, Jan 16-31, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 14



Uttam Kumar Sinha

By Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha

In early December 2020 in New Delhi, the water resources ministry (Jal Shakti) organised the 4th India Water Summit with the theme 'Valuing Water-Transforming Ganga'. An important objective of the summit was to bring together global financial investors and institutions to focus on various aspects of water challenges, in particular water efficiency. A number of countries represented by their ambassadors and diplomatic emissaries attended the meet sharing their countries experiences in water management and discussing various avenues of water cooperation and collaboration with India.

With water as a strong driver and seeing India as a potential partner in promoting regional security and

was inaugurated virtually by Dan Tehan, Minister for Education and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, minister for Jal Shakti.

According to the media statement from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), "Australia's funding will support the exchange of the latest tools and technologies for safeguarding water supply to India's fastest growing cities, and will focus on wastewater treatment, recycling and water-sensitive city design. The initiative will pair Australia's expertise in water and urban design with Indian counterpart agencies and institutes – known as a 'twinning arrangement' – to address the increasing challenges associated with providing water and sanitation to cities."

Countries, leaders and institutions around the world are putting their weight behind to achieve a 'water secure world'. Water is an existential resource and the need to manage it for development to support agriculture, manufacturing, domestic requirements and the environment has never been so critical. "In a water-secure world" as the World Bank, the largest multilateral source of financing for water in developing countries notes, "Countries are able to reduce and adapt to the impacts of a changing climate on water, while ensuring that each drop is consumed more efficiently."

The India-Australia water connect has a history. Alfred Deakin, regarded as the father of federation and father of irrigation, and three-time prime minister of Australia between 1903 to 1910, had visited colonial India via Colombo in the early 1890s to study irrigation. India had always fascinated Deakin more than any other country. Before his voyage to the sub-continent, Deakin had already travelled to the US, Italy and Egypt to grasp the essence of irrigation system in these countries and came out with notable reports Irrigation in the America (1885) and Irrigation in Italy and Egypt (1887).

An 'enterprising personality', Deakin, had involved himself with water supply issues in Victoria and his vision of an irrigated Murray Basin was a product of both liberal

stability, the Australian government announced a contribution of \$10 million to support cooperation with India on urban water security. The Water Security Initiative promises to expand the two countries 'comprehensive strategic partnership', agreed in June 2020, by committing to strengthening water security cooperation. Picking up pace, in November, Australia-India Water Centre led by University of Western Australia and IIT-Guwahati

reasoning and his own spiritualism that made him view water as a 'life force'. As he examined irrigation works, dams, canals, weirs and various structures across rivers in his extensive travels, Deakin strongly felt that it was India's irrigation system that would be relevant to Australia. In his tour of India through the cold months of 1890-91 he wrote a series of articles for Melbourne Age that was later compiled into a book, *Irrigated India. An Australian View of India and Ceylon. Their Irrigation and Agriculture* (1893). Deakin writes:

"Between India and Australia there must soon be special links and associations. Their irrigation systems will be of perennial interest to all hydraulic engineers, and especially to those on this side of the line. Our southern colonies are certain to be always in favour with their officials on furlough in search of health, or those who have retired, and seek a home in a temperate climate, free from the tropic heat of their field of labour, or the snows of their place of birth. Australians and Anglo-Indians are therefore bound to be acquaintances. Intimacy between the two countries will doubtless be established in course of time. They are part of one empire, and thus linked to one destiny."

Deakin used the expression "the duty of water" signifying the area of land which a given quantity of water will irrigate. His understanding of the inextricable connection between land and water was striking. Any irrigated land, Deakin observed, was principally determined by the quality of soil, temperature, rainfall, evaporation, etc. Deakin's outlook on irrigation and agriculture and his role in the formation of the Victorian water legislation helped to significantly inform the federal water policy debate in Australia.

Another important influencer to the river debate in Australia was David J. Gordon who briefly was South Australia's minister of education and repatriation in the Archibald Peake government in 1917. Gordon had believed in permanent navigation of rivers that would induce settlement and facilitate trade. In an illustration captioned 'If the Rivers Were Locked' in his book *The Nile of Australia. Nature's Gateway to the Interior* (1906), Gordon writes:

"The Murray-Darling and Murrumbidgee if locked would give 3000 miles of navigable highways to the interior, a distance equal to that from Adelaide to Pt. Darwin and more than half way back."

Both in terms of irrigation and navigation, the two geographies can come closer.

Collaboration, coordination and joint actions are the new mantras in the water sector and the two countries can partner projects emphasising on 'affordable solutions' for Indian conditions covering both the rural and the urban areas.

Four critical contexts determine water challenges in India: water as a dwindling resource or the scarcity and its challenges on the agriculture sector; the quality of water and increasing level of pollution; the impact of climate change in particular floods and droughts; and the issues of water governance that requires cooperation and coordination between the centre and the states. These four broad contexts offer opportunities for cooperation in priority areas such as clean drinking water, ground water utilisation, water efficiency, sanitation, Ganga rejuvenation, inland waterways and hydro-powers.

In India, over the last half and more decade, possibly one of the most modernizing policy approaches of the Narendra Modi government has been to raise the profile of rivers. Water is indispensable to governance and development plans, livelihood and healthy life, expressed as *sujalam sufalam* (water for prosperity) and *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*. It is also a key instrument of regional prosperity and integration. It is not surprising that many of the Modi's government big ticket programmes like *Swachh Bharat Mission*, *Swachh Bharat Urban*, *Swachh Bharat Gramin*, *Namami Gange Programme*, *Smart Cities Mission* and *Inland Navigation* are centred on the indispensability of water.

That apart, India like Australia is committed to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs guide countries as they aim to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce inequalities and effectively deal with climate change by 2030. Many of the goals (SDG2, SDG3, SDG7, SDG13, SDG15, SDG16 and SDG17) are centred around water, sanitation and hygiene proving again the centrality of water. One of the objectives of SDG6, in particular, is to 'expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation related activities and programmes.'

It is often expressed in a lighter vein that India-Australia relations have enjoyed deep bonding over cricket, curry and commonwealth. But beyond the 3Cs there is deepening relationship on wide-ranging issues that express the interconnected world we live in. Water is unmistakably adding a new flavour to the bilateral relations.

The writer works at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, now known as Manohar Parrikar IDSA, New Delhi

Invoking Gandhian philosophy for a better world, Feb 1-15, 2021- Vol 1 Issue 15



Jyoti M. Pathania

By Dr. Jyoti M. Pathania

Mahatma Gandhi's 73rd death anniversary is an opportune time to revisit, rejudge and replicate his credo and vision. During the challenging COVID-19 times, where the world is marred by conflicts, violence, and unending clashes and protests, Gandhi's conflict resolution ideals will act as the guiding light giving courage to the millions globally and uniting those who believe in humanity. His ideas were never based on fixed doctrines as he strongly believed that knowledge and learning is a continuous path and human knowledge and achievements are a continuous process and ever evolving.

Gandhi's conflict resolution methodology is based on the principle of 'Satyagraha' and 'Non-Violence' which is based on a people-centric approach, to achieve social or political change. Often described as 'the politics of ordinary people' this form of social struggle has been adopted all over the world in campaigns for social justice, liberty and equality. Such non-violent mass protests can be seen in the ongoing political demonstrations, rallies and marches taking place in many parts of the world: the protest marches in Belarus against President Alexander Lukashenko; mass protests in the United States under the banner "Black Lives Matter"; the non-violent demonstration by the people in Hong Kong against the oppressive policies of the Chinese regime; protest marches against Russian President Putin; rallies and marches against the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. This effective and potent method of voicing dissent and protest is prevalent in regimes of all hues, be it democracy, communism, authoritarianism, monarchy or capitalism.

International conflicts can be resolved on grounds of morality as Gandhi believed that three-fourths of the world's miseries and misunderstandings in the world would disappear if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their viewpoint. This approach is enshrined in the UNESCO's motto, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". Hence, mindsets need changing, but is it practical in today's changing geopolitical world order, especially in the COVID-19 times, where the glaring inequalities are coming to the forefront between the developed and the developing world? International organisations, like the United Nations and the World Health Organisation (deemed leaders in internationalism), have completely

failed in their response mechanism in these testing times. Their biases and decision-making are being questioned and derided by nations globally. If these organisations have become the mouthpieces of the biggest funding countries, where is the morality, one may ask? Why don't international organisations cut much ice on moral and ethical grounds? The need today, therefore, is to reset their moral compass and infuse a dash of idealism in international relations. Otherwise, believing and practising only strategic interests or tactical considerations in every sphere of activity or engagement will only make nations more and more self-centred, aggressive, assertive and even violent at times. The recent border clashes between the Chinese and the Indian soldiers is testimony to the aggression of China, aspiring to attain a superpower status by bulldozing its way in the near and extended neighbourhood.

With the world locked in an unending arms race as regional tensions and great power rivalry gather steam in the Indo-Pacific theatre, there is a need to galvanise domestic constituencies of peace to pressurize governments to move towards disarmament. Domestic peaceful movements have a huge potential to put brakes on the power aggrandizement of big powers. This seems to be a Utopian ideal but Gandhian philosophy is its most potent symbol which brought once a mighty colonial empire on its knees. Peace movements championing the cause of disarmament should be built from the grass roots, and through non-violence means only global peace is attainable. It is imperative to highlight that peace does not mean simply cessation of hostilities, but entails freedom from protracted, structural conflicts and exploitation. This will finally lead to positive peace, progress and growth. Gandhi wrote in Harijan newspaper, "Peace will never come until the great powers courageously decide to disarm themselves. Exploitation and domination of one nation over the other can have no place in a world striving to put an end to all wars. I do not doubt that unless big nations shed their desire of exploitation and the spirit of which war is the natural expression and atom bomb the inevitable consequences, there is no hope for peace in the world." Gandhi's international appeal was essentially aimed at developing a "culture of peace", wherein human beings curb aggressiveness and prepare to follow a policy of peaceful co-existence or at least a policy of non-military competition. For Gandhi, war was a creation of a few, to impose their will upon the majority. War was 'unrighteous' because it contradicted the principles of Ahimsa and the higher law of Dharma, he believed. Therefore, a progressive moral world order is the need of the hour.

In the present, there is an even greater need than before to cherish and practice the Gandhian philosophy. In India, Gandhian values have been championed by the National Democratic Alliance government, both in public welfare schemes as well as international engagements where India chose to help the world fight the pandemic in the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Indian prime minister Narendra Modi has very passionately emulated Gandhi's vision and philosophy, in promoting good work culture, personal discipline and hygiene, public cleanliness (SWATCH Bharat Mission) and mutual compassion. It is a matter of pride as an Indian that Gandhian philosophy even after more than a century continues to inspire global peace movements and lends courage and hope to individuals and institutions to stand up and challenge big powers' behaviour in the rapidly altering international order.

Dr. Jyoti M. Pathania is the Founding Editor of Online Indian Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution, Senior Fellow and Chairperson Outreach at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi, India

Time to balance certainty to international students and national interest, Feb 16-28, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 16

By Prof. Nick Klomp

It has been almost 12 months since international students last arrived en masse in Australia, ready to begin the 2020 university year.

Many more, ready to commence their Australian studies, saw borders close before they could arrive – and by the end of 2020, some 138,000 international students were enrolled at Australian universities, including CQUniversity, but studying from their home countries.

These students are acutely aware of what they're missing out on – our vibrant

university experience, our global industry connections, innovative workplaces, the inimitable Australian lifestyle.

But Australia stands to lose just as much, as education experts estimate the number of international students in our country will drop to half the pre-coronavirus cohort by July this year.

While international students are patiently making the best of a tough situation, we need a plan to make it better.

In recent months, we've seen governments hurriedly move mountains to ensure Australia's top-tier sporting events can go ahead – signing off on international charter flights, opening new streams of quarantine accommodation, arranging "isolation bubbles" for training. We've also made special arrangement for farm workers, international seafarers and aircrews.

So why is there still no staged and strategic plan to welcome back international students, despite international education being Australia's third-biggest export?

International students injected \$37.6 billion a year into Australia's economy before the pandemic hit. (The Australian sporting industry, by comparison, contributes less than half that amount.)

Nearly 60 per cent of that figure is what international students spend on goods and services once they get here – and that's just the start of their contribution to the Australian community.

In 2019, we welcomed 876,000 mostly young people to our shores, generating employment for 130,000 Australians.

CQUniversity's international student cohort, coming from over 80 different countries, is a small portion of that number.

But I've seen first-hand the value they bring as students, workers, generous community members.

And they graduate as advocates of our great nation, sharing their Australian experiences wherever their careers take them. Indeed, 84 per cent of graduates return to their home country to pursue employment.



Nick Klomp

Australia's international education boom of the past decade has too often been derided as creating "degree factories".

In reality, national and university-level regulations ensuring the quality of our education are vast.

At CQUniversity for instance, we make an offer of enrolment to just one out of every nine foreign applicants. Our rejection rate is so high because we are uncompromising in our vetting process; scrutinising academic records, English language proficiency, financial capacity to support themselves while studying, performance in a formal interview, and study intentions and career aspirations.

While domestic students can be enrolled on the spot and begin studying almost immediately, international students face a gruelling 12-18 month process of tests, forms and background checks.

And yet, they still clamour to come. Such is the pull of our universities and our lifestyle, that the Australian sector was about to overtake the United Kingdom as the world's second most popular study destination.

But for how much longer will international students put their study dreams on hold?

While Australia is the envy of the world for how we've controlled COVID-19, destinations like Singapore, Japan, the USA, Canada, and even New Zealand have already moved to welcome back international students. Surely this is not beyond the will of Australia.

Australian universities are ready and willing, albeit with the highest degree of COVID safety to ensure public health remains the number one priority.

Small and controlled cohorts could arrive on chartered flights, quarantine in independent accommodation, and meet strict travel requirements, as our sector prioritises health and safety above all else.

The burden on the taxpayer would be non-existent (with students or their universities footing the bill), and commercial airline seats and government quarantine processes would remain prioritised for returning Australian citizens.

There is even an opportunity for our regional communities to get a bigger slice of the international education benefits.

While foreign students have traditionally preferred city education, regional centres like Rockhampton, Mackay and Cairns – among the safest destinations in the world and barely touched by the ravages of COVID – could emerge as new education leaders and attract international students in their thousands. This could transform economies in those areas and create new opportunities for growth and employment creation.

CQUniversity, with campuses across regional Australia, understands that our regions desperately want fresh opportunities in the wake of the pandemic downturn. We've already seen massive breakthroughs in logistics, treatment and science for dealing with COVID-19.

It's time for a breakthrough in how we welcome back our international students, and the vast economic benefits they bring – safely, with a smile, and before our competitors take away Australia's market.

Prof. Nick Klomp is Vice-Chancellor of CQUniversity. He is entrusted with the safety, wellbeing and success of more than 7,500 international students from 88 different centres, plus more than 2,000 staff and 25,000 domestic students, working and studying at CQUniversity campuses across the nation.

Cultural diplomacy in Act East policy: India's way forward within the ASEAN region, March 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 17



Ishani Naskar

By Dr. Ishani Naskar

Incorporating culture as one of the pillars of the Act East policy indicated its recognition as an integral part of India's foreign policy. It is a testimony to the fact that India is ready to consider and employ culture as capital in its diplomatic endeavours and signals the 'coming of age' of Indian diplomacy. For as long as one can delve into documented history, India's relationship with the present Southeast Asia and the extended East comprising of lands as far as Japan and China were based on commerce and rich cultural contacts dating before the age of Christ. These ancient cultural contacts are now being traced with renewed vigour through archaeological sources, literary works and narratives from both indigenous and foreign sources. The integral part of Act

East approach towards the countries of the ASEAN region and the East requires revisiting of the history of cultural connect. Therefore befittingly, the Government of India has conceived Project Mausam to connect the dots back into time.

Project Mausam has a strong cultural dimension and is expected to yield strategic dividends by helping India gain better access to Southeast Asia region. Southeast Asian history is replete with evidences of close cultural contacts and adoption and adaptation of Indian cultural elements, and they are reflected in the rich cultural mosaic of contemporary times. Intangible evidences range from language, performances, palaeography to philosophy, religious and cultural practices that have been imbibed in everyday contemporary social lives of the region. Tangible evidences include architecture, paintings, numismatics and scriptures. A very exhaustive research of the deep cultural relations by Hari Bhushan Sarkar is a must read for those who are interested. A read of Pollock's Sanskrit Cosmopolis will explain the roots of words like Ayuthya, Khambuja, Garuda, Seramban (Sri Ram Ban). The list is long and exhaustive. The Indian epics of Ramayan and Mahabharat have left an indelible imprint in most of the countries of Southeast Asia and they have been adapted into their belief systems and majority religion of the country as has been the case in Myanmar where Ram has been assimilated with Buddhism. The Wayang culture has drawn largely from the two Indian epics accentuating its artistic and literary dimensions particularly in countries like Indonesia. Architectural remnants and contemporary evidences speak volumes of the cultural communications that have flown from ancient times into modernity. Temples, shrines and religious monuments were dedicated to mostly two major Hindu deities Shiva and Vishnu, while Buddhist architectures incorporated from the Jatakas. Popular religious shrines like Angkor Wat, and Borobodur are popular, and there are Saivite towns of My-Son and Po Nagar in ancient Champa, now South Vietnam. Similarly a glimpse of the magnificent Samudramanthan architecture standing in all its glory in the Bangkok International

Airport reminds of the deep seated influence of the Indian culture.

Contemporary Act East has prioritised areas like religion, education, and cultural interactions and joint archaeological collaborations. The ICCR has been promoting active cultural engagements for long; in addition it has established chairs of India Studies in various universities of Southeast Asia. Cultural Scholarship Scheme, Cultural Exchange Programme Scheme (as a part of ICCR scholarships based on bilateral agreements) and Technical Cooperation Scheme of the Colombo Plan, the ICCR Scholarship programmes, the Mekong Ganga Scholarships are offered to many of the students of Southeast Asia to provide technical support and to promote awareness about India's art and culture. Alongside, the Ministry of AYUSH provides scholarship to ASEAN countries to learn about traditional Indian medicines, therapies and Yoga. The ASI has been renovating historical religious monuments in Bagan, Myanmar. Cultural diplomatic engagements have focused on people-to-people contacts through establishing contacts with the Indian diaspora living in several Southeast Asian countries. In 2015, PM Modi had mentioned that India is not confined to her territory, but India exists in every Indian in every part of the world. The diaspora has facilitated the acceptance of contemporary Indian entertainment mediums like the Bollywood among the local population. In 2008 popular Bollywood star Shahrukh Khan was awarded the 'Datuk' title in Malaysia. Buddhism is a channel of people-to-people contact allowing thousands of Buddhists from the East to visit Buddhist sites in India; the Ministry of Tourism in India has promoted the Buddhist Circuit allowing thousands of pilgrims to visit. The Buddhist Conclaves organised by India has emerged as a strong element of cultural diplomacy, and the Prime Minister and the President of India have actively participated in these Conclaves.

The emphasis on cultural connections is an attempt to look beyond territorial delimitations into regions. Trying to establish connects, threading in cultural intangibles and intangibles, is also a way of developing a parallel discourse of foreign policy to the Western stereotypes based on hard power dynamics. It takes recourse to the path of soft power that ancient civilisations of Asia like India and China both are. In fact for quite some time now, China has incorporated culture as a part of its soft power drive all over the world with considerable success; in contrast, India has made a late start. The question is how to convert the soft power endeavours into real foreign policy dividends; it is evidently difficult to gauge the success of soft power and how they can help India attain its strategic goals. Not to forget Project Mausam clearly has a strong strategic dimension as it focuses on the Bay of Bengal (BoB). Moreover, cultural diplomacy alone cannot establish strategic gains; it can only compliment engagements through hard power abilities. It is there that India faces considerable competition from China. In response, India requires calibrated approach in deploying her hard power resources such that her cultural engagements project her as a well-meaning neighbour to ASEAN.

Ishani Naskar, Ph.D, is working as professor at the Department of International Relations in Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She can be contacted at akiksha@gmail.com.

India's leap towards space 4.0, March 16–31, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 18



Aditi Mittal

By Aditi Mittal

After a long stretch of the 2020 pandemic with almost all space operations halted, ISRO opened its space calendar 2021 with the successful launch of PSLV C51 carrying Amazonia1 and 18 other satellites. This space program is a collaboration project between Brazil and India wherein the PSLV C51 rocket of India is carrying Amazonia-1, an optical Earth observation satellite designed by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) in Brazil.

How is this a revolutionizing step for the Indian space

program?

Though the highlight of the space program is the Brazilian satellite, however the launch did turn in some new chapters for Indian space sector as well. This mission is hailed as the first dedicated commercial mission of New Space India Limited (NSIL), a two-year-old commercial arm of the Government of India under the Department of Space. Some of the commercial satellites not designed by the ISRO instead developed by commercialised institutes and start-ups were 'Anand', 'Satish Dhawan' satellite and 'UNITY sat' which served as co-passengers in the launch. 'Anand' is built by Indian space start up, Pixxel, and 'Satish Dhawan Satellite' by Chennai-based Space Kidz India. 'UNITY sat' is a combination of three satellites designed and built as a joint development by Jeppiaar Institute of Technology, Sriperumpudur (JITsat), G. H. Raisoni College of Engineering, Nagpur (GHRCEsat) and Sri Shakthi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore (Sri Shakthi Sat).

As you may call it a co-incidence or a well narrated plot this project clearly addresses the goal of the current government to allow private players in the space sector of India under its new Spacecom Policy 2020 which has been highly regarded as a paradigm shift from Space 3.0 to Space 4.0 for India. While Space 3.0 has been characterized by large government investments and public-public collaborations, Space 4.0 is a more democratized and accessible field with more public-private and private-private collaborations. This is expected to bring cost efficiency and operational efficiency in the various regular satellite operations which currently are becoming hurdles to ISRO's way for working on new projects. Hence by "outsourcing" these regular operations to private

players can help ease out the burden faced by ISRO. The private players can participate in setting up of ground stations for space crafts which constitute 48% of the ISRO's space sector budget and also in application of space technology which result in contribution to 45% of Indian space economy.

How private players can level up the game of the current Indian space sector?

India has been traditionally growing with a slow-paced space exploration with limited technology thus leaving out on several growth booster opportunities. Shifting responsibility of regular operating activities of ISRO to private sector can now open new doors for India to promote research and development in many unexplored areas. One such is Space power which can be regarded as the potential fourth arm of the country's defence setup in the emerging future. With US, Russia and China already in pursuit of becoming a Space power, India will need to equip itself appropriately to meet emerging security and defence challenges. Another is space tourism which is one among several opportunities that Indian businesses may be keen to explore. This collaboration is also a keynote addressal of how Brazil clearly shifted to India's PSLV C51 instead of China's rocket. This shows how with the ongoing pandemic, lost consumer and investor confidence in China has begun the hunt for alternatives not just in the business sector but now even in the space sector. It's time for India to shift to the fast track in such times and gather opportunities like these to build upon its space technology.

As the world looks forward to India in the future, a strong base of private and public partnership in its space program is an utmost essential. However, the role of government isn't limited to just the Space-com policy 2020. The government needs to promote such co-players by also addressing the crucial issue of funding. The government must trust and support early-stage innovations in private start-ups through "adventure" capital, not just risk-averse venture capital. Setting up of "patient" capital is also important as lead times in such ventures are quite longer than usual. A level playing field for private players in not just development but also financing can promote to a 10% share of the global space economy in the next decade as estimated by data sources. The entire agenda of Space-com policy 2020 is a direct consequence of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'. To achieve this, we need self-belief, and trust with bold policies coupled with determined actions, which can then help us certainly pole vault to a great new future, sooner rather than later.

Aditi Mittal is a Research Intern with the Institute for Australia-India Engagement

Quad manthana in the Indo-Pacific: A new phase in Indo-Australian strategic partnership heralds, April 1–15, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 19



Ashutosh Misra

By Dr. Ashutosh Misra

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has labelled the inaugural leaders' virtual summit as "Quad's coming of age". Quad's evolution has been impeded for long by India and Australia's hesitation in formalising the Quad, owing to their own bilateral sensitivities towards China. But not anymore. In the wake of Australia's trade tensions with China which triggered by the former's demand for an inquiry into the origins of the Covid-19 outbreak, and on the other hand, India's military confrontation in Doklam and Ladakh with China, their strategic cooperation has grown manifold in recent months. Their newfound willingness to stand up to China's irridentist claims, Hong Kong and Xinjiang crackdown and periodic diplomatic bellicosity and bluster in bilateral dealings has

underpinned Quad's fruition into a formal entity.

The agenda for the inaugural Quad virtual summit was consciously kept quite wide including, Covid-19 strategy, vaccine production, climate change, supply chain disruptions, critical and emerging technologies and maritime security. The rationale being downplaying any "anti-China" posturing that Beijing may find disturbing and disruptive for the Indo-Pacific.

The burgeoning quadrilateral vision was carefully articulated in the first of its kind joint op-ed by the US President Joe Biden, and the three prime ministers, Yoshihide Suga, Scott Morrison and Narendra PM. But for the watchers of international politics the op-ed is a significant document for its 'in-between the lines messaging'. For instance, the reference to 'a group of democratic nations' in the second paragraph is a veiled countervailing democratic pushback to China's authoritarian and bullish international conduct under the garb of 'peaceful rise'.

In particular, the op-eds broad emphasis on making a joint effort to tackle Covid-19 pandemic is a clever strategy to win the hearts and minds of the ASEAN member states, Pacific Island countries (the focus of India's Pacific Island Countries and Australia's Pacific Step-up strategies) and the Indian Ocean littorals to offset the long-running Chinese economic and military influence. It is a welcome development for states who have long been buried under the weight of China's debt-diplomacy and military dominance but were unable to articulate their displeasure for fear of a punitive backlash from Beijing. The use of the phrase 'dark hour' in the op-ed is another indicator of how the Quad wants the regional states to look at the current state of affairs in the Indo-Pacific.

While strategic commentators remained sceptical of Biden's resolve in reining in the Chinese economic and military muscle-flexing in the region, the decision to convene the historic virtual summit has put at bay some of those scepticism, at least for some time. The Quad's messaging has not been lost on part of other regional democracies. South Korea too, has expressed its desire to join the Quad in a "transparent, open and inclusive" manner, a clear sign of how widespread the unease runs amongst the regional states with China's overbearing influence in the region.

So, what does the Quad mean for Australia and India relations?

India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has expressed great satisfaction in how the Australia-India ties have deepened in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, battering the two economies and causing hundreds and thousands of deaths. Since June 2020 when the inaugural Modi-Morrison virtual summit transpired, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has not only been deepening, but also become the fulcrum of the Quad's new collective avatar for ensuring a safe, open and secure Indo-Pacific regional architecture. It is a double delight how the Quad and Australia-India bilateral business and trade ties have assumed a mutually complementary character. The growth of Quad will underpin the Australia-India strategic partnership and vice versa.

Engagements on both fronts will chart a parallel course and should not be seen in isolation. Peter Varghese, the author of India Economic Strategy report had observed much before the Covid outbreak, "...the stronger that [Australia-India] broader relationship the better the prospect of an economic strategy. India should not be seen only as a geopolitical partner". Now New Delhi too sees Australia not only as an economic partner but also as a geopolitical partner, therefore vindicating the rationale for elevating their 2009 strategic partnership into a 'comprehensive' one.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade observes that India's youthful population and diversified growth trajectory present significant opportunity in education, agriculture energy, resource, tourism, healthcare, financial services and infrastructure among other areas. Both sides have formalised over 20 MoUs last June covering some of these areas during the Modi-Morrison virtual summit. Their two-way trade has risen from \$13.6 billion to \$30.4 billion in 2018, but it is still below their full potential. By 2035, both sides aim to double their bilateral trade and Australia seeks to bring India in its top 5 trading partners (currently 8th).

Ambassador Anil Wadhwa's Australia Economic Strategy report launched a few months ago could not have come at a more opportune time in bilateral and regional affairs. The report has identified 12 key sectors inter alia, mining, services and start-ups, pharmaceuticals, healthcare and medical technologies, education and skills, agribusiness, infrastructure, power and renewable energy, railways, gems and jewellery, automotive spare parts, and tourism. The report very nicely complements the recommendations of Varghese's India Strategy across 10 sectors. Although, both reports lay less emphasis on defence cooperation, Quad's evolution and new regional equations are likely to boost bilateral collaboration in drone development and shipbuilding. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and Island Support Agreement to use Andaman & Nicobar and Cocos (Keeling) Islands in the maritime domain, and India's decision to include Australia into the Malabar Naval exercise, assume much greater significance in context of the Quad's emergence. These are good signs even for the stalled negotiations on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

Put wisely, Australia and India are now well-positioned to play their long-due leadership roles in the Indo-Pacific, and broadly speaking, in international affairs. Business and trade benefits to both would automatically accrue. It is a historic opportunity which must not be allowed to go untapped.

Dr. Ashutosh Misra is the CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement, Brisbane, executive committee member Australia India Business Council (Queensland) and editor-in-chief, India News Australia

What is it in Quad for India?, May 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 21



Ishani Naskar

By Dr. Ishani Naskar

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, (the Quad) emerged in 2007 as an informal association focusing on 'security' and gained momentum when the four founding members – India, Australia, the United States, and Japan decided to revive the dialogue process in light of the growing threat of China in the South China Sea region. The historic 2021 Declaration, 'Spirit of the Quad', candidly mentioned that, "Together, we commit to promoting a free, open rules-based order, rooted in international law to advance security and prosperity and counter threats to both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. We support the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity. We commit to

work together and with a range of partners". The genesis dates back to Japanese PM Shinzo Abe's Arc of Democracy that revolved around a normative formation based on liberal values and beliefs of like-minded political systems. This revival of the Quad brings together two critical domains – diplomatic and the maritime. Quad brings together maritime democracies across the Pacific and seeks to bond on the belief of establishing 'an order based on democracy and liberal values' and avoids any open reference to military engagement. It adopts an overall security approach and has an assortment of concerns and commitments – freedom of seas, environmental issues, global vaccination, exchange of critical technologies, denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and challenges to democracy in Myanmar. Yet, it is interesting to note that the Quad members are already looped in a network of bilateral military and strategic relationships. Australia's inclusion in the Malabar Naval Exercise indicates soliciting of the 'might' component of the Quad that gives a distinct indication of the strategic interests of the grouping in consonance with

the geopolitics of the region. The 'QuadPlus' mechanism involving Canada and France, New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam provides avenues to other stakeholders for a say in grouping. For the Quad members China is the elephant in the room. The whole democratic – liberal order rationale itself is indicative of China's authoritarian ubiquity in the region either militarily or economically. Thus, Quad has to calibrate its approach to grapple with China's expansion into supply chains, production, manufacturing, banking networks, name it, the Chinese are quite indelible in their imprint in the region. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) initiative has already spread the tentacles far and wide which Quad is striving to counter through Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure, Blue Dot Network Process and Resilient Supply Chain Initiative. Quad as a loose value-based arrangement oscillating between military and non-military moorings has its own uniqueness in translating international ordering in a much more flexible manner vis-a-vis China-dominated rigid international ordering. In the last decade or so, with the emerging thaw in relations with the US on the one hand, and confrontations with China on the other India's foreign policy has witnessed significant readjustment. But the entire rationale behind joining the Quad should not be boxed in the Sino-India binary as India addresses bilateral and strategic concerns separately. What India expects in strategic terms is balancing China's territorial aggrandisement with some form of maritime balancing through the Quad through maritime exercises and other cooperative mechanism with the Quad members. Quad is also expected to strengthen India's bilateral strategic engagements with Quad and Quad-Plus members. Quad is also predicted to yield economic dividends for India. In face of Covid-19 pandemic, the Quad has pledged to expand vaccine production and strategize equitable distribution across the region. India will benefit from this scheme as it is set to produce the single-dose Johnson & Johnson Vaccine financed both by US and Japan and logistically supported by Australia. Before the pandemic India's bilateral trade with the Quad countries were valued at around US\$200 billion and net investment from the Quad countries were over US\$50 million. In the post Covid-19 recovery scenario, India is projected to make a robust recovery better than the other three members, which is an added incentive for the QUAD members like to engage with India.

Dr. Ishani Naskar is a Professor at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India

My heart goes to India and its people, May 16-31, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 22



Matthew Hayden AM

By Matthew Hayden AM

I can proudly claim that I have seen India up close over the years and that is why my heart bleeds to see it not only in agony at the moment, but also for the bad press that has been hurled at it by those who I am not sure spend any time here to understand India, Indian people and its myriad challenges. As a cricketer and lover of the game, I have maintained my association with the sport, which has allowed me to come to India to cover the Indian Premier League. Many of my fellow countrymen have also been playing in the League for many years. In this context, at a time when the world has been shutting doors on India and lambasting the government, I thought of sharing my thoughts while based in India, to give a perspective, not available to those sitting thousands of miles away in a faraway land. I am not a data person,

but some of the figures that I gathered from some of the media reports are astonishing. India has already vaccinated over 160 million people (five times the size of Australia), and has been reportedly conducting 1.3 million tests daily. The point I am making is not to overlook the sheer vast numbers and the challenges associated with it. When one conjures up thoughts of India, a singular thought comes to mind. Incredible; a word popularised by the Indian Tourism slogan, 'Incredible India'. Even being now caught in the political crossfire between the Morrison Government's decision to temporarily impose a ban on travel to Australia, nothing has changed my mind about this ancient civilization. As of now this heaving mass of humanity reels in the wake of the COVID pandemic. The new normal replacing various religious festivals, exotic wedding celebrations, bustling streets jam packed with street vendors, livestock, tutu's, all sadly like the Morrison Government's travel policy temporarily put on hold. Looking out of the window of my room overlooking

the majestic 'Garden City' of India, Bengaluru, a truss has been established, as if a siesta has been called in respect to health authorities' call to action for our new global anthem. "Isolate, stay at home, sanitize your hands, wear your mask, socially distance". A race busily running in the background in many cases for life itself as national resources like oxygen and critical medical supplies are being re-routed from manufacturing plants to hospitals and care facilities. The simple truth, demand for basic medical facilities making supply, look more like one of Usain Bolt's competitors, over his legendary hundred metre Olympic final dashes. In short, hectic has been replaced with nervous and one can truly sense fear and anxiety as India face off against the challenges of this horrific pandemic. Begging the question, why is an ex-Aussie Cricketer travelling to India away from his beloved country and family at such a critical, even dangerous time? On the surface is the commercial value for my family, having played and worked on every Indian Premier League since its conception in 2008. It's true, my remuneration is significant and yes it pays my family's bills. More broadly however, I have a deep connection to Mother India which docks into my life's mission to connect people and organisations on purpose and strategy. My purpose in supporting the IPL this season is to provide a welcome relief to the monotony of extended periods of partial or hard communal lockdown due to COVID. Every night for 2 months from 6.30pm, cricket lovers, and let me tell you there are a few, can get online or turn on the television to watch their favourite franchise do battle. As a genuine lover of the game since I was 4 years old, my voice, full of excitement helps narrate our great game by bringing an authentic positive view to the cricket community. Cricket, as it so often has been throughout history, has been and is now the silver lining to our COVID cloud. The cricketers, especially in the IPL have been the soft targets of the media, and because of their contractual obligations, players cannot defend themselves and share their perspectives. It makes all the more important for people such as me, who have once been in a similar situation, but can now from the outside not only share a "player's perspective", but also speak-up for them. India is a rich civilisation which has very few parallels in the world, and in its hour of need, the least we can do is to appreciate its cultural, regional, linguistic, human development and other complexities before passing any judgment on it.

Matthew Hayden is a former Australian cricketer, Board Member, Australia India Council (DEAT), and Goodwill Ambassador for India, Institute for Australia India Engagement

India's potential in the changing Australian geopolitical environment, June 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 23

By Ambassador (Retd.) Anil Wadhwa

The deterioration in the Australian geopolitical environment dates to 2018 over growing concerns in Australia of Chinese influence in the Australian society, government, universities and media, as well as actions in the South China Sea, East China Sea and the Western and Southern Pacific. China has systematically invested in Australia in mining with a focus on lithium and rare earths, infrastructure like the Darwin port and LNG, agricultural land with water resources, electricity and energy grids, housing and real estate. In 2018, over security concerns Australia banned Huawei from its 5G network. National Security laws were passed to stop overt foreign interference into domestic affairs of Australia and enabling enhanced oversight of foreign buyers of agricultural land and electricity infrastructure. In March 2020, during the Covid 19 pandemic, Australia

had to promulgate rules to scrutinize foreign takeovers of Australian companies, taking into account vulnerability of companies to buyouts by state owned enterprises from authoritarian regimes. Over the past year, without linking directly it with Australia's demand for an inquiry into the origin of the Coronavirus by the WHO, China has targeted at least a dozen Australian exports – including cotton, coal, barley, beef, wine, lobster, sugar, copper and log timber – amounting to roughly \$25 billion. However, overall exports of Australia to China are down by just \$2 billion over the past year. Despite fears, given the dependence of China on Australian iron ore, it is unlikely to be a target sector. China is dependent on cheap LNG imports from the Darwin port in Australia and cancellation of current contracts will draw heavy penalties. Australian coal exports to India have gone up. China cancelled the meeting of the Economic Cooperation group called by Australia to review bilateral economic relations, but that group has not met since 2017. In December 2020, the Australian Parliament passed legislation which allowed veto powers to the federal government over foreign arrangements by states, local bodies and



Anil Wadhwa

universities in a broad range of sectors such as infrastructure, trade cooperation, tourism, cultural collaboration, science, health and education, including university research partnerships. This allowed Foreign Minister Marise Payne, on 21 April 2021 to cancel two MOUs signed by the state of Victoria under the Dan Andrews led Labor government in 2018 and 2019 with China's National Development and Reform Commission on Chinese participation in infrastructure projects under China's Belt and Road initiatives. Theoretically, the legislation can now allow the federal government to review and overturn MOUs between China and the state governments of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania in sectors ranging from investment, science cooperation and access to the Antarctic. An Australian parliamentary inquiry has called on

the government to consider reversing the 99- year lease for the port of Darwin from a Chinese company under the new Foreign Relations Law. Defense officials are checking if the Land Bridge Group, owned by Chinese billionaire Ye Cheng, with links to the Chinese PLA, should be forced to give up its ownership of the port of Darwin on national security grounds. Chinese government backed Confucius Institutes at Australia's public universities which have also become a subject of controversy and put under scrutiny. On the other hand, Defense Minister Peter Dutton has recently warned that a conflict over Taiwan could not be overlooked. Chinese media has accused Australian politicians of colluding with "terrorists" in Xinjiang. Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited Darwin a few weeks ago where he promoted a \$747 million upgrade of defense training bases in the Northern Territory. The Australian government defense strategic update last year had also warned that a "prospect of high intensity conflict in the Indo-Pacific, while still unlikely, is less remote than in the past and under its defense Strategic update, the defense budget of Australia has been increased by 40 % last year. It is reviewing Australia's \$270 billion investment in attack class submarines, the future frigate programme and offshore

patrol vessels over the coming decade. The arrest of Cheng Lei, an Australian national and anchor for China's English language state broadcaster, in February 2021, accused of "supplying state secrets overseas"; Australian statement on the "Five Eyes" over Chinese violations of its legally binding international commitments on Hongkong; the tweet late last year by Chinese spokesperson Zhao Li Jian of an image showing an Australian soldier putting a knife to the throat of a child in Afghanistan have all soured bilateral relationship. China has also invested at least \$1.7 billion in aid and loans to the Pacific Islands in the past decade in transport and utility infrastructure. In response, Australia unveiled a \$1.5 billion infrastructure fund for the region in 2018. Now the Pacific Islands Forum based in Fiji is split, prompting five island states to withdraw from the grouping, allegedly induced by China's promise for loans for tourism and infrastructure. As Australia looks elsewhere to hedge its interests India offers excellent prospects for collaboration in critical areas like science, vaccine development, pandemic management, space and defence, critical minerals and related technologies, water resources, training and education, the circular economy, waste to wealth processes, grains management and logistics, and cyber technologies. India needs Australian commodities like lithium and rare earths, coal and LNG, as well as technology to address challenges in financial inclusion, healthcare and education. Recent Indian reforms in the mining, healthcare, agriculture, power, defence, space, electronics and textile sectors, and incentives announced for 13 sectors under a Production Linked Incentive Scheme to boost manufacturing are good news for Australia. Corporate tax rate has been slashed, as India simplifies difficulties in land acquisition, labor laws reform, and liquidity to attract foreign investments. Their trade ministers have met twice and formally launched a Supply Chains Resilience Initiative with Japan on 27 April 2021. Australia therefore, needs to collaborate with a wider network of likeminded partners in the Indo Pacific, and must quickly advance practical cooperation in maritime safety and security with India and France in a trilateral framework. It needs to take forward the SCRI with Japan and India. Australia should also see the Quad as an important component of its foreign policy which can become a pivot for coordinating the vaccination response and roll out, maritime security, infrastructure, supply chain resilience, counter terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, cyber and critical technologies, while strengthening deterrence through a defensive posture with an emphasis on the core of the Indo Pacific (as Australia sees it) across South East and South Asia, the northeast Indian Ocean and the South Pacific.

Anil Wadhwa is a former Secretary (East) in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, and former Indian Ambassador to Italy, Thailand, Oman and Poland. He is the author of the Australia Economic Strategy Report commissioned by CII and KPMG. The views expressed are personal.

A "Smart" way to nurture future Australian and Indian leaders, June 16-30, 2021-Vol 1, Issue 24



Pankaj Gupta

By Dr. Pankaj Gupta

Collaboration between India and Australia is growing by leaps and bounds in all major areas including academics, research, policy advocacy, cyber security, sports management, virtual internships, games & sports, culture, trade, energy, capacity development, strategic issues, media, international affairs, and culture among others. Several new agreements are being signed and the earlier agreements are being further strengthened. It is indeed very heartening. Thanks to efforts of organizations such as the Australia-based Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE).

Recently, the O P Jindal Global University (JGU) has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with IAIE and Cyber EQ to create opportunities for students

to undertake internships in Australia. With IAIE, students will participate in the Student Mentoring and Research Training (SMART) program over a period of 1-2 months. For those students interning with Cyber EQ, students will conduct important research on regulatory and technological issues around cyber security.

The internships will prepare students for future challenges and possibilities and will also be mentored for future research, academic and professional roles and impart training to build research skills in academic writing including data collection and management, preparing hypothesis, abstracts and conclusion and presentation skills etc. The internship programme will also impart key leadership skills to the students. These skills and exposure to our students along with an opportunity to working with other international students (though virtually), will make them better professionals and open newer global possibilities for them and making them better human beings.

During this period of pandemic where travel and physical internships are not possible, this engagement for virtual internships is opening newer possibilities for effective India Australia collaborations and making a difference towards fostering innovation, creativity and new ways of doing business and managing organizations globally among others. These internships are likely to enrich our students and at the same time, our students are also very excited to start this journey and making a significant contribution. We look forward to build JGU's partnership with numerous organizations and multiple platforms in Australia such as this one which is an outcome of our institution's global perspective. JGU's association with Australia has evolved over a period of time. Our Founding Vice Chancellor Prof. Raj and Prof. Shaun Star have played a key role in this regard. Even during the pandemic, the virtual internships by Cyber EQ and the Institute of Australia India Engagement have been a catalyst. I am certain of an enriched and prolific growth of this partnership in times to come.

Dr. Ashutosh Misra, CEO and Executive Director of IAIE committed to nurturing bilateral ties and future leaders shared his vision in a media release, "IAIE is committed to strengthening Australia-India ties by nurturing future thinking leaders, professionals and academic experts in collaboration with JGU. The Student Mentoring and Research Training (SMART) program is an important part of this vision, encouraging meaningful contributions from the next generation of leaders in the bilateral relationship". IAIE is a not-for-profit policy institution which aims to strengthen Australia-India Strategic Partnership through evidence-based research, exchange of new knowledge, targeted policy dialogues and innovative business solutions for the government, corporate and community stakeholders.

Another organisation, CyberEQ Australia provides a business intelligence solution for workforce and supply chain risk mitigation. CyberEQ has developed a self-learning AI autoimmune system that detects workforce threats, vulnerabilities, risks and anomalies faster, and before they occur. This allows for the deployment of early interventions to kill cancerous cells by stopping them from growing and multiplying.

Such opportunities were not possible in the pre-corona world as the concept of online internships was not very popular. But now, these are becoming like a new normal. But the virtual internships also need to be managed in a different manner.

New ways of engagement, enrichment, performance evaluation and monitoring are needed like the way the systems have been redesigned for preparing our employees for 'work from home' (WFM) environment.

With a view to make these internships more effective, what is required is a joint online/digital onboarding. Training and Handholding is very much required. During online process, sometimes a young mind loses focus and interest. Efforts should be made for creative engagement and continuous enrichment of heart capital, then only it can be a symbiotic and win-win association. Effective mentorship will also play a very important part to make this initiative successful. These days, we have tools such as digital cloud-based collaboration and sharing platform, digital interactive tools, virtual meeting and sharing apps, team virtual groups on Team/ WhatsApp etc. – all this will foster efficiency and speed. If a small core team of faculty and industry advisors from both the countries can be created towards goal setting, mentoring and performance monitoring, it will enhance the performance multi-fold.

In similar ways, students and professionals from Australia are very much welcome in India. Any relationship, which is healthy and vibrant, is always on the foundation on mutual respect, contribution and is on equal footing. India also has so many things to offer- new and innovative ways of doing business, newer possibilities, the 'jugad' (getting things done somehow inspite of lack of resources -a type of 'desi' solution), yoga, meditation, mindfulness, wellness, inner journey, 'money to meaning', 'true meaning of success', inner peace and bliss, 'restfulness with highly productive frame of mind' etc. This new beginning is very exciting...miles to go towards great, successful, symbiotic and nurturing relationship between Australia and India...

The author is a Fulbright Fellow, Professor and Dean OCS and Executive Director, Centre for Ethics, Spirituality and Mindfulness at the O P Jindal Global University. He can be contacted at pgupta@jgu.edu.in

China's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy, July 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 25



Srikanth Kondapalli

By Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli

As China's communist party celebrates its 100th anniversary on July 1st, one of the key changes that happened under its stewardship is the rise of aggressive diplomatic posturing against other countries. While this is not a new phenomenon, it has nevertheless acquired domineering proportions in China's interactions with the outside world.

The triggers for such a belligerent posture are located in its history, contemporary interactions and practice but also a sense of belonging to the Middle Kingdom of the yore. In the words of the Qing emperor Qianlong, meeting the British Earl George Macartney's 1793 delegation: "Our dynasty's majestic virtue has penetrated unto every country under heaven, and kings of all

nations have offered their costly tribute by land and sea. ... we possess all things. I set no value on objects strange or ingenious, and have no use for your country's manufactures". This streak runs through the subsequent generations of Chinese leaders in what was termed as "great wall syndrome" of keeping away the "barbarians" from the outside world.

Even though China is a major beneficiary of the globalisation process, specifically after entering the World Trade Organisation in 2001, the rise of China in the past four decades vetted its global ambitionsto assert itself. A shift from Deng Xiaoping's "keeping a low profile" (taoguangyanghui) to Xi Jinping's "accomplishing something" (fenfayouwei) has a huge bearing on the country's attitudes. China's rise is also reflected in such movies as the Wolf Warrior series which assured the Chinese that the party-state would back them to the hilt in their pursuits abroad. This is clearly flowing from the decisions taken at the 4th and 5th Central Conferences on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs in November 2014 and June 2018 at Beijing respectively to protect China's interests abroad.

There is also the influence of rising nationalism in China, which since the Japanese defeat of China in 1895, was targeted against Japan. Apart from the number of demonstrations against Japanese businesses on historical issues, recently, those 200 Chinese scholars who availed Japan Foundation fellowships were termed as "traitors". China's rabid nationalism is also directed against the United States. As relations between China and the US deteriorated since the tariff issues came into prominence, China's diplomats began using sharp invectives in their responses. In the backdrop of the border tensions at Dokhlam in 2017 and the bloody conflict at Galwan in June 2020 between India and China, China's nationalism is also getting diversified.

Several recent instances can be cited on how China has been implementing its "wolf warrior" diplomacy. The US and its allies faced the brunt of the attacks of China. Zhao

Lijian, the foreign ministry spokesman tweeted the US military personnel introduced bioweapons at Wuhan in October 2019 during the World Military Sports events, although he did not provide evidence nor retain the tweet for long. Zhao and other spokespersons comments have increasingly become hoarse on the State Department officials and coincided with the US sanctions on issues related to Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, South China Sea, Huawei, ZTE and others.

Australia bore the brunt of Chinese attacks too as it took lead in the World Health Assembly in May last year for a probe into the origins of epidemic at Wuhan. China imposed restrictions on Australian products. In December last year, in a bizarre incident, Zhao tweeted a morphed photo of an Australian soldier holding a knife to the throat of an Afghan child. Prime Minister Morrison retaliated by stating that the "Chinese government should be totally ashamed of this post. It diminishes them in the world's eyes."

China's ambassador to France Lu Shaye's April 2020 disparaged the western countries criticism of China's handling of the pandemic and lack of transparency. When this March the United States, the European Union, Britain and Canada imposed sanctions on Chinese officials for human rights abuses in Xinjiang, China sanctioned several European nationals, including French Member of the European Parliament Raphaël Glucksmann, Adrian Zenz, MERICS Reinhard Butikofer, Michael Gahler, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Miriam Lexmann of the European Parliament and others. Chinese embassy's caustic remarks in March this year on the French lawmakers proposed visit to Taiwan only led to warnings by the French authorities. The Chinese embassy in France reached its nadir in public relations with its bizarre of Antoine Bondaz of Foundation for Strategic Research as a "small-time thug" and "mad hyena".

China's ambassador to the U.K, Liu Xiaoming as well faced condemnation for his criticism of the parliament members who imposed restrictions on the Huawei 5G telecommunications as well as on the incarceration of scores of people in Hong Kong under the new security law. What surprised many was the sudden spurt of this "wolf warrior" diplomacy even on seasoned Chinese diplomats. Also, public opinion polls across the world have depicted to high levels of disapproval of China's aggressive policies and on the pandemic that killed over four million people across the globe.

Taking a cue from the widespread global disapproval to this "wolf warrior" diplomacy, China's President Xi Jinping on May 31 this year in a study session suggested that diplomats should present the image of a "credible, lovable and respectable China" to the world. It of course needs to be seen whether China's diplomats mend their fences or follow the structural influences of rabid nationalism and revival of the Middle Kingdom.

Pursuing China's "wolf warrior" diplomacy has its own pitfalls. The carefully cultivated veneer of Chinese civilisational-state ethos, benevolence (wangdao), its doctrine of the Mean on how to use power and influence, winning respect through virtues, harmony without suppressing differences – all appear to be tossed out in pursuit of this aggressive diplomacy. The costs for China are clearly high in front of the international community.

Srikanth Kondapalli is Professor in Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Jammu twin drone attacks: Dawn of new trend in warfare, July 16-31, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 26



Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain

By Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain

It needs no research to write about the long expected arrival of the phenomenon of delivery of explosive material on targets by small drones. The Jammu-based Indian Air Force facility at the airport technical area was subjected to a drone-based IED attack in the early hours of June 27, causing a minor damage and an odd non-serious casualty (as reported).

For a couple of years now, quad copters (rotary wing drones) of varying sizes have been crossing the LoC and the international border (IB) from Pakistan and PoK (Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir) into Punjab and J&K in an effort to exploit an emerging technology for effective use in hybrid warfare. It had started some years ago mainly in J&K, to photograph and map possible locations of manned positions on the Indian side, to facilitate infiltration.

For the last five years or a little more, the focus shifted to terror groups attempting to use these airborne vehicles to transport a limited amount of warlike stores to the areas slightly in depth of the defensive canals in Punjab. With the counter infiltration posture becoming far more effective, the supply chain of these stores had been disrupted causing a negative turn in terrorist capability. The experience of terrorists and their sponsors in logistic supply by drones did not really overcome the challenge but a possible indulgence in explosive payloads using these was expected sooner than later.

The employment of small size unarmed drones capable of delivering a payload of explosives up to a standoff distance is actually the terrorists' dream. Ideally, they would like to indulge in heavier drones for greater terminal effect but for a beginning this would be considered suitable in changing the complexity and direction of hybrid war. It's the message of capability which is important because that puts the regular forces on alert with an out of proportion quantum of effort, energy and deployment, all of which are resource sapping. Neutralizing small size drones is difficult due to the limited time they



are likely to be in the air. If launched over short distances from just across the border or LoC their low flight path and short time to target precludes any manual acquisition of targets, especially at night.

The devices used at Jammu were probably crude technology demonstrators but they put all military and other sensitive deployment on notice, requiring round-the-clock surveillance (more of the manual kind) to prevent a repeat. Given the fact that these devices can be GPS-enabled and locations of important installations can all be surveyed by satellite, the accuracy with which targeting can be executed cannot be underestimated. The sensitive border region of North Punjab and Jammu has a plethora of such targets in the vicinity of the IB. The advantage which the terrorists enjoy of physically infiltrating and striking in a single night can also be applied using such drones. They can in fact be used to strike at multiple objectives on a broad front, divert attention and then use physical infiltration to exploit the resultant chaos. It may be recalled that on September 14, 2019 Yemen's Houthi rebels attacked an Aramco oil refinery in Saudi Arabia's capital

city, Riyadh. They used six bomb-laden drones along with 11 missiles to paralyze the working of the refinery. This is not something difficult to replicate in our context where oil installations at Jammu or Pathankot and various communication centres at a depth of no more than 10-20 km remain vulnerable. The incident we have witnessed saw only two drones in use but the entire phenomenon of drone swarms is not something unknown to us; it's a methodology which could eventually be the adopted tactics. Swarms may offer large targets but carry a higher surety of some of the payloads reaching the target even if a few get shot down. More important for us is the counter measures that we propose. Passive defence is fine and will have to be resorted to through more air sentries and quick reaction teams (QRTs) trained to fire in a virtual air defence role. Hybrid wars in

the subcontinent need not be fought only on the basis of absorbing Pakistan's deceitful cooperation with terrorist elements. Rotary or fixed wing drones do not require very high technology. But before these become a nuisance for us and a source of unnecessary embarrassment the right offensive options must be clearly thought through. It's not long before a few such drones will be launched to target our ammunition dumps, from within the precincts of the LoC or just outside it.

Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM is a retired General of the Indian Army. He was the Military Secretary of the Indian Army and the Indian Army's 15 Army Corps Commander in Jammu and Kashmir. The article was originally published by News18 in India.

Yesterday Tibet! Today India! Tomorrow Ceylon?, August 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 27



K. Vigneswaran

By K. Vigneswaran

The relationship between the Chinese and Tamil people date back to the Han dynasty in the second century BC. There had been cultural and trade relationships between the two peoples since then.

During the Tamil Pallava rule in south India, Bodhidharma Thero visited China in the year 527 AD, and introduced Zen (Dhyanamarga) Buddhism. He also introduced martial arts or Kung Futo China. Before he left for China from Kanchipuram, he visited Tiriyai in Trincomalee which then was another Centre of Tamil Mahayana Buddhism. Other Tamil Buddhist monks, Gunavarman and Vajrabodhi had also visited Tiriyai prior to their undertaking visits to China.

In the 8th century AD, the Tang Dynasty

forged a military alliance with the Pallava King Nandivarman II to protect China from Tibetan expansionism. The Chinese people and their rulers had always valued self-preservation and were against expansionism. The Great Wall of China was symbolic of that doctrine.

In the year 1409, a Chinese Admiral erected a stone tablet in Galle harbour to signify the visit of the Chinese Navy to Lanka. The tablet was only in Chinese, Tamil and Persian. These languages were, then and now, recognized as three of the oldest living languages of the world. Such was the relationship that the cultured Chinese people had with the cultured Tamil people in the past. But things changed after the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in China in 1949.

A prophetic question asked 60 years ago

It was June 1962. The army of the PRC had intruded past India's northern border and begun a war. We, the undergraduates belonging to the Faculties of Engineering and Science in the Colombo Campus of the University of Ceylon were agitated. The Colombo Campus housed only these two Faculties. The Medical Faculty was in Maradana and the other faculties were in Peradeniya.

The undergraduates were invited to meet at the College House on Thurston Road, it being the 'common room' of the students. Many acrimonious speeches were made. It was pointed out that the government of the PRC was a hegemonic and expansionist government. It had annexed the peaceful Buddhist country of Tibet in 1959. It had expelled the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political head of that country and had begun a process of cultural genocide. Now, the PRC army had walked into northern India and attacked unsuspecting Indian soldiers and butchered them with bayonets.

A resolution was passed at that meeting to the effect that the undergraduates of both faculties would undertake a protest march to the Chinese Embassy on Turret Road, demanding withdrawal of its troops behind the international border. The resolution was carried with more than two hundred undergraduates voting in favour and around ten voting against. These were the pro-communist undergraduates who wrongly understood the proposed protest march as a protest against the doctrine of communism.

Protest march against China

We fashioned several placards, the most popular one being "Yesterday Tibet! Today India! Tomorrow Ceylon?". There were other placards which called for the Chinese to quit Indian Territory; Indians are our Kith and Kin, and so on. We obtained permission from the Cinnamon Gardens Police and commenced the protest march from College House. When we reached the Chinese Embassy and began shouting slogans, a group of thugs appeared suddenly from nowhere and attacked us with wooden clubs. Around thirty students were injured, of whom seven had to undergo treatment at the nearby Colombo General Hospital. In the same manner as the thugs appeared, they suddenly disappeared, probably into the Embassy building.

The student leadership, which included me, decided that we should not disperse, but march along Turret Road, Flower Road and Thurston Road to the Residence of the Indian High Commissioner. In any case, India House was in the neighbourhood of College House.

Expression of Solidarity with India

Outside India House, we shouted slogans expressing solidarity with India. Thereupon the High Commissioner B.K. Kapur invited the leadership of the protesting undergraduates, three in number, which included me, into the premises and to his residence. We expressed solidarity with India on this issue. The High Commissioner thanked us profusely for our active support of India. He told us that the event would be reported to the Indian government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. Thereupon the protestors dispersed



to College House and thence to their residences.

True nature of PRC

During the Second World War, the Republic of China was led by Chiang Kai-shek who helped the Allies to win the War. However, Mao Zedong ousted Chiang Kai-shek in 1949 and forced him out to Taiwan with his followers. However, the establishment in Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek was recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate government of China, despite the fact that the vast majority of the Chinese was under Mao.

Since the majority of the Chinese people were under the PRC of Mao, the Indian government led by Jawaharlal Nehru supported the claim of the PRC under Mao to be recognized as the legitimate government of China. In spite of such a favourable position taken by India, in 1962, the government of the PRC decided to attack India on her northern border. Recall the earlier sacking of Tibet by the PRC. Unfortunately, at that stage, liberal India took up the position that Tibet was an autonomous State, but subject to Chinese suzerainty.

Thus Nehru had followed a policy of non-confrontation with the PRC and was confident that China would never attack India. However he was disappointed. The politics of the PRC had no morality. The intentions of the PRC were not understood by Nehru. The PRC's ambition was expansionism followed by hegemonic subjugation of other nations.

A disappointed Nehru visits Ceylon

In October of that year, Prime Minister of Ceylon Sirimavo Bandaranaike invited Nehru to visit Colombo, which he readily obliged. During that visit, the undergraduates of the Faculties of Engineering and Science invited Nehru to address a gathering of the students at King George's Hall. He gladly accepted our invitation. I was one of the student leaders who received Nehru when he arrived for the meeting. During the course of his speech, he expressed disappointment with the PRC, both in respect of Tibet and India.

PRC targets Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

The current political leadership of Sri Lanka has leased out the Colombo Port City to the PRC. Earlier the Hambantota Harbour was similarly leased out to them. The Sri Lankan political leadership had not understood the Expansionist motive of the PRC. This should have been clear to any intelligent person when Tibet was annexed in 1959.

Expansionist governments never support self-determination of people.

Agents of the PRC have conveyed promises that if the Tamils of Sri Lanka would support Chinese enterprises in the North and East, the PRC would create Tamil Eelam for them. This promise has been conveyed to former and current Tamil Members of Parliament. Tamil journalists and journalist-politicians are being wooed by the PRC agents.

The Tamil political leadership which had mastered the 'art of rhetoric' was urged by a stupid section of the Tamil Diaspora to blindly support Velupillai Prabhakaran in his war against Devolution of Powers and against India. The net result for the Tamils has been the migration of 1.5 million Tamils from Sri Lanka. The Tamils have now become a politically powerless people.

We should recall the original Chinese doctrine of self-preservation. Regardless of the mistake made by the Sinhala leadership, the Tamils should be able to recognize the PRC as Expansionist and Hegemonic. Let us not forget that the PRC stabbed Nehru in the back sixty years ago, and has committed cultural genocide in Tibet prior to that.

(The writer is former secretary to the Chief Minister, North-East Province, Sri Lanka; Former senior advisor to the Chief Minister, Eastern Province, Sri Lanka; Former MP; and President of Akhila Ilankai Tamil Mahasabha. The views expressed are personal)

Working with Australia to build a better world, August 16–31, 2021–Vol 2 Issue 4



Manpreet Vohra

India-Australia relations are underpinned by several commonalities, including our democratic ethos, common values, economies full of strong complementarities and our shared Indo-Pacific region. It is a comfortable and natural partnership where we also see eye to eye and cooperate on most major international issues, be they challenges or opportunities. As Prime Minister Scott Morrison has himself said, “Our cultures might be different, but we believe in similar things. We believe in the supremacy of the ballot-box in our national life; in the rule of law; in institutions that safeguard rights; and the responsibility of free people to build a better world.”

The over 700,000 strong Indian diaspora, growing rapidly, serves as a living bridge

between our nations and our people. Besides enriching Australia’s economy and society in multiple ways, they have assimilated seamlessly here. They are law-abiding and deeply respect the Australian way of life even while proudly preserving their Indian roots, traditions and culture.

The Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Morrison on 4 June, 2020 was historic. Our bilateral relations were elevated to a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”, 11 years after we had forged our ‘Strategic Partnership’ in 2009. This is testimony to the steady transformation of our ties over the last decade. The warmth and personal connect between our leadership is noteworthy.

Our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is marked by growing convergence of views on geo-strategic and geo-economic issues and a strong desire to work together for a region that is more free, secure and prosperous. Foreign Affairs, Economy and Trade, Defence, Education and a host of other ministries, departments, institutions and organisations on both sides have stepped up their collaboration and are working together on myriad issues. We have also agreed to elevate our 2+2 Foreign and Defence Secretaries Dialogue to Ministerial level, underlining the positive trajectory of our bilateral relations.

India and Australia engage with each other in various plurilateral and multilateral formats as well. The Quad came of age with the first-ever Quad Leaders’ Summit in March this year. The positive outcome of the Summit, especially in the areas of vaccines, climate change and emerging technologies for the Indo-Pacific underlines our strong commitment, as democratic and like-minded partners, not only for the provision of global commons but also in promoting a free, open, secure, prosperous and inclusive region.

Given the imbalances in global supply chains with regard to critical health, technology, intermediate goods and services, sharply highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic, we have decided to work cooperatively to strengthen and diversify these supply chains. In April this year, Trade Ministers of India, Australia and Japan formally launched the Supply



Chain Resilience Initiative. India and Australia are also working bilaterally on the supply chain diversification of critical and strategic minerals and metals.

Our bilateral trade and investment remains significantly below its potential. We are jointly committed to improving this for the mutual benefit of both economies. We have re-engaged on negotiating a fruitful and enduring Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement since it is time to take our economic and trade relations to a much higher growth trajectory. Recent World Bank and IMF projections that India will be the fastest-growing major economy in 2021 and 2022 should be exciting news for Australian businesses.

India is today also one of the most attractive destinations for Foreign Direct Investment. We have ushered in simplification and reduction of taxes, new labour laws, Production Linked Incentive schemes in exciting manufacturing sectors and empowered institutional arrangements to hand-hold new investors. Infrastructure stands vastly improved and supply logistics and transportation speeds are now among the best in the world. The stock market is booming and setting new records. It is not surprising, therefore, that FDI into India did not decrease in 2020 despite the pandemic.

This open and globalised market of over 1.3 billion, together with the new ease of doing business has opened up vast opportunities including for Australian investors. Make in India, for India and for the world.

The number of Indian students coming to Australia has steadily increased and there are well over 100,000 now, making Australia the second-largest foreign destination for Indian students and of huge benefit to Australia in multiple ways. I hope that an early solution is found to bring back those of these students who have found themselves unable to return to Australia since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we enter India’s 75th year of independence, every Indian can justifiably take pride in the growth and success of India in diverse domains since 1947. I look forward to celebrating India@75 with all Indians and friends of India in Australia.

His Excellency Manpreet Vohra is a career diplomat and currently the Indian High Commissioner to Australia

Afghanistan’s future, September 1–15, 2021–Vol 2 Issue 5



Asad Mirza

By Asad Mirza

The Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan has once again put a big question mark on its future, but it has also offered a glimmer of hope for the redevelopment of this war-ravaged country utilising its natural resources.

The Taliban have once again captured power in Afghanistan. In one of the swiftest operations, the Taliban took control of all major cities including Kabul within a ten-day period. This feat has, however, put them in a tight bind on whether to continue with their old traits or try to portray a new picture of the Taliban, which has moved along with the world in the last 20 years and one which is more pragmatic and tolerant and most of all which is politically savvy not violence prone.

A widely held belief is that the Taliban would like to be seen as a more pragmatic and inclusive force rather than the one, which brutally ruled Afghanistan earlier. Whatever be the case, it would be reckoned by the group’s attitudes towards jihadis and other militants present in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious minorities, women and governance.

Future Government

It has been a while since the Taliban captured the national capital but they are yet to announce any government and its structure. This has led to speculations that intense political activities are going on behind the scenes and the world is waiting with bated breath to know the outcome. In the meantime, Taliban have tried to calm concerns about their rule by urging women to join a government that has yet to be formed, declaring an amnesty for people employed by the former government or US and other foreign forces. To assuage these feelings, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in May that the group, once in power, would write laws to ensure the participation of women in public life.

However, reports from Kabul indicate that the former President Hamid Karzai and former Minister of External Affairs Abdullah Abdullah are still present in the city. This leads



credence to the fact that any future government might be based on Islamic foundations but it might be an amalgamation of Islamic and liberal democratic principles.

Karzai and Taliban’s current supremo Haibatullah Akhundzade are relatives and belong to the Popalzai tribe, tracing their lineage to the Durrani clan. So in a possible scenario Haibatullah might lead the Islamic Council, wielding control and power, as in the past and Karzai might be named as the president or prime minister of the new government, in which Abdullah Abdullah might also be included. In addition, non-Taliban leaders like Hizb-i-Islami’s Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and former deputy president Karim Khalili might also be included in the new setup.

Further, we also have to take into consideration the rise of young blood amongst the Taliban ranks. Figures such as Mulla Yaqoob, son of former Taliban supremo Mulla Umar now leads its military branch and is credited with the swift capture of power in the country with less bloodshed. This young generation is tech and media savvy, many Taliban leaders now announce the latest developments on Twitter. Coupled with this the Taliban delegation, which took part in the Doha talks, has experienced exposure to the liberal views and they might be more amenable to a not strictly Islamic form of government. As far as the role of Taliban is concerned, they were accepted as an important political force when the former American president invited them to the Doha Talks, lending credence to

them as a group, which needs to be engaged with for any feasible solution of the on-going war.

Afghanistan’s mineral wealth

The Taliban’s resurgence has once again brought renewed focus on Afghanistan’s vast untapped mineral wealth and resources that could transform its economic prospects if developed judiciously. Some conspiracy theories circulated earlier, which claimed that behind the on-going military campaign in Afghanistan, the American experts were also exploring the mineral deposits in Afghanistan.

Lending credence to these theories, CNN on August 17 carried a story, which said that Afghanistan possesses mineral deposits worth nearly \$1 trillion. Iron, copper and gold deposits are scattered across provinces. There are also rare earth minerals and, perhaps most importantly, what could be one of the world’s biggest deposits of lithium – an essential but scarce component in rechargeable batteries and other technologies vital to tackling the climate crisis.

Said Mirzad, former head of the Afghanistan Geological Survey, told Science magazine in 2010 that if Afghanistan has a few years of calm, allowing the development of its mineral resources, it could become one of the richest countries in the region within a decade.

Three countries, which have been wooing the Taliban based on this assessment, are Iran, China and India. All of them could provide the expertise, infrastructure and labour force for the further prospecting, mining and processing of these minerals.

Iran and China have been early starters in this regard. Iran has been hosting Taliban delegations to Tehran since last year and in late July 2021, before the recent developments, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with a delegation led by the head of the Afghan Taliban political committee Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in Tianjin.

India on its part began engaging with the Taliban leaders in Doha in September 2020

when the intra-Afghan dialogue began even as New Delhi refused to spell out its policy clearly and said it continues to engage with “all stakeholders”.

Afghan Psyche

Before commenting on the future of Afghanistan, we have to understand the geographic location, socio-cultural fabric and the internal forces, besides the Afghan psyche, all of which have always managed to play a key role in any political activity in the country.

The tribal Pashtun population of Afghanistan, which is approximately 42 per cent, has always enjoyed political influence both at the local and national stage. The Pashtun by virtue of being the largest tribe in the south and east has always dominated the national politics of Afghanistan, since the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani (1722–72).

Moreover, the central authority in Kabul has always governed the country through a loosely federal structure. Which means that the central law was more or less observed in major cities and some smaller cities, but at the district and village level the tribal writ was imposed with a heavy hand.

Added to this is the overall Afghan psyche, which has always remained fiercely independent and loyal to its tribal and clan ties besides being devout Muslims. To control them through a loose federal system remains the only wise choice, so as to let the tribal and clan ties continue and dominate the rural population but the major decisions are taken by the powers in the big cities.

This might be one of the reasons, which is forcing Taliban to evolve a government, which rules with an iron fist from the centre but at the village and district level the local tribes manage their affairs in their own style whilst participating in the development of the rural areas and the country as a whole.

Asad Mirza is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He writes on Muslims, educational, international affairs, interfaith and current affairs.

20 Years on from 9/11, September 16–30, 2021–Vol 2 Issue 6



Scott Morrison

By Scott Morrison

There are moments in time when things we thought were certain can change in a heartbeat and we know that nothing will ever be the same again.

We recall exactly where we were, what we were doing, and the shock we felt as the foundations of our world seemed to shake.

September 11, 2001 in the United States was one of those days.

That night in Sydney, as dawn broke in America, Jen and I were at home having a quiet evening together watching television. When the news broke through, we sat and watched in numb disbelief.

Twenty years have now passed since New York and Washington were attacked. On this anniversary, we remember and honour the

2,977 people who lost their lives on that day and the many more since.

Our hearts go out to the families of the 10 Australians among them, and the many other Australians affected by those terrible events.

It was a time when we saw both the worst and the best of humanity.

Amid the devastation, we saw acts of love, great bravery and sacrifice.

The calls being made to loved ones from burning towers, as the tragedy came down around them. Messages of love and good-bye.

But also calls of brave defiance. ‘Let’s roll’ Tod Beamer said, as he and others on board took back Flight 93 and crashed into the fields of Pennsylvania, to thwart the terrorists’ evil plans.

And the thousands of first responders, many sacrificing themselves, as they charged into the burning towers, and those who then converged to find survivors and clear the rubble of ground zero.

We pay tribute to all their heroism and sacrifice.

First and foremost, let us remember this terrible event as an awful human tragedy, causing great personal suffering and grief to so many.

When I think of September 11, my mind always casts forward to just over a year later on October 12, when the same evil terror, that blasphemes the very religion it claims to serve, was visited on 88 Australians in Bali.

Each year the families and friends of those Australians killed on that day gather on the cliffs at Coogee in Sydney to remember. I have often joined them there.

Despite the passing of the years, their sorrow and mourning, their loss and grief continues. And so it will be for the families of the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks today.

So on this anniversary, let our first thoughts be with them as we send our sincere condolences for their terrible loss and to President Biden and all the people of the United States.

But let us also appreciate that September 11 reminds us that we can never take our peace, our freedom and our way of life for granted.

A little more than a decade before the terrible events of September 11, the Berlin Wall fell. Some thought this marked ‘the end of history’ and that the cause of freedom had forever prevailed.

September 11 reminded us that freedom is always fragile. As Ronald Reagan said, it “must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation”.



That day was an attack on free peoples everywhere. It was an attack on our way of life and the values of liberal democracy. Despite the pain inflicted on that day, the terrorists ultimately failed in their attempts to crush our resolve and change our way of life.

Our then Prime Minister John Howard was in Washington D.C. on that terrible day. He saw the smoke plume in Washington. He also saw the great spirit and enduring faith of the American people.

The Howard Government invoked the ANZUS Treaty, for the first and only time in its 50 year history. As John Howard said to Parliament on his return, “if the comradeship, the friendship and the common bonds of democracy and a belief in liberty, fraternity and justice mean anything, it means that the ANZUS Treaty applies.”

So when the Taliban refused to hand over Al-Qaeda terrorists, we supported a US-led operation to hunt down Osama Bin Laden and eliminate the capacity to stage more attacks against the West from Afghanistan.

Together with the international community, we also laboured long and hard to help the Afghan people secure a better future.

Sadly, the fruits from those seeds of hope are now very uncertain.

But let us never doubt that our cause was, and always will be, a just one.

So on this day of remembrance, we also honour all who served in Afghanistan, especially the 41 Australians who died in the service of our country.

And on this day we re-dedicate Australia to the cause of peace and freedom and to the constant vigilance required to deny the threat of terror.

Let us appreciate all those who work every day to keep us safe. Our police and security agencies, our defence forces, and thank them for their service.

Let us commit ourselves to continue to stand with our partners and allies – especially the United States – as we work together for a world that favours freedom.

Let us reaffirm the liberal democratic values that guide us and the truths we hold dear.

And above all, let us hold all those we love a little closer and be grateful for their blessing in our lives

Mr Scott Morrison is the Prime Minister of Australia

Australia and India: Architects of the Indo-Pacific security, October 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 7



Ashutosh Misra

By Dr. Ashutosh Misra

The inaugural Australia India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between the Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and their Indian counterparts Rajnath Singh and S. Jaishankar was held when the constellation of bilateral and strategic determinants could not have been more favorably placed. Bilateral ties, elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in June 2020 have reached a historical high, emerged as an important cog in the rapidly evolving world hierarchy, as S. Jaishankar once argued in an interview.

New Delhi and Canberra have hitched on to the tide that propels their bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral engagements.

The very fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison have met five times in less than 18 months is itself a testimony to the transformation this partnership is undergoing currently. During the Modi and Morrison virtual summit in June 2020, nearly a dozen MoUs were signed in education, agriculture, energy, resource, tourism, healthcare, financial services and infrastructure.

To further boost bilateral business and trade, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has initiated a timely and well-advised review of the 2018 Peter Varghese's report An India Economic Strategy to 2035 in the context of altered international diplomatic and economic settings. While much of the recommendations of the Peter Varghese report still hold ground, there was certainly a need to recalibrate bilateral business and trade strategies and diplomatic engagements. On the other hand, India's Australia Economic Strategy authored by Anil Wadhwa has been launched at the right time, covering the post covid economic scenario. The two reports together are critical for recalibrating and realigning business and trade strategies amidst rising bilateral tensions with China. Peter Varghese believes that it is in Australia's interests to diversify business and trade ties, which also resonated during Australian Senator Simon Birmingham's New Delhi visit in early 2021 when he said, "Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India." DFAT believes that India's youthful population and diversified growth trajectory beholds significant opportunities for Australia, and bilateral trade must be doubled and India elevated into Australia's top five trading partnerships by 2035 (currently 8th).

There is no denying that bilateral bonhomie to a great extent has been driven by Covid's impact and Australia's growing tensions with China over the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, Hong Kong crackdown, alleged foreign interference in Australia's internal political functioning, tariff wars and impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the one hand, and India's troubled ties with China, especially military conflict in Doklam and Ladakh, on the other hand. Marise Payne has been a vociferous critic of China over Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and Peter Dutton unsparing in accusing China for cyber-attacks on Australia. Although S. Jaishankar has reiterated that ties are independent of their respective relationships with China, and both sides have dismissed Quad as a future "Asian NATO", their differences with China have certainly been the catalyst for growing strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific. The agenda for the inaugural Quad virtual summit hosted by US President Joe Biden was consciously kept wide to include Covid-19 strategy, vaccine production, climate change, supply chain disruptions, critical and emerging technologies and maritime security, to avoid making it a purely military alliance and also downplaying any "anti-China" signaling.

Both US-India and India-Australia ties are seen as "natural" partnerships, for upholding



democracy, peace for all peoples, freedom of navigation, rules-based, free and open global order, respect for territorial sovereignty and unrestrained access to the global common goods. In the G-7 Summit in May 2021, PM Narendra Modi had emphasized that preventing future pandemics would rest on 'democratic and transparent societies'— a recurring phrase in bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral proclamations.

What is encouraging for New Delhi and Canberra is the realization, for the first time, that bilateral ties cannot be seen in isolation with their larger strategic interests. Quad's evolution as a rising "concert of democracies", which Australia has described as an "anchor of peace and stability in the region" has bolstered bilateral understanding. The 2+2 joint press statement reaffirms this realization, while anchoring the defence ties on three Cs — comfort (of the bilateral relationship in strategic and security spheres), convergence (over security matters) and commitment (to free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific). The re-entry of Australia in the Malabar exercise and the Mutual Logistical Support Agreement are two key developments denoting fresh thinking emerging in not only New Delhi and Canberra, but also in Washington and Tokyo on the Indo-Pacific.

At the trilateral front, their three-way relationships melds mutually complementary visions, inter alia India's 'Act East' policy, Australia's 'Pacific Step-up' and Indonesia's 'Global Maritime Fulcrum' (GMF). India employs to elevate its Act East policy based on commerce, culture and connectivity, in sync with the seven-point Indo-Pacific Vision that PM Modi articulated at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018, and vision SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region). Act East policy complements Australia's 2018 Pacific-Step Up too in addressing challenges related to states' sovereignty and regional stability, security and prosperity. Similarly, Indonesia's 2014 GMF affirms Indonesia's vital interests as an archipelagic state at the crossroads of contending major power interests. The GMF prioritized the strengthening of the regional architecture to prevent the hegemony of major powers and promote comprehensive maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Similarly, the Australia-Japan-India (AJI) trilateral that germinated in 2015 and the inaugural India-France-Australia trilateral launched in May 2021 at the G-7 Summit sidelines also adhere to the Quad based commitments to free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific, rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and uphold ASEAN's centrality and Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

In sum, while Australia and India turned a new leaf in the early 2000s in bilateral engagements, but what has changed in 20 years is a growing convergence of bilateral and strategic interests and a realization that in the evolving post-covid order, US alone may not be able to guarantee international peace and security, for which they will have to step-up their desired role.

The Author is the CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement; National Chair for Sport, Australia India Business Council; and Editor-in-Chief, India News Australia.

AUKUS, Quad, China in Sri Lanka, and India's security concerns, October 16-31, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 8



Asanga Abeyagoonasekera

By Asanga Abeyagoonasekera

Alliance gives new meaning to political boundaries on physical maps empowering coalitions with political preferences to work together. President Biden does "not seek a new Cold War", clearly expressing at the UNGA and many other leaders are with Biden, including Indian Prime Minister Modi, where the world divided into two rigid blocks will only limit progress and prosperity to many nations. In reality, Cold War structures will resurrect when the rules-based order is threatened, and robust partnerships are required to maintain the security balance.

President Biden established a more structured alliance, the AUKUS, a week before the first-ever in-person Quad Summit in Washington DC on September

24. AUKUS, the security alliance, will enhance the capability of the US, the UK and Australia on deterrence, an expansion of underwater warfare capabilities of the nuclear-powered submarine fleet to Australia for extended patrols. With more military capacity in Indo-Pacific and substantial naval presence, the like-minded nations in the new security alliance will deter China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea and the surrounding waters. Many like-minded nations with democratic values which subscribe to Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) norms will be part of the AUKUS security structure in the future. While the security alliances are usually heavily structured, the primary informal structure with a non-militaristic space will be the Quad which is more informal. Michael J. Green from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) argues, "It's like a dimmer,



not an off-on switch. It's a flexible tool, including who joins. It's flexible for Korea, New Zealand or the UK. If they decide they're upset with China, they can send a frigate to the next exercise." The flexibility of the Quad made it easier for nations like Singapore to join military exercises a few years ago with the Quad and many other nations, to follow bilateral or trilateral naval exercises to enhance the value of a critical Quad goal and to maintain a free and open Indo Pacific (FOIP).

In the Western diplomatic toolkit, Quad is at the forefront due to the assertiveness of China in the Indo-Pacific from military expansion and stealth economic takeover, 'strategic trap' to shackling nations under Chinese 'BRI' orbit. "The Quad has come together due to China's assertive behaviour and economic dependence on some countries", explains ORF scholar Druva Jaishankar. The Quad is a non-security arrangement due to India's appeal to leave security out of its core agenda. The alliance focused more on securing supply-chain security and thus, semiconductors and vaccine diplomacy were the primary focus. China was not mentioned during the summit due to the Biden administration's idea of Quad to project a positive vision towards a vaccine, climate change, critical technologies and not a grouping to contain China.

However, Raja C. Mohan from ISAS Singapore observed, "China's peaceful rise has not

been peaceful, a concern to many nations; having bitten once [by China] people are finding alternatives.” China’s assertiveness with military expansion, the concern of human rights and coercive economic practices with stealth takeover of strategic assets promoting alternative governance structures with more militaristic regimes such as in Sri Lanka would alter the core agenda of the Quad. India, which preferred a non-military configuration for the Quad, would perhaps be forced to bring in security to the Quad agenda in the future to defend and protect the regional balance due to China in its immediate neighborhood.

Quad, initiated in post-Asian Tsunami in 2004, has been at the forefront during the pandemic to “play the role of a force for global good”. Explains Prime Minister Modi, “I’m confident that our cooperation under Quad will ensure prosperity and peace in the Indo-Pacific and in the world.”

Quad’s informal arrangement will allow other non-Quad nations to join and support the norms and values of democracy and international law in the future. The countries that have been direct victims of China’s aggressiveness will join the Quad to deter China in the future. The informal structure of Quad is to protect and bring democratic nations together and to give protection to nations that have become victims of China’s “debt trap”, such as Sri Lanka. It will also be a balancing counterweight to Chinese expansion. The “strategic trap” is visible in Sri Lanka from its long term 99 years leased out strategic infrastructure. The Hambantota port and Colombo Port City were the best examples of strategic expansion. While accepting and expanding the Chinese loans, Sri Lanka rejected substantial grants such as the US MCC. Recently at Carnegie Endowment, the Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary explained that the rejection of the US MCC grant of \$480m by the government was due to “democracy and people’s power” that scrapped the project, defending that there was no Chinese hand behind it. The foreign secretary has forgotten the concocted Presidential expert commission report projecting a national security threat.

Chinese sphere of influence has now enlarged into Sri Lanka’s democratic space, where the Sri Lankan regime defends Chinese human rights in Xinjiang, clear signs of reciprocal arrangements to receive assistance from China to defend the grave human rights concerns in Sri Lanka raised by the UN High Commissioner at the 48th UNHRC session a few weeks ago. The recent expression of Foreign Secretary Jayanath Colombage was “we wish to remain neutral in our foreign policy”, which contravenes with the Chinese bandwagoning foreign policy posture taken by the same regime. Colombage further explained that Chinese warship arrivals are far less than Indian and Japanese warship arrivals to Sri Lanka, where 563 warships have visited since 2009 hinting a less significance of Chinese presence and interest from the volume of warship arrivals. Unfortunately, the illogical view does not capture the broader strategic danger to the Island nation and its neighbour India.

India will have two concerns with Chinese aggression and the strategic takeover of its neighbouring nations. First, to strengthen its external alliance structure, such as from Quad to bring in nations like Sri Lanka towards the norms and values of the international system rather than allowing drifting from a Quasi-democracy to military control autocratic regime. This drift towards China will pose a direct threat to India’s

China’s assertiveness brings India and Australia closer, Nov 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9



Srikanth Kondapalli

By Prof. Srikanth Kondapalli

The recent upsurge in India-Australia relations has been a subject of debate for the strategic implications of such bilateral ties in the maritime domain, economic cooperation, technological transformation and security cooperation.

Barring a few incidents, India-Australia relations remained cordial although dormant in nature for long. Ironically, China’s assertiveness and the challenges thereof have brought New Delhi and Canberra together.

Both Canberra and New Delhi faced China’s wrath in recent times. Australian calls for investigation into the origins of globally disastrous Covid-19 at the World Health Assembly last year rattled Beijing which retaliated by restricting import of Australian products. Beijing also expressed its displeasure at the decision of Australia to

exclude Huawei from the 5G network rollout, although. Beijing has not clarified its back-channel collection of data through such networks. Australia also expressed concerns over Chinese influence in Australian business, economics and politics, including continuing allegations of espionage.

On September 15, leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced a nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) deal to build such vessels for the Australian Navy. This is part of a series of arrangements that they intend to announce to strengthen trilateral security partnership. Writing in the communist party’s outlet People’s Daily on October 19 criticised the AUKUS for creating “global instability” and “multiplying the risk of nuclear proliferation”. However, China had already deployed six Shang-class nuclear-powered submarines, besides proliferating nuclear and ballistic missiles or technologies to Pakistan, Iran and other countries.

India as well is reeling under heavy pressure from Beijing, despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s two “informal summit meetings” with President Xi Jinping at Wuhan and Chennai. On the other hand, China stealthily mobilised troops in the western sector of the disputed border in violation of all the previous border protocols of 1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013 and killed scores of Indian troops in June 2020. Today India and China have mobilised heavily in their border areas.

Several other issues also brought India and Australia together. Both are dependent on trade and commerce but Beijing recently has been obstructing economic activity. China’s militarisation of the crucial sea passages of the South China Sea affected both India and Australia who are dependent on these seas for their trade and commerce.

On August 29, China announced new maritime restrictions on vessels passing through the South China Sea, despite its assurances previously to the international community on no such restrictions in the region. This has further rattled several countries including India

security. While economic practices and standards are also part of Quad dialogue, supply chain security shows groups’ intention to work together in the economic arena where China’s place in the world economy would limit how far the Quad could achieve success in bringing standards to economic practices. The Biden administration’s focus on the B3W (Build Back Better World) initiative will complement the economic infrastructure standards and supply chain security in the coming years.

The Biden administration will focus more on Quad and the G-7, the two core organizing bodies that will centre on the global international system to achieve tangible results. India has a stronger position and voice in both of these platforms than any South Asian nation. As mentioned by PM Modi, India is a “natural ally for the G7 countries in the fight against authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation, and economic coercion, among other threats”.

Second, to partner and support security alliances, a more formal structure such as AUKUS will be of India’s interest since the mini-lateral complements India’s vision towards achieving a rules-based Indo-Pacific. ORF scholar Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan aptly captures “AUKUS is an important development because it signifies the capability augmentation of one of India’s closest strategic partners, with whom it has just started a 2+2 ministerial dialogue. A strong and capable Australia is in India’s interests, that of the Quad and the broader Indo-Pacific region”.

These mini-lateral platforms will crisscross the Indian Ocean, where Sri Lanka, an important maritime nation located geo-strategically in the Indian Ocean, will be a crucial maritime partner to consider which is unfortunately, in the present context, drifting towards the Chinese orbit. Nations like Sri Lanka are essential due to their open access to the Indian ocean, where naval exercises and maritime security will be primary drivers for sustaining the mini-lateral military arrangements. Sri Lanka’s security trilateral signed by the Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime with India and Maldives is a mini-lateral in the right direction and will benefit Sri Lanka. India would require a two-pronged strategy to its northern borders and its South, the Indian Ocean. India, the only nation among the Quad nations that shares a physical geographical border with China, is more vulnerable than the other Quad partners for confrontation, just like in the past. India’s challenges from its western flank, from Af-Pak, will grow with the Chinese footprint expanding in Afghanistan. From India’s South, the security balance of the Indian Ocean will be of primary interest where Sri Lanka, Maldives and other literals cannot be ignored.

The efforts of mini-lateral democratic alliances such as Quad should focus more on targeted nations like Sri Lanka by the Chinese “debt and strategic trap”. Sri Lankan regime seeping away from democratic norms to a militarized rule has drifted from the Indo-Pacific configuration, a geographical flashpoint in India’s vicinity. The Quad should actively engage and seek commitment from nations like Sri Lanka, pulling towards the norms and values of a rules-based order. The country-specific strategic push from the Quad will assist Sri Lanka to recalibrate its foreign policy towards a more balanced and progressive path with international norms and values.

Asanga Abeyagoonasekera is a geopolitical analyst, strategic advisor on security from Sri Lanka

and Australia.

Australia had exhibited its sympathies to India whenever the latter was under siege by Beijing. To recall, during China’s border clashes with India in 1962, the then foreign minister Richard Casey criticised Beijing as an “invader” against India. During the Chinese encroachment on Bhutanese land at Doklam in 2017 and the ensuing standoff with India, visiting foreign minister Julie Bishop urged New Delhi and Beijing to resolve the issue peacefully because Australia did not want to see any escalation that could result in “miscalculation” and “misjudgement”. More recently, Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O’Farrell seconded India’s suggestion for de-escalation in the western sector of the border and paid tributes to the 20 Indian martyrs who were killed by China on June 15, 2020.

These challenges nudged the two countries to coordinate and cooperate at the bilateral and multilateral arena. China’s intended punishment of Australia and India has only boomeranged with the latter coming together and exploring mutually beneficial opportunities but most importantly opening up a new strategic space for the previously hesitant leaderships in Canberra and New Delhi.

Both today interact extensively in the Commonwealth, Indian Ocean Region Association, ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asian Summit and recently in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad – along with the United States and Japan) and in Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (with Japan in April 2021) and other avenues on various issues of concern.

This indicates not only shedding off of their previous hesitancy but also positively reshaping bilateral cooperation. For instance, after the Quad was formed to provide relief to the disastrous Tsunami in 2004-05 in Southeast and South Asian regions, Australia backed off from the Quad activities after the September 2007 Malabar naval exercises between the US, Japanese, Australian and Indian navies in Bay of Bengal. In the presence of China’s foreign minister, the then Australian foreign minister Smith stated in February 2008 that Canberra “wouldn’t be proposing to have a dialogue of that nature” again. Subsequently, the Kevin Rudd government, under pressure from China, backed off from participating in multinational naval exercises till November 2020.

In the background of common challenges, the coming together of India and Australia was sustained by the frequent visits of the two leaderships. The November 2014 visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his speech to the Australian Parliament is significant. He stated: “Australia will not be at the periphery of our vision, but at the centre of our thought”.

A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement was signed by Modi and Morrison in a virtual summit meeting in June 2020, graduating from strategic partnership of 2009. As a follow up in September 2021 both held a 2+2 dialogue between foreign and defence ministries at New Delhi. India has such a format only with the US and Japan. Tony Abbot’s early August 2021 visit to India as a Special Envoy on trade issues and pushing the much-awaited Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement between the two countries. Bilateral trade was \$6 billion in early 2000s, increased to over \$21 billion by 2011 but declined to \$ 17 billion in 2020 due to the pandemic disruptions. With the supply chain resilience initiative, they intend to enhance digital technology and diversify trade and investments. Also, taking a cue from Beijing’s trade restrictions, Indian firms quickly purchased 2 million tonnes of coal for domestic electricity generation at a discount from Australia in October 2021. These trends, of course, need to be sustained and strengthened over a long period of time by both countries.

Srikanth Kondapalli is Professor in Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Aircraft carrier – a reality check for Indian Navy, India News – November 16-30, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9



Sumit Kumar Singh

By Sumit Kumar Singh

Much newsprint was devoted to a naval exercise undertaken between the USA and India. The exercise was designated a two day “passage exercise”, and, inarguably, contributed to strengthening bilateral cooperation and military coordination.

Apart from the myriad advantages accrued, the exercise also threw up a somewhat worrying aspect, viz the stark disparity in the two naval forces participating.

While the US Navy fielded a full ‘Aircraft Carrier Strike Group’ with USS Ronald Reagan, India was represented by two ships and shore based aircraft, and aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

Earlier, in March this year, the two navies had undertaken a similar exercise. Then too, while the US Navy had a full carrier strike group participating, India sent a single ship and shore-based aircraft.

Apart from these bilateral exercises, the Indian Navy also took part in a French Navy led multilateral exercise named La Perouse in April, where two ships and shore-based aircraft were deployed, though in this instance other participating nations did not field an aircraft carrier.

Evidently, with its sole aircraft carrier being under maintenance, the Indian Navy is constrained in operating across all dimensions at sea, including during such exercises that bear the potential for valuable lessons and experience to be gleaned. Exacerbating the situation further is the fact that, given the size and complexities of a large ship like an Aircraft Carrier, its maintenance durations are likely to be of an extended nature.

Consequently, the naval fleet remains hamstrung in undertaking operations related to maritime air power in such periods. Orchestrated deployment of shore-based aircraft over the seas is unlikely to fructify or indeed be available during a live conflict, where there will be concurrent requirements of air operations on land as well.

Clearly, here and now air capability at sea will have to manifest from the sea itself. This operational reality has motivated all significant navies of the world to include aircraft carriers in their forces levels.

Military experts across the world are unanimous in the view that aircraft carrier operations are a skill learnt and perfected through sustained practice and long experience. This is borne out by the fact that China, despite having inducted its first aircraft carrier nearly a decade back, is still figuring out carrier operations.

The UK, with its return to being an aircraft carrier navy, has also been dependent on the USA to assist in re-learning the ropes of such operations. Does a long lay-off period for



the Indian carrier then not have an effect on India’s ability to protect its interests at sea?

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently during his visit to Kochi in late June to review the progress of construction of the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier or IAC, had highlighted the historical fact that all major powers in the world have boasted powerful navies. In the present day, as evident from China’s focus on building aircraft carriers and UK’s U-turn on doing away with its carriers, it is clear that any navy will need to have such capability if it hopes to be a serious contender on the global or even regional stage.

While the minister’s pronouncement indicates a clear understanding about this aspect within the government, ancillary agencies and organisations appear to be stuck in a state of flux. The abysmally slow progress on the IAC project is a case in point. In case the ship had been built and delivered in a timely manner, the Navy would have been able to keep one of the two ships operationally available.

Whatever be the past, unless the relevant agencies wake up and smell the coffee at least at this point, India and its Navy are staring at a bleak operational capability for the near future.

A reality check is long overdue and the problem is fast approaching critical mass. An attitude of business-as-usual is unlikely to get the second ship inducted any time soon. Every possible effort needs to be channelized into the project, including working round the clock, imposition of stringent penalties on every source of delay, daily monitoring at the PMO itself, etc. India needs to act now lest we are left behind because China would act and is acting with a clear aim.

We also need to think about what lies in the future, 15 to 20 years down the road. When the existing carrier gets de-inducted. What then? Given the long lead time to build carriers, how will India retain her edge as a major naval power? Well, the answer is obvious.

Sumit Kumar Singh is the Deputy Bureau Chief at the Indo Asian News Service and can be reached at sumit.k@ians.in

Diwali fest as a tool of ‘Soft Power’, December 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 10



Nirendra Dev

By Nirendra Dev

The move by US lawmakers led by Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney from New York to get a new draft law that would declare Diwali as a federal holiday is a landmark event of our time.

After Yoga, we now have Diwali – the festival of Light and Sound -- as a symbol of India’s Soft Power.

Statesmanship, mutual benefits, and

strategic significance, not necessarily in that order, decide foreign policy ball games in the contemporary settings. Now, it is time to add ‘Soft Power’ as a major tool. The emphasis is bigger and more thrustful in the post pandemic era.

Without realising much, we now know that the world is changing pretty fast. The ‘great resignation’ saga as witnessed by MNCs is a case in point.

For beginners, a Microsoft study says nearly 40 per cent of professionals are keen to give up their existing jobs in the current calendar year. Welcome to a new world era wherein the civilisational and cultural prisms too could prove to be effective tools in the changed world order.

Perhaps this can be underlined better also in the context of developments in Afghanistan and some roles played by Pakistan. Religiosity can have a soothing impact for someone who uses these occasions to gaze in within oneself. These virtues are appreciated in advanced societies as materialistic achievements have made people lonely and friendless.

More than creating ‘segments’ like Hindu culture or fest, certain things are emerging now as a global phenomenon. The timing of Diwali festival in between autumn and winter is not something to be lost. The light and sound kill some bacteria in the air – that’s for the rational school; and in pursuing this argument, one knows the problems lay in overdoing things.

Bursting of firecrackers would have been pleasant and a tasteful experience had this not become a symbol of showmanship. If firecrackers are bad for the environment, so is gambling and the so-called gift-exchange culture of Delhi for human behaviour. Here too, the problem is in overdoing things; not ordering a blanket ban as a presumed corrective strategy.

The global recognition by the UN and ongoing craze for Yoga and a renewed zeal for festivals such as Deepawali have some messages. Of these, the big picture message is – the international game can be no longer about pushing a single-agenda item.

Soft power games also means persuasive diplomacy. It may be out of the box, but not something to be dismissed as out of the blue. Life is often like standing in the dusk, to use poetic jargon. It is all about optimism. Optimism leads to patience. The storm would pass off eventually, no matter how long it is.

This is a major takeaway from oriental teachings and India’s perspectives. That’s the



essence of India’s civilisational “soft power” strength too. Diwali symbolises glory of virtues over vices like most festivals and rituals across the globe.

Switching on to another chapter now, there are observers who say that Indians thrive on self pity and that’s why we Indians often continue to curse ourselves. The polarization of India’s intellectual class is so deep that it is difficult to express an opinion and that would still be considered an objective one.

If one writes a few lines on Hindu festivals and oriental traditions and values, he is in danger of being called a communal! But the fact of life is that some Indian and, for that matter, Hindu fests have attracted attention and excitement globally. This has not happened because Indians can influence the outcome in an US election, this is also because people see merit in some of these festivals and practices.

The festival of light and sound which essentially marks the victory of Good over Evil and Knowledge over Ignorance is being celebrated with religious zeal in countries such as the UAE, Canada, the African nations and Malaysia. In many countries, Diwali has made a mark as a festival of share and care. People also do charity work at orphanages and old age homes.

It is worth mentioning that in 2016 in the context of Art of Living’s World Culture Festival in Delhi, none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said, “We (Indians) can make contribution (of India’s soft power) only when we ourselves feel proud of our culture. But if we continue to curse ourselves, then how will the world look towards us? The world is not only united by concerns of economic growth, but also by human values and India can play a vital role in it.”

The motive of building a predefined narrative against Hindu fests and practices, if any, has thus fallen flat.

Nirendra Dev is a New Delhi-based journalist. He is also author of books, ‘The Talking Guns: North East India’ and ‘Modi to Moditva: An Uncensored Truth’

Putin Visiting India: Is it strategic balancing? December 16-31, 2021- Vol 2 Issue 11



Major General S.B Asthana

By Major General S.B. Asthana

With heated exchanges between the US and Russia due to heavy concentration of troops in Ukraine border scheduled for talks between both, Russia's growing dependency on China due to sanctions from West, and Indian tilt towards the US with inclusion in Quad, the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India on December 6, appears to be viewed differently by different world players. Even in domestic debates, the public anger due to Chinese intrusion in Ladakh and growing partnership of Russia and China, indicates that the visit is sensitive in context of international geopolitical scenario; hence will require a delicate strategic balancing including text of joint statement, if issued at the end of the visit. Notwithstanding the above, the visit is a scheduled 21st India-Russia Annual Summit, which couldn't take place earlier due to the coronavirus

pandemic. There are many justified reasons to continue with 'Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty (1971)' matured into 'Strategic Partnership (2000)', which has stood the test of time till date, even during ongoing rough relations between China and India.

Why Russia matters to India despite the Chinese embrace

Despite India's effort for Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing and SIPRI indicating a significant 33 per cent decrease in import of military hardware by India in recent years, it remains heavily dependent on Russian technology, maintenance, procurement of hardware and spares. For many decades Russians have been collaborating with India in its indigenous manufacturing programs and were amenable to transfer of technology, which India was finding difficult to get from others. It includes some major systems like nuclear-powered submarines, warships/frigates, nuclear reactors, space programmes and flagship projects like Brahmos.

The impending visit, besides the deal to commence indigenous manufacturing of AK 203 Kalashnikov rifles, may see some forward movement in collaboration in manufacturing (including transfer of technology of very short range air defence missile systems (VSHORADS), twin engine helicopters to replace Cheetah and Chetak, upgradation of inventory of MIG-29 and Sukhoi aircrafts. S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile system which India had signed in 2018 for \$5.43 billion is a done deal, and the threat of CAATSA is unlikely to have any impact on delivery schedule. It was chosen because it was most suitable to Indian requirements at that point of time. There are also speculations of approximately ten agreements to be signed between the two countries, which could include reciprocal exchange of logistics agreement and 10-year military technical agreement, besides Two plus Two dialogue to strengthen existing strategic partnership. The US may be amenable to a waiver on CAATSA for S-400, in view of the common China challenge, but further deals may create some new friction points in strengthening Indo-US relations.

In a strategic context, Russia continues to be a favourable P5 member in the UN and continues to support India in various multilateral organisations like the UN, SCO, BRICS on crucial issues. It's a technological powerhouse, one of the largest producers

of military hardware, producing rugged equipment suited for a variety of terrain, where Indian forces operate. While its nearness to China, its discomfort with Indian embrace to Quad, growing Indo-US partnership, and hardware sale to Pakistan, forces some of the opinion makers in India to suggest divorcing Russia in favour of US, but such opinions are marred by impracticality, ignorance of Indian hardware dependency on Russia and its track record of reliability of its partnership with India. In its revised Military Strategy document Russia continues to name India as its partner along with China, and has not delayed/defaulted on any hardware support to India, even during standoff with China. The interest of both countries also coincide regarding concerns on export of terror after Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and resultant humanitarian crisis, which will certainly be a subject of discussion and may find some mention in joint statement.

Reality of Sino-Russian embrace

The much publicised Sino-Russian embrace by Chinese media and Russian acceptance to go along has been due to economic compulsions due to increasing sanctions from West, common adversary US branding both as competitors in security strategy documents. Objectively an expansionist, aggressive China seeking Sino-centric world order does suit Russia as well, which is looking for multilateral world order. Chinese BRI has already side-lined Eurasian dream, its technological theft like alleged hypersonic technology proliferation and increasing border claims in previously settled borders with Tajikistan are not to Russian liking. Russia has made no commitment to back China's misadventure in South China Sea/Himalayas and China has also not made any commitment on Ukraine borders. Reiterating India as a strategic partner may be Moscow's message to the US and Beijing both. It is however, impractical to expect Russia criticising China or Pakistan or India discussing Ukraine issue during this visit, due to peculiar geo-political equations, and Russians' need for strategic and economic balancing.

Strategic balancing by India

India and US have commonality of Interest in most issues including tackling China, which has pushed India to become an important global strategic partner of US, by its aggressive designs. There is congruence of interests in most global issues between US and India in the current geo-strategic equation. India stands with the US and Quad in the context of the Indo-Pacific and facing China's challenge. India continues to do its best to respond to sensitivities and concerns of the US, at times risking some of its old relationships like Iran. To accommodate US interest, India reduced import of oil from Iran, bearing a cost disadvantage, as Iran oil was being imported in rupee terms, in crude form and attuned to existing refineries in India. India doesn't seem to be repeating the same mistake with Russians, who haven't done anything bilaterally which demands a divorce in a mutual relationship. Moreover, military capacity building of India also adds to the collective strength of Quad, which is in collective interest.

Lately India is trying to be self-reliant, as well as diversifying procurement from various countries to include the US, France and Israel. In the last decade the defence procurement from Russia has gradually reduced from over 65 percent approximately to nearly 49 percent and correspondingly increased in favour of the US, Israel and France. There is a noticeable upward trend in purchase of US military hardware, as the year 2020 alone saw a purchase of \$3.4 billion worth of US military equipment, indicating enough accommodation by India. In a buyers' market the US has competitors including Russia, Israel and France. India has also made a modest beginning in exporting Rs 38,000 crore worth of military equipment, as a step towards self-reliance, seeking support of all the partners.

Major General S.B. Asthana is a strategic and security analyst, a veteran Infantry General. He is the Chief Instructor, United Service Institution of India. The views expressed are personal



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Special Features

Is Kashmir's terror heartland turning its back to militancy?, Jan 1-15, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 13



Ahmed Ali Fayyaz

By Ahmed Ali Fayyaz

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS): Southern Kashmir's Tral in Pulwama district has for long retained several dubious distinctions in the last 31 years of armed insurgency in the valley. This was the crucible from where Burhan Wani to Zakir Musa, and scores of top-notch militants emerged. Wani's death in an encounter in July 2016 led to a four-month-long street turbulence in which over 70 demonstrators and arsonists got killed and thousands, civilians as well as security forces personnel, sustained injuries.

Dadsara, a village in Tral, is said to have created the maximum number of militants among all villages and towns across the valley. It was because of the people of Dadsara and other villages that a two-lakh

strong procession gathered to form Wani's funeral procession. Four years later, Dadsara is singing to a different tune.

On December 8, three local cadres of 'Albadar' outfit—Merajuddin Lone, Umer Ali and Owais Farooq—were killed in an encounter with Police and security forces at Tiken in Pulwama. One of them was a resident of Dadsara. The bodies were buried as per the Covid-19 protocol in the distant Baramulla area in northern Kashmir.

Unlike on scores of similar killings and encounters in the past, Dadsara and all other villages in Tral were calm in the morning after. Hardly anyone gathered to offer condolences to the militant's family and nobody demanded burial the dead body at the local cemetery, let alone an effervescent funeral procession and a gun salute at the tombstone. There was no shutdown in Tral.

The voter turnout was thinner in Pulwama and its contiguous district of Shopian as compared to eight other districts in the valley in the District Development Council elections. However, the scenes of defiance, demonstration and protest, that marred over a dozen elections after 1990, were nowhere there across Kashmir. The residents of Pulwama still remember the separatists' anti-election campaign, coupled with terror attacks, which subverted several democratic processes in the past 24 years particularly in that district.

"In many elections, we saw militants attacking the polling parties. Even in 2014, a polling party returning with EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) was subjected to a fatal attack. I remember senior Hurriyat leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Abdul Gani Lone reaching here with their Police guards armed with AK-47 rifles like the Ministers' escorts and provoking the people to fail the elections. Several times, I remember, there were violent demonstrations and teargas shelling by Police. Not a single such incident has been reported from anywhere in

the valley during the DDC elections."

One-odd incident of a militant attack occurred in Srinagar where some unidentified gunmen shot dead the personal security officer of the People's Democratic Party activist Haji Pervaiz.

This is not the only manifestation of change in the last over one year. It has been widely noticed that many of the Twitter handles and Facebook accounts, which used to bully, troll and intimidate anybody not toeing the Pakistani line until May this year, have silently disappeared. While hundreds of such accounts have been removed by their users after the Cyber Cell of the Jammu and Kashmir Police began filing FIRs over 'anti-national' and 'subversive' content, many others have deleted objectionable and intimidating posts.

According to senior Police officials, the security and the intelligence agencies had, immediately after the killing of 40 CRPF personnel in a car bomb attack, identified all the vehicles used by the "militants and their Pakistani handlers".

"First of all, we called or detained temporarily some of such elements after August 2019. Secondly, we shut down the internet for a purpose. We knew about their plans to create a mayhem like 2016, 2010 and 2080. Thirdly, we let them off but made it clear that the age-old practice of running an anti-India tirade alongside armed insurgency wouldn't be tolerated any more. Most of them responded positively and stopped indulging in subversive and anti-Indian activities," said an officer.

The officer referred particularly to the Twitter accounts of two women activists, one a journalist based in Mumbai and another a Kashmiri scholar in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), to prove his point that the world was "misled" by the social media, as well as the foreign press, with regard to the "real situation" in Kashmir after August 5, 2019.

"For months they ran a tirade that we had jailed and tortured thousands. They reported that the Kashmiris were defiant, and thus suppressed, and that there was lockdown and curfew. As a matter of fact, we had detained less than 4,000 persons of proven subversive history. We have released almost all of them. Our lockdown was for less than two months. In October, November and December 2019, there was a shutdown sponsored by the separatists and the terrorists. They gunned down wholesalers and fruit dealers and spread a wave of terror to ensure that the signs of normalcy do not go out. This election called their bluff and exposed everybody," said the same officer.

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Decoding recovery path of the Indian economy

Dr. Niranjan Hiranandani

No one ever thought of the scale and magnitude of disruption that was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the aftermath, the resurgence would be equally trying especially in a country like ours with a complex economic framework. However, we need to applaud the government for paving the way for an impressive recovery, with a judicious mix of spending and structural reforms. The outcome of the efforts visible in the Q2 numbers which showed a single-digit economic contraction of 7.5 per cent as compared to 23.9 per cent in Q1. The figure beats the global average, where according to an analysis, 49



economies declined at an average of 12.4 per cent.

The jubilations and optimism mirrored in the financial markets, business houses, and the government. If the current optimism and rally gets carried unabated then as per the official and unofficial forecasts, India's economy is likely to return to the pre-Covid levels by the end of the current fiscal year which is a much shorter timeframe than expected. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) prediction of a positive growth in the H2 FY21 is substantiated by the fact that in the recently published Q2 data, the manufacturing PMI is above 50 for the fourth straight month which is only 11 percentage points lower than pre-Covid-19 levels. It is worth noting that unemployment levels are currently on a decline; the 6.7 per cent the unemployment rate for September was lower than the pre-Covid-19 level of 7.6 per cent in February.

Like always the world has taken notice of the positives and showed faith in India's story once again as visible in the growth numbers of segments such as foreign direct investment (FDI), foreign policy investment, and corporate bond market inflows. It all points to strong investor faith in India's economic resilience. Besides, upwards revisions by rating agencies in India's GDP forecast are all repeating the same story that we have kicked in the rebound phase.

The ripple effect

The unleashing of structural reforms and the stimulus packages announced by the government did take effect in various sectors as the fiscal response has been calibrated to reap maximum benefit. The one that stands out is the extension of the 100 percent credit guarantee scheme to 27 stressed sectors. Besides, fiscal stimulus and tax rebates for growth-critical sectors, such as housing, would have spill-over effects, thus indirectly boosting demand-led growth. Reforms and timely fiscal interventions in other critical sectors are already showing positive results: the Gross Value Added (GVA) for three sectors-- agriculture, manufacturing, and utilities-- has been positive in Q2, as compared to just one, the agriculture sector, in Q1 this year. Similarly, the expansion of production linked incentive (PLI) schemes --that give incentives to firms-- worth ₹1.46 lakh crore for 10 new sectors will give a boost to the manufacturing sector, and result in long-term benefits for the economy.

The liberalization of the notoriously rigid formal labour market would expedite India's upward movement in the ease of doing business rankings, and attract further investments.. India has moved up 79 positions in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business' rankings since 2014.

Fears of fiscal deficit

The stimulus packages and therefore, additional non-budgeted spending --along with falling tax revenue,-- by the government to wean off the COVID crisis has led to pushing India's budget gap wider to 8 percent of GDP in the current financial year, more than double the targeted 3.5percent. The expanded support package-- to rescue companies and save jobs amid the pandemic--given by the government amounts to 15 per cent of the economy, adding to the global stimulus that has touched \$12trillion. The fear that the fiscal deficit will loom large on the government in the future to manage fiscal prudence is not unfounded. However, the finance minister has assured time and again that fiscal deficit fears won't derail government spending as government spending is important to bring the economy on track. The forthcoming union budget will focus on public spending on Infrastructure to ensure sustainable economic revival. There is a dire need to reinstitute Infrastructure Development Bank for long term funding of infrastructure projects.

Globally countries that have committed to stimulus spending as high as 20 per cent of their GDP is now resorting to additional taxation, helping fuel a recovery in the economy. In India, the government is finding other routes to keep fuelling the economic engine as the FM said that the government will push PSUs to accelerate spending as the government can't afford to curb spending at this juncture of economic crisis.

Authorities to the rescue

A multipronged policy response -- the efforts and intelligent balancing act done-- by the apex bank in India, the RBI, during the Covid crisis is praised by the government and the people of India, equally. The reduction of key interest rates along with the restructuring of outstanding loans, moratorium of given to the borrowers and extension of on-Tap TLTRO to 26 stressed sectors under the Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme(ECLGS 2.0) are some of the strategies that has helped the businesses tide over the crisis.

The way RBI is trying to resolve the shadow banking crisis that has plagued the country since 2018 has found many takers including the government. The government on the other hand is rooting the idea of privatising a couple of state-run banks that have received cabinet approvals.

Conclusion

The year 2020 may not have belonged to India, but the future certainly belongs to this nation for its resilience, faith, and sheer optimism.

The author is the national president of the industry body, ASSOCHAM and NAREDCO. The views expressed are personal.

Frankincense: Smell that invokes the divine, Jan 16–31, 2021 – Vol 1 Issue 14



Ahmed Ali Fayyaz

By Malvika Barry

During my first visit to Sacré Coeur, a monumental Basilica in the most touristy Parisienne neighborhood of Montmartre, I encountered this mysterious scent that made me nostalgic for the time my mother burnt frankincense to purify the air in the house after her morning prayers. I saw her practicing it less over the years, but this peculiar smell and the dense, curly fumes remain etched in my memory. A few years later, I again encountered this scent at the Dubai Souk at a spice store selling these precious creamy off-white crystals at an exorbitant price. Although, UAE is famous for bakhoor and oud, some households, especially those from Oman and Morocco, burn frankincense in their homes and offices. Some of my friends from Tunisia

also chew on frankincense crystals to strengthen their gums and improve digestion.

Frankincense, also known as olibanum or incense, areoleoresin crystals, which are the most expensive and luxurious trade items since antiquity. Have you ever wondered why they are associated with rituals? Why are they used for evoking the gods? How have different religions used it for similar purposes?

On a starry night when Jupiter and Saturn formed the rare alignment known as the “Star of Bethlehem,” the three wise men bearing precious gifts of frankincense, myrrh, and gold visited baby Jesus at the stable. Therefore, frankincense was regarded as a priceless commodity, and was only offered to the divine. Although the magi story made frankincense famous, the use of frankincense has been dated back to 3200 BCE during the Egyptian civilization. Egyptians used frankincense for rituals to appease the gods, as fumigants to purify the air, as a digestive, and for preparing cosmetics such as kohl for the eyes. Later due to trade in this region, the raw material grew in popularity and became an essential commodity for Babylonians, Romans, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese and Persian civilizations. These civilizations also used it for appeasing the gods, sacrificial rituals, and medicinal purposes. To this day, the practice of burning incense is believed to be an offering to the gods to appease them.

There are more than 25 species of frankincense found widely in countries such as Oman, Ethiopia, Somalia, India, East Africa, Sudan, and Yemen. Of these, the most famous variety is the Boswellia sacra, which grows in the inlands of the Arabian Peninsula and thrives in the limestone hills of Khor Rori in Dhofar governorate in Southern Oman. The port of Al-Baleed, Wadi Dawkah, and the ancient caravan oasis in Shisr close to the Great Arabian desert, Rub Al Khali, are lands rich in frankincense trees due to their calcium-rich soils.

The mystical and enigmatic frankincense has always been associated with other-worldly forces and is closely linked to magical energy. Its scent is warm, woody, honey-like

balsamic with piney lemon nuances. These resins are categorized based on the color from amber brown, the low grade to creamy white crystals, high grade, or classified based on the citrus notes of lemon, orange, and lime. The frankincense trees appear to be knotted and weather-beaten due to the arid conditions in which it thrives. Luban, the Arabic name for frankincense, which means milk, is harvested by making several incisions on the trunk, and the thick milk is scraped out from the core of the branch and hardened in the sun to form translucent crystals. There is a high demand for Luban in recent years, resulting in an increase in the number of incisions per tree throughout the year. Over tapping and over-exploitation of the trees have made some species, such as Boswellia sacra, a threatened species. Therefore, most of the trees in Oman are located in the UNESCO World Heritage sites and protected by law.

This priceless frankincense resin has several properties and can be used for relieving cold, like chewing gum for oral care, a cure for joint inflammation, etc., and its essential oil can be used in perfumery, aromatherapy, as well as exotic desserts such as artisanal ice-cream in Salalah Oman, made famous by Trygve Harris, an American entrepreneur. Frankincense is a special note in perfumery, therefore exclusively used by niche brands such as Byredo, Guerlain, Gucci, Kilian, etc.

The three fragrances which have a slightly eerie, unearthly, and bold presence of frankincense include:

Gypsy Water by Byredo

For those of you who find incense over-powering, this fragrance is a breath of fresh air. Just like the lush green oasis of Salalah, the vibrant sparkling nuances of bergamot, lemon along with cool pepper, and juniper are a blessing in the barren, hot desert. Piney notes along with incense and ambry vanilla, add warmth and comfort to those whose thoughts wander to such paradise. One can wear this perfume in the sultry summer heat to feel fresh and elevated.

Encens Mythique by Guerlain

It is an enchanting fragrance by Thierry Wasser, in-house perfumer of Guerlain, that captures the essence of Arabia. Perfectly well-balanced notes of rose, velvety saffron, and vetiver glorify the star ingredient Frankincense in the most magical and surreal way. It is truly divine and speaks of the civilizations that thrived on these precious raw materials trade.

A Midnight Stroll by Gucci

When the clock strikes twelve, and all is still, supernatural powers are set free in the wee hours of the night. Similarly, in this fragrance within the complexities of smoky aromatic nagarmotha and tar-like cade emerges the spell-binding frankincense, which is hauntingly visible amidst this perfume’s depths. Talk about a scent that gives you the creeps! This perfume is suitable for a bone-chilling winter night worn underneath thick heavy coats.

These are just some fragrances that celebrate frankincense’s surreal scent, and more are in the making. Notwithstanding the mystery why these resins are used to evoke the divine, try these fragrances to invoke the gods or goddesses within you. Happy Sniffing!

The author is a fragrance evaluator at Identiscents FZC, Sharjah, UAE

Why Disengage? Decoding China’s Motivations at Galwan the ASEAN region, March 1–15, 2021–Vol 1 Issue 17



Sriparna Pathak

By Dr. Sriparna Pathak

2020 marked an extremely tumultuous phase in India-China relations. In addition to a pandemic which originated in China and led to an economic collapse and public health crisis in India and elsewhere, China, also unleashed aggression at borders with India. Nine months later and after nine round of talks between senior military leaders of two sides, India and China decided to disengage at Pangong Tso- one of the theatres of the conflict. The decision, which was first announced by China met with a mixture of jubilation and skepticism. The jubilant parties expressed hopes that complete disengagement will take place in the other segments as well, while skeptics

have chosen to adopt a wait and watch approach given that China through its actions has undone years of trust gained from the Indian side.

Weighing the unfolding events at the border and within China on an objective scale leads to a better understanding of why China chose to disengage, after nine long months. In addition to this disengagement what China has also did is that it finally gave out the names of four of its fallen soldiers. While India chose to disclose and honour India’s martyrs in June last year itself, it took China about a year to do so.

Nevertheless, this is a rare occasion when China has given out some of the names of its fallen soldiers. What China also did is that it arrested six people for “insulting” Chinese martyrs of the Galwan clash and was reportedly targeting a teenager living overseas. Contrary to the charge of the insult, what Qiu Ziming- one of those arrested had done was to question the Chinese official, “account of the clash.” The announcement of the honours for the fallen soldiers was widely covered by Chinese state media and led to an outpouring of sentiment, with the topic being among the most widely discussed one on social media during the week in which the announcement was made. What also happened subsequently because of the frenzy that the announcement had stirred up was that anti-India sentiments surged in China along with racism against Indians. Chinese state media shared an image from a recent Galwan clip along with annotations. The only issue was that the image was not of the Line of Actual Control. Very carefully China’s official media



is rewriting the narrative on the border crisis.

In addition to the announced disengagement from Pangong Tso, announcement of four fallen Chinese soldiers, arresting of people questioning the Chinese state’s version of the clash, creating jingoistic frenzies among its public, releasing doctored images and videos, rewriting the narrative, what China has done is that it has consolidated the Rutog base near Pangong Tso to house disengaged People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops. The garrison at Rutog was being developed since 2019 and is expected to act as a feeder station for future PLA activity in the Pangong Tso area. Also, after the announcement of the disengagement at Pangong Tso, it was hoped that the tenth round of talks between senior military commanders will be able to make a breakthrough on addressing other friction points at Gogra, Hot Springs and Depsang Plains. However, the meeting held on February 20 did not lead to any further disengagement.

This takes one to the question, Then why did China disengage at Pangong Tso at all? If it does not want a de-escalation in the overall military conflict with India, since issues at Gogra, Hot Springs and Depsang still remain, and Chinese state media is actively creating an anti-India sentiment in China, then why disengage at Pangong Tso at all?

One of the answers to this lies in ancient Chinese wisdom that advises against opening too many fronts at the same time. Given Joe Biden’s strong remarks on China, Beijing might be wanting to close one front before another one gets opened with the

U.S. Secondly, the winters have been harsh for both the armies, and the Lunar year celebrations only bring back longing amongst Chinese people far away from their homes. This is true for the PLA as well. Therefore from at least one segment, a few soldiers could be given temporary relief, so that the morale stays high. The garrison at the Rutog base clearly suggests that the disengagement is only temporary. Once reinvigorated the released soldiers can become feeders for the next round of PLA activity near Pangong Tso. Thirdly, in order to portray itself as a responsible player of the international system, China announced the names of the four fallen soldiers- something it has never done so soon in any of its previous military conflicts since 1949. This serves a dual purpose as well- keeps Nationalism high among the Chinese population, showcasing how under the

able leadership of the Communist Party, China is teaching aggressors like India a lesson while doing the humane thing of honouring the fallen. But of course, any questioning of this narrative will be punishable because it has the possibility of derailing the Chinese official narrative of always portraying itself as a hapless victim which nevertheless stands its ground and fights for the right. In any case, these events only signal that the disengagement is part of a larger play and that India should be prepared at all fronts for more military aggression from China.

Dr. Sriparna Pathak is an Associate Professor and Assistant Academic Dean at the School of International Affairs of O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana. She can be reached at sriparnapathak@gmail.com

Decoding India and Taiwan bilateral diplomacy, March 16-31, 2021-Vol 1

Issue 18



Raviprasad Narayanan

By Raviprasad Narayanan

India and Taiwan are in the process of reaching out to one another for two reasons – economic and strategic. Economic reasons are motivated by Taiwan’s ‘Go South Policy’ for over two decades, wanting to build deeper linkages with India. Taiwan’s Go South Policy (GSP) is to strengthen relations between Taiwan and countries south of Taiwan, especially Southeast Asia. “GSP 3.0” is current reiteration by Taiwan led by Tsai Ing Wen of the Democratic People’s Party (DPP). Two former presidents of Taiwan, former President’s Lee Teng-Hui (1996–2000) and

Chen Shui-bian (2000–2008) – had initiated Go South Policy owing to wariness of China in political, economic and strategic terms. This necessitated looking to Southeast Asia and South Asia as manufacturing hubs Welcoming Taiwanese investments. It does appear that there is overwhelming political consensus in

Taiwan for GSP. India is a primary objective for Taiwan’s corporate laoban’ (bosses) to become a base for its micro and nano electronics companies, uncomfortable with Xi Jinping’s evolving into Mao version 2! Relocating many factories from mainland China to Southeast Asia and India is in the interests of remaining a global supplier of micro-electronics, not restricted by events in Hong Kong and a regressive political control stymieing innovation.

India’s ‘Act East Policy’ announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was re-interpretation of ‘Look East Policy’ articulated by Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister (1991 – 1996) when economic reforms were introduced. Implementation of ‘Act East Policy’ is to attract Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese investments into dynamic sectors where electronics and technology fuse to create stronger and more diversified domestic economy. Taiwan sees India as a market and production base where it could locate its high technology industries away from China. Wistron Infocomm, a Taiwanese global sub-contractor for Apple has based its manufacturing unit in India at Bengaluru. Qualcomm, template of Taiwanese expertise and innovation in Micro and Nano electronics is establishing itself in India, underlining a shift from China, where its Nano electronic founders for Apple are largely based. India while welcoming initiatives from Taiwan is also trying to convince Taipei to establish high technology training schools where manpower with limited technical skills could be upgraded. Metal cutting, wind power and technical skills required in manufacturing processes on large scale are to create wherewithal of China in India. Private Corporates in India are very welcome to this initiative finding support. It could be argued that the closer India and Taiwan get in economic terms, the ‘strategic’ is not far away. With a bilateral investment agreement signed in 2018, trade between the two sides is only USD 7.2 billion in 2019, approximately around one-tenth of bilateral trade India has with China. A positive feature is of Taiwanese investments to India increasing year after year, owing to Taiwan Trade (TAITRA) naming India as investment destination.

India and Taiwan are natural partners in economic terms. Current bilateral engagement between the two has to cognise an imprint from 2014 national elections making the BJP ruling party since.

Deciphering Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s foreign policy and identifying a methodology, a starting

Point is the Election Manifesto of the BJP for the 2014 elections. To quote from the document: “BJP believes a resurgent India must get its rightful place in the comity of nations and international institutions. The vision is to fundamentally reboot and reorient the foreign policy goals, content and process, in a manner that locates India’s global strategic engagement in a new paradigm and on a wider canvass, that is not just limited to political diplomacy, but also includes our economic, scientific, cultural, political and security interests, both regional and global, on the principles of equality and mutuality, so that it leads to an economically stronger India, and its voice is heard in the international fora”.



The lengthy second sentence captures his stance on the economic and scientific interests being central to foreign policy. Put succinctly, ‘economic diplomacy’ is driving foreign policy with security considerations remaining at a different level. Mr. Modi has an advantage, as the BJP has a majority in parliament and can chart a new course without being pressed by domestic considerations beyond a point. He therefore, has far more flexibility in his foreign policy forays than his predecessor. Intent at presenting himself as ‘lodestar’ striving to maintain continuum of positioning India as an emerging power that embraces multilateralism and global governance based on economic diplomacy. India’s fourth decade of reforms requires intensive engagement with global stakeholders and institutions that appeal in their global content in creating a normative structure where India will find its niche.

The slogan ‘Make in India’ – an inviting prospect to the global audience to locate their manufacturing capacities in India. The normative in Mr. Modi is witnessed in the manner in which India has supported the creation of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) also known as the BRICS Bank. Both these financial institutions are located in China, and as an indicator of economic cooperation amongst emerging powers, India is at the forefront in demonstrating its commitment to the idea. It also sends the message to Beijing that the boundary dispute will not become an obstacle in matters focusing on economic inter-linkages and their import.

It is a frailty, exposed by Beijing with its aggressiveness on the high Himalayas. Economic considerations have always played a pivotal role in shaping the nation’s foreign policy and Mr. Modi has only highlighted this aspect as being a core feature of his foreign policy.

Could strategic complementarities be next?

Yes. The Quadrilateral where United States, Australia, Japan and India have established operational wavelength has united four countries disenchanted by an aggressive interloper wanting to transform global geopolitics. Trade determinants apart, the rabid functional manner of China in international forums indicates a strong perseverance in creating alternative arrangements, be it finance or strategic. To China, India’s pro-active role in the Quadrilateral is an attempt by democracies to stifle and derail China’s economic growth and strategic influence. Beijing feels, Taiwan plays a role, as being a democracy willing to be a beneficiary of Quadrilateral adopting a plausible deniability façade, not in sync with China’s claims over the ‘rebellious province.’

Considerations for India are the following:

First, the personality centric approach adopted by Mr. Modi is stamped on all his visits abroad and interactions.

Second, the Prime Minister’s Office has for quite some time been the fulcrum of policy making in India and Mr. Modi’s second term has made his office the core of policy and supreme institution of decision-making. Institutional frameworks, not exclusively bureaucratic, are expressly required between Taiwan and India.

Third, while Mr. Modi has galvanized a lot to do with India, as his government nears a decade in office in 2024, statements made by him, have to be matched indeed, otherwise the frisson of the moment will be questioned. This is where India-Taiwan relations are litmus test. Will China’s further belligerence on the high Himalayas make India back track on Taiwan? Will domestic politics become an obstacle to investments from Taiwan?

And last, a weak and inchoate opposition does not mean there are not going to be any obstacles for Mr. Modi in his conduct of foreign policy. That in its essence is the euphoria called Indian democracy.

Dr. Raviprasad Narayanan is an Associate Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

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Decoding India's stake in the South China Sea, April 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 19



Aditi Mittal

By Aditi Mittal

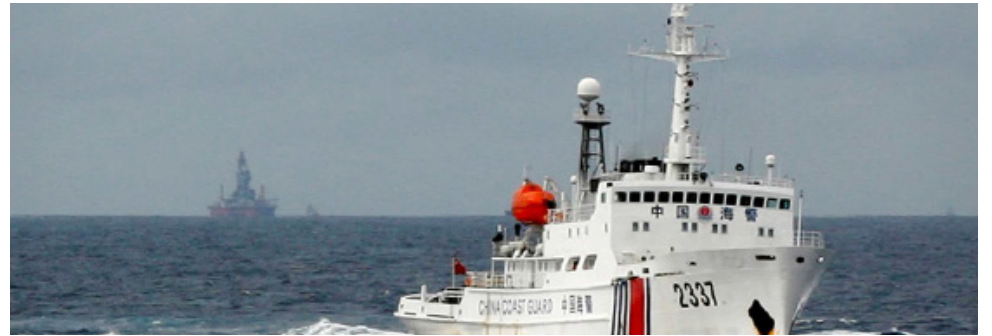
Over the past year the South China Sea (biggest maritime flashpoint) has found itself making headlines on multiple occasions. Tensions in the strategic waterway has once again brewed as a consequence of China encroaching 200 ships to the disputed reef. This has sent alarming concerns to Philippines – another major contestant of the disputed reef claiming this as a “provocative action of China militarizing the area.”

As the world diplomacy contextualizes if you control the seas you control world politics, thus justifying why this marine

spot has become such a political hotspot. In a world where fortunes of powerful countries depend hugely on maritime trade, South China Sea's location and span make it among the most vital geostrategic water bodies in Asia. The 3.5 million square kilometers area accounts for a total trade of \$3.37 trillion dollars which passes through some of the most crucial shipping lanes of the Asian continent. Apart from this the area is immensely resourceful for the fishing industry with some of the key sections of it lying on the vast oil reserves. These immense benefits associated with the region explain why China is trying to capture the area with militia control since many years starting almost back from 1947 with its dubious cartographic efforts of the nine-dash line.

However the South China Sea is not China's sea but a global common. Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei Indonesia and Vietnam are other countries in the area that have contested their claims over the region and vehemently protested China's overambitious territorial claims by neither formally recognising the so-called nine-dash line nor by approving China's attempt to militarise the waters of the South China Sea. The nine-dash has in fact framed a damaging impact on the stability in the region. Interestingly, the most prominent disputes that today define the instability in the South China Sea all involve different sets of claimant countries, although the nature of the wrangles is fundamentally the same. China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines have conflicting claims wholly or partly over the Paracel Islands, Spratly Islands, the Scarborough Shoal, Vereker Banks and Macclesfield Bank. The same countries in various combinations have contesting claims over other less-known islands, banks and reefs in that zone.

China's defence apparatus includes steadily turning small islands into de facto military bases which is nowadays the worst-kept secret of South China Sea. The recent fleet of 200 ships of China is the result of according to China one of its many so called military drills that it is supposed to carry out during the month of March. However these efforts seem contemptuous enough and come with its own ramifications leading to shooting unrest in many political arenas, not just in Asia but also the west. As a result of this many other political powers like the USA and India have started turning their heads towards this decades long dispute.



What is at stake for India in the South China Sea?

First the region has been an important sea-lane of communication since the very beginning, and has been remained unimpeded over the centuries. Indians have sailed these waters for well over 1,500 years. Secondly nearly \$200 billions of India's trade passes through the South China Sea. Thirdly the region also calls for high stakes in the peace and security of this region which is common with others who reside there, along with freedom of navigation, as well as other normal activities with friendly countries make it essential for India's economic well-being.

India has been cultivating its ties on the 10-member South East Asian countries of the ASEAN. India has however not been part of any free trade deal with the ASEAN countries and it also pulled out from the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) as a consequence of China's uncertain designs. Instead India has opted for mini trade deals. Currently a preferential trade agreement with the Philippines is on the cards. This puts things into much perspective as to why India must intervene in the recent political disputes between Philippines and China (i) Philippines has been the third largest economy in ASEAN (ii) despite over 70 years of diplomatic ties India and Philippines have never been close. So, this could be a chance for India to bring a new country in its fold. Hence partnering with the major stakeholders in the region could address the trade and security concerns that India faces from the disputes over this strategic region as well.

Economically and politically not just India, in fact the entire world has a lot at stake in the high seas. The US recently backed Philippines in standoff over South China reef and accused China of using “maritime militia to intimidate, provoke and threaten other nations which undermines the peace and security in the region. Thus, all the above concerns show why deterring China's truculence is key and India could possibly be the bulwark against Beijing.

Aditi Mittal is a Research Intern with the Institute for Australia India Engagement.

As a final year student of Indra Prastha College for Women, University of Delhi pursuing B.A (Hons) in Economics, over the course of her study Aditi has developed a keen interest in analysing the financial markets and public policy discussions. She integrates in-depth research with current economic trends to build upon her writing endeavours. She truly believes that the participation by today's youth is necessary for growth and development which has further compelled her to initiate founding projects on pivotal areas concerning our society like women's safety and global health.

COVID-19 Second Wave in India and Devolution of News Media into Voyeurism, May 16-31, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 22



Divya Sharma

By Prof. Divya Sharma

The news about COVID-19 should be covered in as much detail and as critically as possible. The center & state governments, agencies, and individuals that failed to plan for and respond to the crisis should be held accountable. Given India's healthcare system and the large population, the challenges during the second wave and beyond would be harsher. That's a no-brainer and is incontrovertible. But can the media resist using a dead body for the dramatic effect or live-telecasting the dying?

In 2020, during the first wave, New York in particular and the US, in general, was reeling under record-setting COVID-19 cases, hospitals were running out of beds and oxygen, dead bodies were being stored in

trucks, mass graves on Hart Island became a pragmatic option to bury the piling bodies, funeral homes were overwhelmed, nursing homes deaths were ignored, doctors and nurses were begging for N95 masks and PPE kits on social media – similar tragedies were unfolding in Italy and England – yet largely, the news media did not start fear-mongering, invade funeral homes or shove recorders in the faces of grieving families, pose in front of caskets as props, or generally sell human grief as a commodity for mass consumption. It reported on the grave situation while using the language of caution, compassion, dignity, and hope. It also amplified what average citizens could do to help.

In contrast, as the second wave hit India much harder, the western media and the Indian media that sees India through a western lens (the term media/western media in this article include both these groups), couldn't wait to get a piece of the tragedy. Within hours multiple pieces were published with images of burning pyres, corpses, and grieving families, and certainty of an impending apocalypse or an Armageddon. Yes, the situation on the ground is challenging, but treating Hindu and Sikh funerals as some bizarre or exotic entity for western consumption is repulsive. There's always a certain gloat and sadism in the western media about any deaths in India & since last year, it's well-nigh been craving for it! Top journos got the light right for the funeral wood behind them, framing the shots so the wailing kin could provide the background noise albeit not too close to risk drowning their own, asking grieving family members 'how they feel,' etc. At the British-American media company's Getty Images website, photos of cremations are priced at Rs. 23,000 (approx. \$311). No, it's not a case where a picture can change the course of history; it's plain ghouliness. Yes, there's a market for everything – will the media next show/sell videos of beheadings by terrorist groups? Videos of rape victims? After the 9/11 attacks, the media voluntarily decided to refrain from showing images of people jumping off the twin towers; why is a man in India gasping for air not given the same dignity? Ceteris paribus, the poor are afforded the least privacy & sensitivity.



While thousands in India and the Indian community abroad have stepped up to help, it is ignored as no stories of hope, compassion, and solidarity can ever be accorded to India even during a crisis. For the most part, the media is not even making any effort to squash misinformation about vaccines or inform the public about resources in the community.

When called out for voyeurism, the typical response is to label it trolling by the right-wing/ nationalists. It's the laziest counter to any criticism and keeps folks endorsed in echo chambers. Such ignorance is second only to the comfort in that ignorance. Many journalists as 'micro-celebrities,' feel validated based on the numbers of 'likes' and 'retweets.'

Call it misery-porn, pandemic-porn, or anything else, banally, media will cash in on tragedies and then make a documentary about saving a girl child in some corner of South Asia or Africa and pat itself on the back. Even pre-COVID, umpteen western tourists routinely intrude on families performing last rites in Varanasi or toss coins up in the air for the poor to catch, and take pictures. It takes an unparalleled level of emotional vacuity and moral hypocrisy to treat death, grief, and misery as exotic entities as they happen in other cultures. If this is how folks feel better about themselves or gain some relevance, it's tough to imagine what deep dark abyss defines their core. Indeed, there's a long history of such unbridled social voyeurism and little emphasis on humanizing the harm especially about victims in 'other' settings and cultures. One could set guidelines to protect victims in India, but it won't work as there's no lucrative reason for media to be civil and humane about life and death in India.

On the COVID front, things are bad and may get worse, before they get better. I wish I could have the same confidence about the eventual improvement in news media when covering stories about India. For now, I don't, because a typical journalist seems to have taken the place of the vulture in the infamous Kevin Carter photograph.

Prof. Divya Sharma is based at the Justice and Law Administration department in the Ansell School of Business, Western Connecticut State University

The great Indian crypto conundrum, June 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 23



Srinath Sridharan

By Srinath Sridharan

Amongst all its Indian stakeholders, there are strong undercurrents, deafening official-silence and unofficial-posturing, all around. Over the past few months, the government has had its varying views & intent about crypto. The RBI has been silent about Crypto. The crypto investor community has been euphoric about the instrument and equally miffed with the Indian officialdoms behaviour. All this, when the topic of Crypto was purportedly solved last year with the Supreme Court of India lifting the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) crypto ban of 2018.

Concerns & common sense

Is it the common-man who buys Bitcoin? Or High Networth Individuals, or someone who understands technology and/or

has surplus funds to invest in it? Should we blame Crypto-investing for lack of other attractive-investment instruments currently? Moral-placarders even compare crypto to gambling! Statistically, capital markets volatility has wiped out a larger proportion of retail investors' wealth in the past and could continue to do so in the future in a free-markets scenario.

Another narrative fears that cryptos could be used for money laundering and terror financing. A mal-actor would have to be naive to try terror financing on an immutable ledger which can be seen and must be authenticated by all nodes on a blockchain! According to a report by Chainalysis, a company that specialises in cryptocurrency investigations for governments, exchanges and financial institutions, in 2020, the criminal share of all cryptocurrency activity globally fell to just 0.34 per cent (\$10.0 billion value). The report also mentions that most cryptocurrency-related crimes are ransom-ware, darknet market deals, etc.

In India, traditional physical assets like real estate and gold still account for most money laundering operations and financing mal-actors. Real estate is still not covered under the Money Laundering Act while purchasing gold does not even require Know Your Customer (KYC).

Confusion galore

Of late, the banks have not been allowing crypto transactions on their gateways. The media reports speculate that the RBI “nudged” the banks to give them “cold-shoulder” treatment.

The RBI has been reportedly working on building a central bank digital currency (CBDC), using many of the properties of cryptocurrencies including the blockchain technology. A good start is that the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) had recently made it mandatory for companies to disclose crypto trading/investments during the financial year. Whenever



the clarity comes through, if Cryptos were to-be treated under Law as “securities”, then the regulatory control will be in SEBI's court. If it's treated as currency (doubtfully so!!), then it would fall in RBI domain. (Technically Cryptocurrencies are unviable as a currency as of now, due to the massive changes in corrections and the time it takes for a transaction to get authenticated by the various nodes on the blockchain.)

“Stick no bill”

Are the current “predatory” actions of the banks against the crypto-players to be seen as “appeasing their regulator”?

Is it a dereliction of commercial agreement between banks and the crypto players?

Can the affected crypto players seek redressal from the consumer grievance committees of the bank boards (chaired by independent directors)?

Can the crypto players seek Security and Exchange Board of India's help, as most of these banks are listed-entities and the consumers as stakeholders, have right-to-recourse for detailed disclosures, with their securities-regulator?

Can they seek help and advice of the concerned ministries under #EaseofDoingBusiness?

Ostrich-head-in-the-sand syndrome of ignoring the development of digital currencies globally will be at our own (un)doing. Economically and business sentiment-wise, the price of arbitrariness of any policy or regulatory indecision is too high. A healthier policy discussion on this topic can start with sharing the draft “The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill of 2021” in public domain.

The author is an independent markets commentator

Why is the Israel-Hamas ceasefire different this time?, June 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 23



Major General S.B. Asthana

By Major General S.B. Asthana

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas after 11 days of deadly hostilities is a welcome step for the innocent people suffering casualties in the crossfire, provided all sides observe this ceasefire judiciously.

The Israel- Palestine struggle is one of the oldest struggles in the world with Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip 53 years back, interspersed with wars and conflicts at varying scale intermittently, with no signs of permanent peaceful solution so far.

This truce after the latest round of fighting, like previous wars, has ended

inconclusively, with Israel claiming heavy damage to Hamas, but unable to stop their rockets (killing 12 Israelis and over 200 injured). Hamas also claims victory, despite heavy casualties (230 Palestinians killed, over 1900 injured), facing challenges of rebuilding Gaza, poor confidence with a troubled population (58000 Palestinians fled their homes) already suffering poverty due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Gaza is controlled by Hamas (post Israeli disengagement in 2005), which also operates the militant wing and West bank with 167 enclaves of Palestinians is governed by Fatah (claiming to represent erstwhile Palestinians Liberation Organisation) amidst 230 Israeli settlements governed by Israel.

Both factions (Hamas and Fatah) have different ideologies and differences, but have formed a Palestinian Unity Government under President Mahmoud Abbas since 2014, negotiating peace through Quartlet (US, Russia, EU and UN).

The competing claims to Jerusalem, which is crucial to Christians, Jews and Palestinians is the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has repeatedly triggered incidences of violence in the past, like the present one.

Trigger for Current Crisis

The renewed violence started on 6 May, when Palestinian protests began over an anticipated decision of the Supreme Court of Israel (yet to be announced), on the eviction of six Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem, resulting in increasing skirmishes between Israelis and Palestinians in the Old City of Jerusalem.



On May 8, Palestinian Muslims streamed to the Haram al-Sharif for Ramadan prayers, in large numbers to mark the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad, considered not only the most sacred night of Ramadan, but of the whole Islamic calendar. Simultaneously, some Israeli Jews were gathering ahead of Jerusalem Day (May 10) marking Jewish control over the Old City of Jerusalem secured during the 1967 war.

The focal point of those celebrations is the Western Wall of the Temple Mount (the holiest site in Judaism), the same elevated platform that Muslims call the Haram al-Sharif. Israeli police stormed the compound of the al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam where the confrontations occurred resulting in more than 300 people, mostly Palestinians, getting injured,.

Closure of Damascus gate was another irritant. This resulted in a barrage of rockets fired by Hamas on Israel which in turn was responded to in the form of repeated air attacks by Israel on Gaza, along with other arsenal, causing heavy destruction and casualties, which continued for the last 11 days.

Internal Dynamics

This confrontation has happened at a time when there is political crises in Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel recently failed to put together a ruling coalition even after the fourth round of elections in just two years; hence lacks a popular mandate.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose term expired 12 years ago, also lacks popular mandate. He recently cancelled legislative elections, after his party was trailing badly in the polls. With leaders on both sides lacking legitimacy, any peace talks regarding such a complex situation may have little chances of success, with a risk of reckless action by either.

Moreover with the Arab population in Israel also coming out on the streets, incidences

of lynching may have the potential to ignite if the pending Supreme Court decision is one sided. The Hezbollah also came out in support of Hamas further adding complexity to the problem. The truce therefore is quite fragile.

International Reaction

During UNSC resolutions, the USA found itself isolated in backing Israel. It was therefore in a tight spot to broker peace amidst growing pressure against Israel which is being seen to be using excessive force. It also needs to be noted that after erstwhile President Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, he shifted the US embassy there and offered an unviable peace solution, which was rejected by PA, but Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to have assumed that entire Jerusalem belongs to Israel and others need to slowly vacate it. This is disastrous because from historic and religious point of view Jerusalem is non-negotiable to Christians, Jews and Palestinians, who have coexisted there since ages. Although the International community recognises Israel's right to defend itself, it does not do so at the cost of pulverising civil areas of Gaza, causing heavy civil casualties, even if it accuses Hamas of basing itself amidst population (a tactic adopted by most terrorist groups in the world).

As per the UN, the truce seemed to be brokered by Egypt and Qatar (normally accused of supporting Shia based Hamas, along with Iran). What is grossly different this time was the overreaction by the Turkish President Erdogan, trying to pose himself as the new leader of Islamic world and Pakistan voicing its opposition loudly against Israel.

This confrontation happened when Israel was improving relations with some countries of Arab world, which may suffer a temporary setback due to their objection to Israeli actions on the Haram al-Sharif. Most Arab states otherwise are hostile to Hamas, and

differentiate well between the Palestinian people and the Hamas fighters.

Future peace prospects

Fed up of insecurities, in 2007, according to a number of polls, the majority of Israelis and Palestinians, preferred the two-state solution over any other solution, as a means of resolving the conflict, which was initiated in Oslo Accords in 1993-95.

With complexities of entanglement of 167 Palestinian enclaves embedded in 203 Israeli settlements and related governance issues, it's not really practical that it may be possible for Israel to agree to vacate West Bank. I don't visualise any Israeli leadership ever agreeing to such a proposal.

Same is the case with Jerusalem. Any attempt to push out any one religious community from its religious site is bound to have serious backlash. Peaceful coexistence may not be a preferred option but seems to be the only practical option.

There is also a possibility of outside peace spoilers like Erdogan igniting religious disharmony, which must be curbed.

There have been some voices from Palestinians expecting Indian mediation as India has good relations with Israel as well as Palestine, but the issue is so complex and sensitive that current Indian policy of maintaining independent relations with both with no interference in internal affairs of either, may be the best policy for India. Considering all the factors, the current truce is a welcome step, but its longevity is questionable in light of political uncertainties on both sides and mistrust between communities.

Major General S.B. Asthana is a strategic and security analyst, a veteran Infantry General. He is the Chief Instructor, United Service Institution of India. The views expressed are personal

We can make next 30 years the best in India's history, August 1-15, 2021-Vol 1 Issue 27



Mukesh Ambani

New Delhi, July 24 (IANS): “I am supremely hopeful and confident about the Rise of New India. I can see that the spirit of India is more resurgent than ever before”, Mukesh Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) wrote in Times of India.

Ambani said India and the world changed dramatically at the beginning of the 1990s. Communist Soviet Union collapsed. The cold war ended. And India embarked on a bold new path of economic reforms. “Thirty years later, the global order is changing fundamentally yet again. The speed, scale and substance of this change are unprecedented, even unpredictable. Yet, one thing is absolutely predictable: India's time has come”, Ambani said.

“Destiny and Drive is making the 21st century's favourite nation ready for a great leap forward. India stands at the doorstep of prosperity that is both significant and inclusive, and of delivering all-round human development through the democratic route. With faith in our potential, confidence in our collective capabilities, and unity in action, we can exceed the world's expectations,” Ambani wrote.

“My source of optimism is our recent past. In 1991, India showed foresight and courage in changing both the direction and determinants of its economy. These reforms liberated India's entrepreneurial energy and inaugurated an era of fast-paced growth”, Ambani said.

Ambani said the results are for all to see. India's GDP of \$266 billion in 1991 has grown by over ten times. India's economy has become the fifth largest in the world. Poverty rates have halved, despite the population having risen from 880 million to 1.38 billion. Key infrastructure has improved beyond recognition. Our expressways, airports and ports are now world-class, and so are many of our industries and services. “No young Indian today would believe that people had to wait for years to get a telephone or a gas connection, or that businesses had to seek government's permission to buy a computer”, Ambani said.

“India transformed from an economy of scarcity in 1991 into an economy of sufficiency in 2021. Now, India has to transform itself into an economy of sustainable abundance and equitable prosperity for all by 2051. In India, equity will be at the heart of our collective prosperity”, Ambani said.

“With our accomplishments over the past three decades, we have earned the right to dream big. What can be a greater dream than to be able to celebrate the centenary of our independence in 2047 by making India one of the world's three wealthiest nations, on par with America and China? Is it too tall an ambition to pursue? No. My visionary father Dhirubhai Ambani, who was one of the earliest advocates of economic liberalisation in the 1980s, used to tell me – “To think small is unbecoming of an Indian”, Ambani said.

How can we realise this ambition? By following our own unique Indian and atmanirbhar model of wealth creation, while cooperating with, and learning all the right lessons from, the rest of the world. Ambani has presented five broad ideas.

First, so far economic reforms have benefited Indians unevenly. The disparity is neither acceptable nor sustainable. Therefore, the Indian model of development should focus on creating wealth for the people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Our greatest advantage lies in India's continent-sized domestic market, which is still largely untapped. Our economy will begin to witness miraculous growth when we create a middle class of one billion people with rising incomes. In demographic terms, this will amount to adding all of the USA and Europe combined to the current size of the Indian market. When so many people are enabled to fulfil their aspirations for a better life, they will set in motion a virtuous cycle of consumption and production. This will cause an exponential rise in

young entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs. Investors and businesses from around the world will want to participate in this humongous India Opportunity.

To achieve this might have seemed impossible in the past. Not so now.

Hence, my second idea. This is the age of technological disruption and acceleration. The world will witness more changes over the next 30 years than seen in the previous 300 years. After losing out in the first two Industrial Revolutions, and catching up on the third, India now has an opportunity to lead the Fourth Industrial Revolution. By speedily deploying its technologies, our entrepreneurs can achieve quantum increases in productivity and efficiency. This will transform not only our large industries and services, but also agriculture, MSMEs, construction, renewable energy, arts and crafts, etc. These are precisely the areas with the highest potential to create large-scale employment, which is India's most pressing need. These technologies can help us achieve quality, affordability and equity in education, healthcare and housing at scale – a dire necessity since our population is expected to rise to 1.64 billion by 2050. They also have the power to reverse degradation of the environment and make it safe for all. In short, technology-led development is the surest way to create a better India and a more equal India for every Indian.

Third, to turn these exciting possibilities into realities, India should become a nation of innovators. Traditionally, India has been highly innovative in low-tech activities. Now we have to replicate this prowess using hi-tech tools so that they become facilitators of faster growth. Innovation will help our entrepreneurs provide high-quality, yet extremely affordable, services and solutions to meet India's needs. The same can also be offered to export markets, where they will fetch higher value. Wealth will thus migrate from developed countries to India. Of course, a critical requirement to achieve this goal is rapid re-skilling of our workforce and reforms in our education system to make our children and youth future-ready. Specifically, we must expeditiously build world-class universities and research centres and also upgrade existing institutions to serve India's 21st century needs.

Fourth, we need to change our understanding of wealth and the ways to pursue it and bring it in alignment with India's ancient wisdom rooted in the primacy of empathy. For too long, we have been measuring wealth only in personal and financial terms. We have neglected the truth that India's true wealth lies in achieving ‘Education for All’, ‘Health for All’, ‘Employment for All’, ‘Good Housing for All’, ‘Environmental Safety for All’, ‘Sports, Culture and Arts for All’ and ‘Opportunities for Self-Development for All’ – in short, ‘Happiness for All’. To attain these redefined parameters of prosperity, we have to bring care and empathy to the core of everything we do in business and society.

Furthermore, our concept of prosperity of the people has to be extended to the prosperity of our planet. After all, India is called upon to play a leading role in realising the daunting 2050 Climate Action goals. Therefore, at Reliance our newest and most ambitious business initiative is aimed at offering ‘Affordable Green Energy’ solutions to India and the global market.

Fifth, the Indian model of wealth creation requires reconceptualization of entrepreneurship itself. Tomorrow's successful businesses will be partnerships and platforms, which promote both healthy competition and fruitful collaboration. Moreover, running enterprises of the future cannot be a solo play. Ambani said at Reliance, we see it is orchestration of professionals and employees with an ‘ownership mindset’, joined by partners, and investors, all working for the common goal of what Mahatma Gandhi called ‘Antyodaya’ (welfare and wellbeing of the last man).

“Having begun my own business career when India was still in the pre-reforms era, I am supremely hopeful and confident about the Rise of New India. I can see that the spirit of India is more resurgent than ever before”, Ambani said.

“Let us accelerate our nation's forward march with positivity, purpose and passion. True, the road ahead is not easy. But let us not be deterred by unexpected and temporary problems, such as the pandemic, or distracted by unimportant issues that dissipate our energies. We have the opportunity, also a responsibility towards our children and youth, to make the next thirty years the best ever in independent India's history”, Ambani added.

Bharatvarsh: Emergence of a global leader with a human touch, August 16-31, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 4



Ashutosh Misra

By Dr. Ashutosh Misra

On 15th August 2021, India celebrates its 75th Independence Day—a day to celebrate and reflect where the 1.35 billion strong nation stands.

As the largest democracy, India has witnessed tectonic political shifts in recent years. The rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India in 2014 has been seen by his detractors as the emergence of the far-right in Indian politics, and the marginalization of liberal/moderate parties. The opposition, civil liberties groups and international media have constantly charged the Modi government with ‘communalization of politics’,

‘shrinking space for dissent’, and ‘erosion of democratic freedoms’. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals a contrarian and promising picture.

Effecting Historic Legislations

Since 2014, the Indian Parliament has passed several historic legislations such as the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (providing sanctuary to minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh), Triple Talaq Act 2019 (making instant Triple Talaq a criminal offence amongst Muslims), Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019 (abrogating Article 35A and amending Article 370 to alter J&K’s special status). In 2019, the landmark Supreme Court verdict also paved the way for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya (ending a 500-year-old dispute) and the post-verdict communal harmony is a welcome news for a country with a bloody communal history.

Augmenting Human Development

Human development indices have witnessed significant improvement too. The under-privileged and women, especially, in the rural and semi-urban areas have benefitted from schemes such as Ujjwala scheme (providing LPG connections to Below Poverty Line families at subsidized rates), Swachh Bharata Mission (Clean India campaign constructing over 80 million toilets), PM’s Awaas scheme (affordable housing for urban and rural poor), Jan Dhan Yojna (opening bank accounts with Rs 0 for direct transfer of financial sustenance), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (financially self-reliant education schemes for girls), PM Mudra scheme (loan to small businesses up to 1 million rupees), Atal Pension scheme (monthly pension for people in the unorganized sector aged between 18-40), PM Jyoti Bima scheme (life insurance of Rs. 200,000 for people between 18-50), Ujala scheme (low priced LED bulbs) and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (free ration up to 6 kgs per person) at the heels of Covid-19 outbreak, reaching over 800 million.

Boosting Economic Growth

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Modi government had announced plans to make India a US\$ 5 trillion economy by 2025, which appears very challenging now in the current global economic scenario. But, India offers a vast array of opportunities for global investors, particularly in infrastructure, energy and cost-effective manufacturing in automobile, electronics, telecommunications, white goods and pharmaceuticals to list a few. As a part of India’s self-reliant pursuit, PM Modi’s Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) initiative saw a colossal \$266 billion #VocalForLocal stimulus package, that constituted 10% of the GDP. The stimulus was aimed at supporting the cottage industries and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The International Monetary Fund’s Global Economic Outlook growth projection in July 2021 has forecast India’s economic ground to be touching 9.5 % and 8.5% in 2021 and 2022 respectively, surpassing China’s growth of 8.1% and 5.7%, for the same period. As the Covid pandemic continues to batter global economies, India has become key to global economic revival. Several world economies, including American, Japanese, German, British, South Korean and Australian are diverting and diversifying their businesses from China to India. Australian Senator Simon Birmingham, who led a trade delegation to New Delhi in February 2020, had said, “Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India.”

Scaling Global Rankings

India has been elevated to 63rd in ‘doing business with ease’ rankings in the World Bank’s Doing Business 2020 Report, making it the sixth fastest growing economy, surpassing France. It is now the 9th largest recipient of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) destinations in 2019 by the World Investment Report 2020 of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The total FDI into India showed an 18% jump from US\$ 62 billion in 2018-19 to US\$ 73.45 billion in 2019-20, in the steel, digital and energy sectors. The report lists professional services and digital economy as some of the most sought-after industries in India for venture capital firms and technological companies. Since 2000, the highest cumulative investments have been recorded in the services sector, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading and construction development.

As per the Global Innovation Index (GII) published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), India ranks 52nd in innovation, improving from 57th in 2018, and topping the list amongst the Central and South Asian nations. India also ranks 77th in the input pillar “Institutions” that measure political, regulatory and business environments;



and 53rd in the input pillar “Human Capital and Research” which is based on education level, tertiary education and research and development. India currently ranks 7th in the “Number of Graduates in Science and Engineering” and 35th in “Research and Development”.

When it comes to infrastructure measures which include the performance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), general infrastructure and ecological sustainability, India ranks 17th. With regard to market sophistication, India ranks 20th both, in terms of “Ease of Getting Credit” and “Market Capitalization”; 3rd in “Domestic Market Sale” and 6th in “Ease of Protecting Minority Investors”. In business sophistication, India has jumped from 51st in 2018 to 27th rank, and 23rd in “University/ Industry Research Collaboration”, something that should interest the academic stakeholders in Australia. India is a major success in Knowledge and Technology and ranks 1st in ICT services exports (as a percentage of total exports) and also ranks 22nd in the list of “Exporter of Creative Goods”.

Energizing Lives

As the third largest consumer of electricity in the world, with an installed power capacity reaching 345.49 GW as of July 2018, India’s power sector requires an 8% growth per annum. With its burgeoning population and rapidly growing industrialization, the rising power demand from 1160.1 TWh in 2016 to 1,894.7 TWh in 2022, will be covered under new schemes like the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana, Integrated Power Development Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya). These schemes are open for 100% FDI.

India’s power sources include thermal (coal & gas, 64%), hydro (13%) and nuclear (across 7 plants, 2%), and an increasing share of renewables (21%). India’s Draft National Energy Policy also is looking at making India self-sufficient in thermal coal by 2037. India’s renewable energy (RE) target set at 175 GW [comprising wind (60 GW) and solar (100 GW)] by 2022, is due for a six-fold jump by 2030 from 70.65 GW in 2017, largely due to declining tariff and equipment costs and increasing regulatory support for RE procurement. Wind energy is another promising sector in which India ranks 4th globally. But India’s RE sector requires state of art load and weather forecasting tools and facilities, energy storage system, improved transmission capacity and high-quality solar panels. Reflecting the rising global trends, in India the Electric Vehicles sales is projected to grow exponentially and achieve 100% vehicle sale electrification by 2030.

Defending the Global Order

As the world’s largest democracy, India has deepened its ties with the West in recent years, including the G-7 members to defend “shared values from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism, disinformation and infodemics and economic coercion,” says P. Harish, Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (economic relations). As a special invitee at the G-7 Summit, PM Modi delivered his address in the “Open Societies and Open Economies” session championing the “One Earth, One Health” approach aimed at forging global unity and solidarity to counter the pandemic. India has also spread its bet and adopted a bilateral, quadrilateral (India-Australia-US-Japan) and trilateral (India-Australia-Indonesia; and India-Australia-Japan) approach to shape the regional security architecture. The entry of Australia in the Malabar exercise in November 2020 is testimony to fresh thinking that has germinated in New Delhi, Canberra, Washington and Tokyo in recent months in formalizing the Quad. India’s External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has expressed that India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has become the fulcrum of the Quad’s new collective avatar for ensuring a safe, open and secure Indo-Pacific regional architecture.

Helping the Global Community

If the Covid pandemic has debilitated lives, livelihood and the economy, causing over 430,000 deaths in India, it has seen India rise in its global leadership. What the health experts and environmentalists are championing now, Ancient India had understood centuries back—nature worship. The respect for nature is rooted in the Indus Valley Civilization. ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः is a Sanskrit hymn taken from the ancient scripture, Vedas (Atharva Veda) which means “My mother is the earth and I am her son”.

Not surprisingly, India’s counter-pandemic global response has been driven by its Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam (world is one family) philosophy. In the early days of the pandemic, PM Modi held marathon telephone conversations with a large number of the heads of states to discuss joint counter-pandemic strategies. In fact, on 26 February 2020, a special Indian Air Force flight had carried 15 tons of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to Wuhan at the request of President Xi Jinping. In April 2020, PM Modi spoke with the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) foreign ministers to offer

India's anti-Covid measures including, Arogya Setu disease surveillance portal. India also convened a South Asian emergency meeting in which PM Modi suggested setting up a regional relief fund and offered Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief fund (PM Cares), SAARC Covid-19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX) and pharmaceutical assistance. India also supplied Hydroxychloroquine and anti-pyretic paracetamol to over 150 countries, including 25 nations in Africa alone, and grants-in-aid valued at around Rupees 80 crore to 82 countries.

In 2021, the Serum Institute of India developed the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, producing 2.5 million doses per day, enabling its neighbours and 25 other countries to vaccinate their population. Additionally, over 200 million doses were sent to the World Health Organization, for distribution in the poorer countries. Yaroslav Trofimov and

Bellman wrote a piece in the Wall Street Journal titled, "In Covid-19 Diplomacy, India Emerges as a Vaccine Superpower". The New York Times wrote, "India, the unmatched vaccine manufacturing power, is giving away millions of doses to neighbours, friendly and estranged", and "Acting East. Acting Fast," is how Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's foreign minister described India's Vaccine Maitri diplomacy driven by the Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam philosophy.

In sum, the world wants India to succeed. How India now steadfastly defends its borders, tirelessly delivers services and goods to 1.5 billion people and also helps the global community should make all proud on India's 75th Independence Day.

The author is the CEO of the Institute for Australia India Engagement, Brisbane and Editor-in-Chief, India News Australia. Views expressed are personal.

Time for a progressive law on online gaming-lessons from Tamil Nadu, September 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 5



Abhishek Ranjna

By Abhishek Ranjana

The Tamil Nadu government played to the gallery, when in November 2020, in the backdrop of the Assembly elections, it decided to pass an ordinance banning online games.

In a single stroke of the pen, the ordinance banned all online games, even saying that "games of mere skill, if played for wager, bet, money or other stake" cannot be allowed in the state.

Three billion people play online games across the world -- this is about 40 percent of the world population. They play all types of games -- racing, sports, action, puzzle, quiz, chess to card games. It is not possible

to club lakhs of games that exist in the world under one category.

Of the three billion people who play online games, there is a good percentage of people who pay entry fees to participate in online skill tournaments or enter tournaments to earn prizes, and these were the people being deprived by the Tamil Nadu law.

The Madras High Court in its recent judgement rightfully held that the Tamil Nadu ordinance was excessive and disproportionate to the object sought to be achieved. It also held the law as violative of Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, which guarantees all citizens the right to practice any profession or carry on any occupation, trade or business.

The Madras High Court thus upheld what the Supreme Court and several high courts have affirmed in numerous judgments that games of skill, whether online or offline, is a perfectly legitimate activity.

Let's examine the rationale put behind by the Tamil Nadu government and also by the critics of online gaming. Some say in online games, players end up spending a lot of money for buy-in and add-ons. Sure, compulsive shoppers end up overspending on Amazon and Flipkart, but that should not be a reason for banning them.

Many responsible gaming apps have best practices that limit the amount of money one can use to play these games. Also, there are regular notifications to warn players if they are spending too much money. Regulation can be introduced to ensure all gaming apps follow this rule.

The second argument that is put forth is that gamers spend too much time on the gaming platform. This could be true not just for skill gaming apps, but for any online game like Free Fire or Battlegrounds Mobile India, or streaming platforms like YouTube or Netflix.

However, this is an issue that needs to be addressed and legitimate gaming apps have warning notifications if a person is spending too much time playing games and this should be a standard feature across all gaming platforms.

The third argument is that innocent people are being cheated. While this looks like a general statement, the issue really is of fair play. All reputed platforms usually obtain



random number generators, and no-bots certificates from global firms, to ensure that a user is not playing against a computer and maintain fairness and transparency.

The specifics for each operator may vary, but all Indian operators should ensure that the platforms are safe, secure, and fair and they are constantly innovating on this end.

Some critics say that these games are played by kids of all ages. This is a malicious and misleading argument as far as skill gaming platforms are concerned. There are several games that are meant for kids - games that are meant to aid their language, comprehension, maths etc.

These are different from skill gaming apps. All legitimate gaming apps in India compulsorily mandate that only adults can play the games, and this is being done through KYC checks.

It is important to distinguish between games of chance and games of skill. What are games of chance? These are games where luck is the most important factor for winning. These are pure luck games like instant win scratch cards, online bingo, online lottery, casino gaming, teen patti, etc. Games of skill on the other hand involve significant playing skill like strategy, mental or physical skill.

While the Madras High Court judgement makes it abundantly clear about the validity of online games of skill, it is an opportunity for various state governments to make progressive laws relating to online gaming. Not just the Tamil Nadu government, but Andhra and Telangana governments that have adopted blanket ban ordinances, must examine all aspects before framing a new law that considers the interest of all stakeholders -- gamers, industry, gaming tech sector and e-sports sector.

More importantly, the law makers should not be misled by ill-informed activists and have detailed discussions with experts and industry bodies. What is important is that the law should weed out all unscrupulous players and only promote and encourage skill gaming platforms that adhere to the highest standards of ethics and fair play.

Countries like France and the United States are inviting game developers from across the world to set up operations in their countries. They want to develop their countries as the gaming hub of the world. India and states like Tamil Nadu can take a clue and work towards recognising gaming which is now the biggest social platform, the biggest pastime and one of the biggest sports disciplines in the world.

(The writer is the Founder of Policy Matrix, a public policy think-tank based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

Taliban 2.0: Dark times ahead for women, September 16-30, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 6



Ishani Naskar

By Prof. Ishani Naskar

On August 15, 2021, the world watched in sheer incredulity and dismay as the Taliban stormed back into power and took over Kabul. The return of the Taliban has laid bare the myopic policy of the United States and the failure of the western coalition to understand the Afghan system as it was, as it is. One of the outcomes of this imbroglio is the fate of the women of the country. Lest this piece falls into the trap of projecting the situation of Afghan women under the resurgent Taliban regime in a binary framework, it will take a cursory look at the Afghan system vis-a-vis the position of women.

The Afghan society is a multi ethnic society with Islam as the predominant religion.



Majority ethnic group are the Pashtuns who are Sunni Muslims. Minority religious communities include the Shias, the Indic religious communities; ethnic communities - Hazaras, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Aimags, Nuristanis, Pashais to name a few. What is important is that the basic social matrix of the land is that of a tribal society wherein honour is a very critical component of social status of the various groups. Women constitute the key ingredient of honour and that is reflected in the way the purdah relegates them into social

oblivion. They are segregated from their male counterparts and confined to the domestic as a part of the drive to see them as protected and their honour preserved. It is thus upon the men to interpret honour and limit women through certain proscriptions. However the purdah system is not strictly practised by other ethnic minorities like the Kuchi women or the women from the Shiite Hazaras or the Tajiks.

Throughout Afghan history, tribal mores and religious authority have challenged the central authority; it applies particularly to the women of the country. Therefore every time there were attempts to introduce reforms to liberalise the ‘protected’ women of the country – introduce education for them, do away with the purdah, allow them to move without being chaperoned by a male member, give them proper justice for domestic issues, and most important, bring them into the professional sphere, there was fierce opposition from both tribal systems and religious authorities. Nonetheless, the reforms of the 1920s, the 1950s and particularly during the communist regime of the 1970s emancipated and empowered women through constitution but the constituency remained confined primarily to the urban young women. A substantial section of the Afghan society remained as feudal, as tribal and as fiercely resistant and resilient to women’s advancement as before.

Further, the fate of Afghan women was sealed in 1992 with the establishment of the Islamic State of Afghanistan; they were required to use hijab (the head scarf) but could continue with their respective professions. During the mujahedeen period of violence and chaos, women were subjected to rape, forced marriages and torture. They did not enjoy equal rights economically or legally. The point here is that the Taliban took the responsibility of a society where women were already objectified, violated and repressed drawing from tribal cultural traits and religious beliefs. They were never equated to men, they barely have been. Talibs with no exposure to liberal systems, deeply ingrained in Quaranic discourse and the cadre largely belonging to rural-peripheral background believed in the brutal use of force to enforce a Sharia-based administration. In the name of discipline and moral rigour, Taliban administration used force and crude penalizing methods to provide justice and prevent crimes within society. During the first phase of the Taliban rule, Human Rights Watch have taken note of the systematic violations against women and girls in complete contradiction to the rights provided to them in the Afghan Constitution. Afghan women have felt the heat of the Taliban as they were de-professionalised, deprived of education, forced to take on the regimented dress codes, disallowed independent movements that affected their ability to get access to health care and other basic amenities. Women of minority communities were particularly subjected to persecution and humiliation.

In the post Taliban period, the elected governments have tried to bring about a political system that reinstituted women’s rights, gave them education and brought them to the forefront of professional life. Women became doctors, professors and teachers, and took responsible positions in the government including political representation in Parliament and even served in the army and participated in games. Again, urban areas like Kabul reflected this empowerment of women but there remains hardly any doubt that large rural areas did not see much of this transformation. As rural areas saw the incremental return of the Taliban forces, the sting of the harsh dictums of regulation and corporal punishments were back and women were again the subjects of religious regimentation. Yet, there was little reprieve because of the lack of alternative administrative or enforcement agencies.

One may wonder why women are of such concern to the Taliban? Reasons are far more practical than ideological. A large section of the recruits of the Taliban are young men and boys from rural background with least exposure; the Taliban leadership fears that softening stance on women will lead to alienation of that large rural base and create

indiscipline within rank and file. One must also realise that the Taliban emerged as a regulatory force not an administrative force. With no certain idea about administration, their policy towards government was also a policy to deal with women (and men of course). Women were seen as vulnerable and were subjects of the prohibitive Islamic policies. In their first phase, development was not high on the cards. The Taliban preferred a rentier economy and depended on a few outside agencies and a state or two like Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arabia for trade and recognition. Thus they were not bothered about whether the international community condemned their policies towards women; in any case the western world was not seriously looking at the issue.

However in the recent past there have been few researches in the West that have made surprising revelations of the supportive role of women to the Taliban regime. Limited research has revealed that Taliban did employ some women to act as informers, domestic supervisors (to see that the households ran according to the Taliban directives) and control female prisoners. Whether the reason for such a supportive role was ideological or any other, data on that is very limited, but scholars like Povey and De Leede have indicated that there may be some subtle ideological support for these radical Islamists. Other works like that by Cristiansson brought to light the role of women (particularly women folk of Taliban fighters) in support of the recent Taliban insurgency vis-a-vis international forces, but that was more to protect family. They may have acted as informers, carried weapons secretly and even taken care of the wounded, but again this needs further intellectual probing. But this is not entirely surprising considering the fact that women have played supportive roles to the Mujahedeen fighters during Soviet control. It was believed that the role of martyrs’ mothers has encouraged the movement against the infidels. Yet the Taliban do not entertain the idea of women as frontline fighters and would prefer to confine them within the domestic space.

Afghan women have also put up resistance against their silencing and have learnt to deal with various adversities. Indigenous support systems have evolved around families and communities while the men have been busy fighting throughout the modern history of Afghanistan, particularly the contemporary times. The decades between the Taliban regimes have empowered women enough and now in Kabul, they are marching for their rights. How will the Taliban respond? There is a view that Taliban has had a better international exposure and has seasoned politicians and statesmen who can think differently. A work by Osman and Gopal indicated a very subtle change towards women in realising the need to provide education in order to engage them in the fields of women and child care. However these soft views are constantly outbalanced by the hard liners and the field commanders who are trained to regulate and dominate. Notwithstanding the views within the Taliban that the Ministry of Vice and Virtue had been too harsh and excessive regarding women, it continues to remain in the administration.

The fact is that the new Taliban or Taliban 2.0 has no breakthrough on how to modulate its perspective on women within the Sharia framework. Therefore much of the verbal commitments about women are directed towards the international audience in search of recognition rather than out of true realisation about treating women as equals. Discounts towards women in terms of education, employment and basic freedoms would be at best cosmetic and they shall never be a part of government. Women of the land will either have to flee or struggle to survive; such fear and scepticism grips women’s rights activists in Afghanistan but herein is the catch. Unlike the popular understanding, Afghan women are not a monolith and they do not share a common platform(s) vis-a-vis the Taliban regime. Only time will tell how this amorphous approach of the Taliban towards Afghan women will unfold and how they will react to it.

Prof. Ishani Naskar is based at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India

The hocus pocus about Quad and AUKUS, October 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 7



Saeed Naqvi

By Saeed Naqvi

Robert Blackwill, US ambassador at the time of anti-terror fireworks over Afghanistan, had established a tradition of seating guests at lunch around a circular table, where he grandly held forth, initiating a discussion. “Imagine I am Henry Kissinger” would be one of his opening gambits. An idea was tossed up. A discussion followed. The one who spoke the most, ate the least, because all plates were removed in one swoop.

On one such occasion, before soup was served, the ambassador announced with

considerable satisfaction that Pakistan’s President Musharraf had decided to join the global war on terror as the frontline state.

Seated to my right the late Pranab Mukherjee, was agitated. He whispered his anger to me. It was uncanny. What he whispered was exactly the question shaping up in my mind. I raised my hand: “You are aware that New Delhi had complained consistently about cross-border terrorism from Pakistan particularly since 1989.” Pranab Da (as Mukherjee was affectionately addressed) completed my question in his typical arrangement of words: “It is most worrying no doubt -- you now have Pakistan as the frontline state in your war against terror?” pause. “They perpetrate terror against this country.”

Blackwill spoke volumes in two brief sentences:

“Musharraf has joined us in our global war on terror. What you are talking about is your old regional quarrel.” Juxtapose this with the Quad-AUKUS equation.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as Prime Minister, had hosted President Bill Clinton for five full days in January 2000, just the previous year. Clinton spent just five hours in Islamabad, mostly chastising Musharraf for disrupting regional peace since Kargil. New Delhi was in seventh



heaven. Terms of endearment with Washington had radically altered.

In a little over a year, had George W Bush reversed that equation? Pakistan was incorporated into the global war on terror even as New Delhi cried foul. Pakistan was in the ‘A’ team against terror; we were not.

Likewise, there is this idea of Quad in which New Delhi is such an enthusiastic participant. Australians and the Japanese did, frequently, vent their scepticism, invested as they were in the Chinese economy. After the American debacle in Kabul, however, Tokyo’s misgivings on Quad were all over the Japanese media. The haemorrhage had to be forestalled.

With the suddenness of revelation came the announcement of AUKUS (Australia, UK, US), the powerful military alliance in the Indo-Pacific of which India alas, is not a partner. So, New Delhi is trying to pack content into an abruptly devalued Quad. Did Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s photograph with Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on the margins of the UNGA, flatter New Delhi? Pardon my complexes, does not a leader wearing AUKUS plus Quad badges dwarf the one with a frayed Quad pinned to the lapel? I would not go as far as the wag who takes the uncharitable view that the US takes India for granted exactly as secular political parties regard the Muslim vote: where else can they go?

AUKUS must have been in the works for some time but it was sprung upon the world

when the US felt the earth move from beneath its feet in Kabul. The furious response from France only disguises anger in the EU which is talking of security outside NATO. That AUKUS is a purely Anglophone grouping should not be a surprise. Games have been played before to keep some clubs racially segregated.

For instance, when the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 placed a question mark on the need for NATO, Margaret Thatcher, then on a trip to Helsinki, was asked by a reporter: Now that the Soviet threat has gone, what was the justification for Britain's nuclear deterrent?

Thatcher shot back, "We still have a problem in the Middle East." Thereafter, along with George Bush the senior, she began to put together "a coalition of the willing" ostensibly to oust Saddam Hussain from Kuwait. Saddam-in-Kuwait was the ignition point, not the larger perspective against which Operation Desert Storm of 1991 was designed.

Anglophone dominance of the world order since World War II, faced a challenge. Soviet collapse had brought about a reunification of Germany. This at a time when the Japanese economy was booming. It was easy to raise the spectre of AXIS, without actually mentioning the 'A' word.

France, always ready with its own compass to navigate world affairs, initially dragged its feet on the coalition led by US and UK. President Francois Mitterrand was among the last to join the "coalition of the willing". It was the biggest military coalition since 1945 -- a grouping of 39 countries. Given their obsession, Pundits may be interested to know that

Pakistan was part of that coalition.

As one who covered the story from Baghdad, I am possibly the only Indian witness who can confirm that the show was run exclusively by the US and Britain. There were two separate press briefings, for the US and British media by their respective spokesmen. French journalists, like the lonesome me, were on the outside. It may be added in parenthesis, that the British media on this occasion were the poor cousins. From the terrace of the Al Rashied hotel, Peter Arnett of CNN inaugurated what came to be known as the global media. The war was brought live into the world's drawing rooms. John Simpson of the BBC, by comparison, cut a sorry figure, walking around with a satellite telephone. It was only after being beaten by CNN during Operation Desert Storm that the BBC World Service TV was launched.

To revert to AUKUS, yes, the French fury is understandable. Not only was a \$90 billion submarine order being stolen, but an Anglophone dominated world order was being perpetuated. This is what infuriated President Emmanuel Macron. It just so happens that the turn of events has also provided Macron with an occasion to fall back on a de Gaulle style nationalism just when his ratings are plummeting and all manner of candidates are tossing their hats in the ring for the next elections.

Saeed Naqvi is a senior commentator on political and diplomatic issues. The views expressed are personal. He can be reached on saeednaqvi@hotmail.com

Liberal democracies Australia and India: A comparative constitutional glance at rights, Nov 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9



Shaun Star



Arindam Bharadwaj

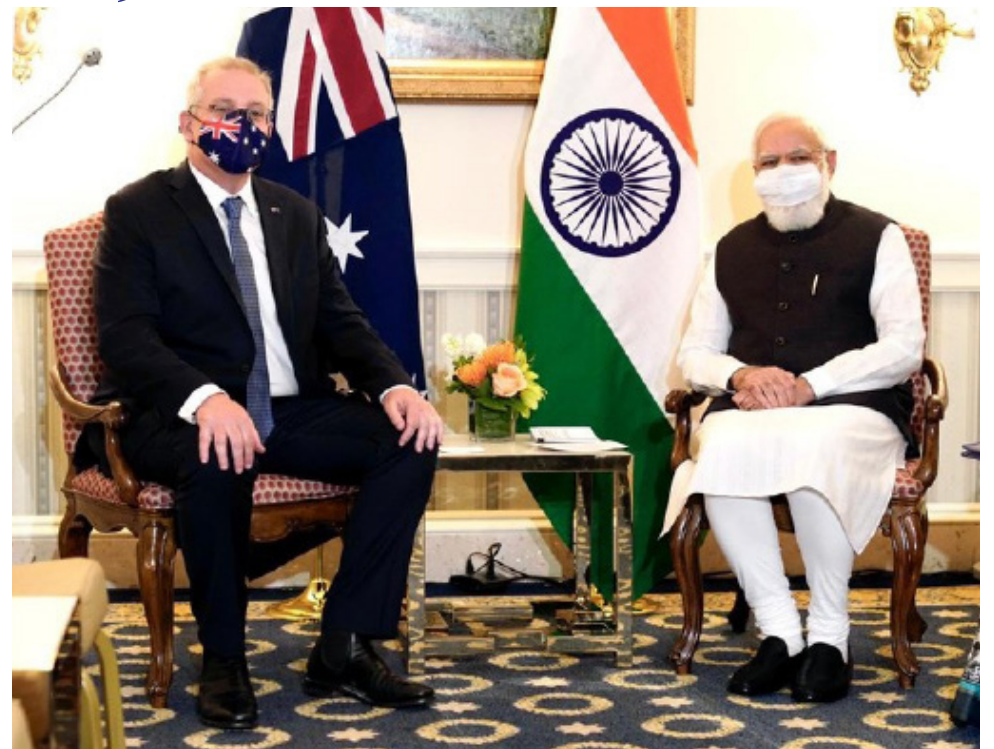
By Prof. Shaun Star and Mr Arindam Bharadwaj

The Australian and the Indian legal systems share much in common given their shared colonial history. In both jurisdictions, the principles of federalism, rule of law and the separation of powers are central to their constitutional jurisprudence. The Constitution is the fundamental legal document in both India and Australia, establishing the structure and the operation of government, as well as defining the scope of the rights of the governed. All laws in both jurisdictions derive their validity from the respective constitutions. Both India and Australia have promoted the rule of law and judicial independence as strong features of constitutionalism.

It is the protection of fundamental rights where the Constitutions of India and Australia differ significantly. In India, fundamental rights are enshrined under Part III of the Constitution. Part III of the Indian Constitution classifies the Fundamental Rights under six groups; namely: (a) Right to equality; (b) Right to particular freedoms; (c) Right against exploitation; (d) Right to freedom of religion; (e) Cultural and Educational Rights; (f) Right to property; (g) Right to constitutional remedies. In contrast, Australia has very few express provisions protecting the rights of individuals. The Australian Constitution explicitly guarantees four constitutional rights namely a right to trial by jury in certain Commonwealth trials, a right to freedom of religion, freedom of movement across state lines and certain protections against the acquisition of property by the Commonwealth. Though, the High Court of Australia has interpreted the structure and content of the Constitution to include some implied protections for individuals as well.

Despite several similarities between the Indian and the Australian Constitution, it is clear that the drafters of the respective Constitutions, as well as the judiciaries from the constitutional benches of both countries have adopted contrasting approaches to constitutional protections of human rights. There are several reasons that can be attributed to this divergent approach, and we briefly outline four key reasons here. The first and most obvious point of distinction is the population and demography of each country. Michael Kirby in his book review of Shaun Star (ed), Australia and India: A Comparative Overview of Law and Legal Practice notes that, "... [a]lthough in recent decades Australia has embraced the principle of multiculturalism, in India it is an imperative feature of the law, if it is to serve the hugely different communities that make up the Indian nation.' The fact that India's Constitution is secular in nature but India's population is so diverse, necessitates constitutional guarantees to protect human rights.

Second, the framers of the Indian Constitution had the benefit of being able to consider 50 years of Australia's (and other jurisdictions') constitutional jurisprudence before finalising their own Constitution. Third, it is much easier to amend India's Constitution as only a Parliamentary majority is required and not a referendum, as is the case in Australia. As of now a total of 105 constitutional amendments have passed in India since 1950 and



only 8 have passed in Australia since 1901. As a consequence, Australia's Constitution has remained largely static, whereas the Indian Legislature has enshrined additional rights into the Constitution in recent decades. Lastly, it is the approach taken by the apex courts of Australia and India when interpreting fundamental rights under the respective Constitutions which can be further contrasted. The Supreme Court of India evolved from its early positivist outlook into an activist outlook over the last few decades and expanded the rights of the people through liberal interpretation of the constitutional provisions. In contrast, the High Court of Australia has recognised very few implied rights, all of which are closely connected to the idea of a responsible and representative government, such as the freedom of political communication, rights of association, and universal access to the franchise.

In summary, India's Constitution is more amenable to change with changing times as opposed to the Australian Constitution. In addition, the Supreme Court of India's liberal approach to the interpretation and development of fundamental rights means that India has adopted much stronger constitutional protections of human rights than Australia. To remedy the lack of constitutional protections, commentators have suggested that Australia should enact a constitutional Bill of Rights in order to protect a range of fundamental and human rights.

Despite the contrast, both Australia and India, being two great democracies, share much in common given the British Colonial history and modern bilateral ties. Time and again, Australian laws have influenced the judicial interpretation of Indian laws and vice versa and have significantly contributed towards confronting common legal issues. It is imperative that Australia and India further strengthen their ties and learn from each other to help bridge the gaps in their respective legal systems with respect to the protection of constitutional rights and guarantees.

For an in-depth discussion on the protection of human rights and constitutional guarantees in the Australian and Indian constitutions see: Shaun Star & Arindam Bharadwaj (2021) "Constitutional rights and guarantees: the contrasting approaches of Australia and India", The International Journal of Human Rights, DOI: 10.1080/13642987.2021.1954618

Prof. Shaun Star is the Director of the Centre for India Australia Studies at O.P. Jindal University, and Associate Dean and Associate Professor at Jindal Global Law School.

Arindam Bharadwaj is an alumnus of Jindal Global Law School, an MSc Candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a Research Assistant at the Centre for India Australia Studies.

Chasing CECA: Australia and India now mean business, Nov 1-15, 2021-Vol 2 Issue 9



Ashutosh Misra

By Dr. Ashutosh Misra

Rejuvenated by the former Prime Minister Tony Abbott's visit to India as Australia's special envoy, bilateral negotiations to ink the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) have gained considerable momentum. Thanks to in-depth discussions that transpired between India's Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs and Food, and Public Distribution and Textiles Piyush Goyal and Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Dan Tehan MP in New Delhi in early October.

The debate over whether or not the Peter Varghese report required a new policy-approach in the context of rapidly altered bilateral, strategic and international circumstances has been answered by discussions between the two ministers. While much of the recommendations of the Peter Varghese report still hold ground, there certainly is a need to recalibrate

our bilateral business and trade strategies and diplomatic engagements. The much-awaited India's Australia Strategy led by former Indian Secretary (East) Anil Wadhwa has come at the right time and covers much of the period since the covid outbreak. In that sense it addresses opportunities and challenges, not covered in the Varghese report. Commissioned by the Confederation of Indian Industries, in conjunction with KPMG and the Ministry of External Affairs, Anil Wadhwa's Australia strategy was launched on 18 December 2020 in New Delhi. Speaking at the launch of the strategy report entitled, "Enhancing India Australia Bilateral Economic and Trade Relationship", Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry and Railways, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, "India's opening up of engagement and activities with Australia is a great morale booster for the entire world, especially during the current crisis." The report complements the Peter Varghese led report, "An India Economic Strategy to 2035: Navigating from potential to Delivery" launched in November 2018. The Wadhwa report comes at a critical time when both sides have been grappling with tensions with China and desperately looking for alternative ways for not only bolstering business and trade ties but also ensuring a safer Indo-Pacific. Divided into seven broad chapters the report is expected to boost India's business and trade engagements in gems and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, auto and spare parts, healthcare, agribusiness, apart from the mining and resources sector.

It is also expected that the Wadhwa report will deepen collaborations in space, defence and education and emphasise on the diversification of supply chains for managing the current transitions in global value chains. What is interesting is that the report recommends integrating Micro Small and Medium Enterprises of other countries into the global value chain to insulate global trade from disruptions as witnessed in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak. Earlier, Minister Goyal noted that "India can provide a core pathway for linking supply chains and provide trusted and reliable suppliers to the world". It is important to underline here that both reports have been authored by two remarkable diplomats who have shaped diplomatic, trade and business engagements during their illustrious careers and are also masters of global politics. They understand the pulse of global trade and diplomacy and have an acute sense of timing and delivery. Their rich experiences have informed the two incisive strategies which augur well for companies, traders, agriculturists, entrepreneurs, educationists among others in opening up new vistas of trade, supplies, research and development and investments opportunities. At the launch of the Anil Wadhwa report, a buoyant Simon Birmingham, former Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment had observed that the new strategy will bolster exchanges in technology and cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing and robotics and waste management and thereby catapult the "comprehensive strategic partnership into an upward bilateral and trade trajectory with India". He had led a trade delegation to New Delhi in February 2021 and said, "Australia must look into alternative markets in the European Union and India.

Why India matters

So why so much interest in India? It is deeply encouraging for Australia and other major economies that India has been elevated to 63rd in 'doing business with ease' rankings in the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 Report, making it the sixth fastest growing economy, surpassing France. It is now the 9th largest recipient of Foreign Direct Investment destination in 2019 by the World Investment Report 2020 of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The total FDI into India showed a 18% jump from US\$ 62 billion in 2018-19 to US\$ 73.45 billion in 2019-20, in the steel, digital and energy sectors. The report lists professional services and digital economy as some of the most sought-after industries in India for venture capital firms and technological companies. Since 2000, the highest cumulative investments have been recorded in the services sector, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading and construction development. As per the Global Innovation Index (GII) published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), India ranks 52nd in innovation, improving from 57th in 2018, and topping the list amongst the Central and South Asian nations. India also ranks 77th in the input pillar "Institutions" that measures political, regulatory and business environments; and 53rd in the input pillar "Human Capital



and Research" which is based on education level, tertiary education and research and development. India ranks 7th in the "Number of Graduates in Science and Engineering" and 35th in "Research and Development".

When it comes to infrastructure measures which includes the performance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), general infrastructure and ecological sustainability India ranks 17th. With regard to market sophistication India ranks 20th both, in terms of "Ease of Getting Credit" and "Market Capitalization"; 3rd in "Domestic Market Sale" and 6th in "Ease of Protecting Minority Investors". In business sophistication, India has jumped from 51st in 2018 to 27th rank, and 23rd in "University/ Industry Research Collaboration", something that should interest the academic stakeholders in Australia. India is a major success in Knowledge and Technology and ranks 1st in ICT services exports (as a percentage of total exports) and also ranks 22nd in the list of "Exporter of Creative Goods".

Next Steps in Business and Trade Engagements

It is imperative that Australia and India put together the following time-bound action plan at the bilateral front: 1. In the first year dialogues must be undertaken at the ministerial level in different sectors. 2. In a maximum of six months, existing Working Groups need to be galvanised and new ones formed to take action upon the recommendations of the two reports. Sub-working group must be formed and tasked to dish-out the details of the consultations and recommendations. 3. All ministerial departments must act in unison and diligently until business relationship gains a momentum of its own. 4. Yearly review of these dialogues and consultations must be undertaken to identify progress, bottlenecks and future action-plan and ideally be shared with the apex leadership on both sides to enable an informed and productive discussion in summit meetings. 5. Sector specific dialogues and consultation must be held under the Free Trade Agreement talks to address the issues of Rules of Origin and trade barriers urgently. 6. Trade talks will be complex and challenging, and businesses on both sides need to become thick-skinned while structural impediments and bureaucratic delays are ironed out. There is also a need to spread risk and diversification in Australia's business and trade ties by engaging with India. 7. Focusing on impact sectors — sports and education will help create a conducive and positive atmosphere on both sides and shape positive public opinion. Herein, bringing back 18,000 stranded Indian students to Australia, addressing the gaps and recommendations in India's New Education Policy 2020, and promoting sporting exchanges and collaboration to strengthen India's \$400 million sports ecosystem must be considered seriously. 8. More efforts are required to bolster India literacy amongst business and trade organisations in Australia, and vice versa. 9. Humanities and social sciences-based cooperation must not be overlooked.

Homework for Australia

There are a range of strategies which Australia must incorporate in its policy-making on the domestic front: 1. There is a need to open up, if not change, the mindset of the stakeholders in Australia for doing business with India. 2. Sharing success stories and India's changed economic scenario with business is necessary to convince them why it is no more business as usual in India. Also, India's business credentials have become stronger which needs to be shared with Australian stakeholders. 3. Collaboration and consultations must move beyond the track-I level with non-government stakeholders inter alia, academic institutions, small businesses, community associations and policy institutes to gather wider and diverse inputs and suggestions and incorporate them in profiling India's improved credentials on the one hand, and enriching Australia's India strategy. 4. As FTA negotiations gather steam, there is a strong case for organising a high-level business conclave, something like the Raisina Dialogue, involving business leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, legislators and diplomats to augment Australia's awareness about India. IAIE is deeply interested in implementing this proposal in conjunction with DFAT, Australia India Business Council, Austrade, Australia India Council, and networks in India in the government, academia, business and strategic circles.

The momentum must not be allowed to fizzle away as the constellation of bilateral, regional and global opportunities has never been so encouraging before. This needs both sides building upon them innovatively, diversely and sustainably.

Author is the CEO of the Institute for Australia India Engagement, National Sports Chair of the Australia India Business Council and Editor-in-Chief of India News

India paves the way for transgender inclusivity, November 16–30, 2021–Vol 2 Issue 9



India created history on November 8 this year when transgender dancer from Karnataka Manjamma Jogathi was bestowed with the Padma Shri, the fourth highest Indian civilian award, by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind for her contribution to folk dance. Manjamma's honour has set a long-awaited and much-needed precedent for the hitherto ostracized transgender community at large despite perceptible efforts to appeal to the moral and ethical sense of the masses to stop treating them as second class citizens.

Resounding triumph after years of struggle and injustice

Manjamma's incredible ascent from destitution to a nationally celebrated personality speaks volumes about the Indian government's genuine efforts to integrate the socially segregated transgender community with the mainstream society in India. Born as Manjunatha Shetty in Karnataka's Ballari district, she began to accept her true identity from the age of 15. Unfortunately, she could complete her studies only till Grade 10 and once her true identity made its presence felt, she had to perform Jogappa, a ritual in which she was married off to a god. Subsequently, she was denied entry to her own house and had to fend for herself as a beggar. She was subjected to sexual abuse and many other misfortunes. However, a father-son duo helped her to learn dance forms and she then, found her calling in folk dance. She went on to popularize a dance form "Jogathi Nrtiyaa" across Karnataka. Manjamma's radiant and vibrant personality and the unique manner in which she received her award (she blessed the President with the pallu of her saree while performing a dance step) has undoubtedly made the members of the transgender community proud of their identity and needless to say, many of them will embrace their true self with more alacrity without feeling the need for validation from the less-enlightened sections of the masses.

Legislations to encourage transgender inclusivity

The transgender community has been an integral part of India from ancient times. In fact, their prominent status in the Indian society is corroborated by the reference to Lord Shiva as being "Ardha-Narishvara" which means God who is half male and half female. Yet narrow-mindedness fuelled by ignorance has been the root cause for the cruel treatment and ridicule meted out to the transgender people. However, the Indian government has not left any stone unturned to counter this grave injustice by taking certain legislative measures.

1. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was enacted, which imposed a stringent prohibition on discrimination in any form against transgender persons in all spheres of life and also obligated every state to ensure their inclusion in society by providing social security, education and health facilities. The Act along with the

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 also confers the right to self-perceived gender identity and mandates issuance of the certificate of identity solely on the basis of affidavit submitted by the person "without any medical examination." Moreover, the law also imposes heavy penalty on any individual found guilty of violence against or abuse of transgender persons, for restricting their entry in public places, removal from residence or for compelling them into labour.

2. National Portal for Transgender Persons: In order to make it convenient for transgender persons to apply for certificate and identity card in a digital mode, the National Portal for Transgender Persons became operational in November 2020, which guarantees an end-to-end online facility explicitly for this purpose.

3. Government schemes: The Government of India has several comprehensive schemes to combat issues of accessibility to basic amenities related to health, education, welfare, skill-upgradation, shelter and economic support and livelihood for the transgender community. In November 2020, for the first time a shelter home, 'Garima Greh' was opened to provide shelter, food, medical care, recreational facilities, and support for capacity-building and human resource development. Thirteen such shelter homes are slated to come up in ten cities. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has allocated funds to National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation for organising skill enhancement activities for members of transgender community. Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 provides for inclusion of Transgender community into all conversations related to gender equity as well as promote their representation in science, technology and innovation. A short-term skill development programme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched in 2015 was reoriented as PMKVY 3.0 with an enhanced component specifically for the marginalised groups including women and transgender.

4. Initiatives by states: Various states in India have adopted initiatives to develop and improve the quality of life of transgender persons and this includes an umbrella scheme by the state of Odisha called Sweekruti to create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice and empowerment of transgender persons. Similarly, the Bihar government has taken all possible steps to safeguard the rights of the transgender community. A State Transgender Welfare Board to monitor their social development has been established. The state said that other welfare measures are also being taken and a case on this issue is being monitored by the Patna High Court which has passed several orders from time to time.

5. Recognition in government forms/applications: The government has now made the third gender an official category in various government applications and platforms. India has been ahead of the Western countries as since 2005, the third gender option was included in the Indian passport. In 2005, however, the third option was 'E' symbolising eunuch, but in the wake of the 2014 ruling of the apex court, in March 2015, those applying for passport online had the option of choosing 'transgender' apart from 'male' or 'female' in the gender category. Not only this, from August 2013, AADHAAR, India's Unique Identification Service acknowledges transgender as a separate category under the head of gender, and granted 1,600 transgender persons unique identification cards. Also, since April 2015 all the banks include a 'third gender' option in all their forms and applications as per a directive issued by the Reserve Bank of India. In 2016, the Indian Railways and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) added 'transgender/third gender' to the gender category along with the other categories. Most recently, the official COVID-19 vaccine portal, CoWIN, includes three gender categories: male, female and others.

6. Transgender Bill 2016: As per the transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2016, discrimination against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service in relation to employment, education, healthcare, access to public goods and facilities, etc is strictly forbidden. Also, in 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality by removing Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, terming it unconstitutional with regard to consensual homosexual sex between adults.

Benares: Karma, Destiny and Freewill! December 16–31, 2021–Vol 2 Issue 11



Manoj Kumar Mishra



Uttam Sinha

By Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha and Prof. Manoj Mishra

As you trudge through the narrow lanes and descend the slippery stone steps to the ghats where its edges touch the ripples of Ganga, you stop and look to the reverend river and turn behind to the heap of mismatched temples and then, suddenly, the mystery of life engulfs you. It is an epiphanic moment like the Yaksha Prashna to Yudhisthira in the epic Mahabharata, "And what is the greatest wonder", to which the virtuous Yudhisthira answers: "Each day death strikes and we live as though we were immortal. This is the

greatest wonder." Benares is that puzzling city; a city of existence and continuity, one of palpable intensity that is forever alluring and perplexing — the enchanting city to wash away your sins and to die in. It is a city you need to know everything about but end up only discovering a million more facets to it; where one convincing story leads to another equally compelling one. The city strains, so to speak, under its own myth; hard to prove but difficult to not believe. And flows the prose But more than anything else Benares is a city of fascinating juxtaposition that immediately instructs and even shocks. The "play of life and death" in the ghats and in the mandirs starts with the break of dawn and lingers into the deep night with hanging smoke from the pyres. It's an ancient Hindu city, which is as holy for the Muslims and continues its cheek-by-jowl existence with Islamic and Hindu traditions. The charm and mystique of Benares has attracted people from far and away and left an indelible impression. Mark Twain, one of 20th century's greatest cultural critics, on his subcontinental sojourn between January and April 1896 confesses: "If you go to Benares with a serious desire to spiritually benefit yourself, you will find it valuable." He almost never stops describing the city in his book *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (1897) and saying: "Benares is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks as twice as old as all of them put together". Interestingly, Twain informs and appreciates getting valuable facts from reading Rev Mr Parker's Guide to Benares of which little is known. While the prose has always flowed in Benares like a muse to an inspired writer; the lens too has been captivated by the surreal expression of the city. Herbert Ponting, acclaimed for his enduring images of the Antarctic from 1910 to 1913, could not resist capturing the sadhus, saints and fakirs on the ghats and the melancholic presence of the havelis in the gullies of Benares.

Cultural chronicle and centre of learning

Benares is also a cultural epicentre, a confluence of religion and faith, and a history of tolerance and co-existence that has seen Persian culture and Islamic traditions flourish.



PM Modi during Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi is strewn with struggles. And

There can be nothing more syncretic than to find a Sufi Muslim shrine of Bahadur Saheed visited by thousands of Hindus and Sikhs and Christians. It is hardly surprising that Benares has been chronicled by historians, sociologist, satirists, poets, novelists and ethnographers. One has to put all the mythological, historical, anthropological, archaeological and proto-history together to unravel the city's past. That's why conflicting schools of philosophy have positioned for intellectual acceptance here through the language (Hindi and its dialect awadhi) that is common and involves larger participation. While many cities have more than a few names, Benares has a hundred or probably even more. Though officially Varanasi (the secret land between the rivers Varuna and Assi that join the Ganga), the locals proudly call it Benares, after the mythological ruler Benar or simply the making of sweetness or joy (ras). Another name 'Kashi' (city of light) carries cultural weight. Mentioned in ancient Buddhist texts around the first millennium BC as a great kingdom, Kashi has a resonance of universal knowledge and wisdom. The city's belief, myth and spiritual power are collectively captured on the ghats that line the west bank of Ganga. Each of the 84 ghats from north to south stretching for over seven kilometres are fantastically photogenic and delightfully architectural but also sees the unfolding of day-to-day life of a multitude of people. The ghats are a lifeline, in fact the only public space in Benares and one can also see the akhadas (a traditional gym for athletes and martial arts), yet another distinctive feature of Benares. Each ghat has a character about it and a tale to tell.

Benarasipan

Benares has lived through many folklore and metaphors such as Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb and Tana Bana. The former compares the Hindu-Muslim harmony and friendship to the holy confluence of India's major rivers, the Ganga and Yamuna, and the peaceful merging of the culture and lifestyle, joint festivities and interdependence. As such Benares reminds people of the incomparable unison of the two communities that share the city space. There is community bonding rather than religious segregation. The other peace metaphor that is unique to Benares is the Tana-Bana (weaving of the silk sari), which describes the interdependent and easy-going communal existence between the Hindus and Muslims — as interlinked like the warp and weft of a Benarasi silk sari. Tana-Bana emphasises salience of business and that harmony between Hindus and Muslims are not only a matter of their personal consciousness but are also driven by their social being. The Muslims constitute one-quarter of the population, which is substantially large as compared to other cities, and significantly contribute to the local economy. The other ethos which is very popular in the city life is that of 'Benarasipan'. It is an over-arching collective identity, which loosely translated means a "free-spirited soul with a heart of gold". This 'Benarasipan' accompanied with mauj-masti (leisure and pleasure) appear to support a unique lifestyle in the city and serves as a frame for the inter-faith activities.

In the eye of politics

Benares has always been politically alive and a seat from Kashi is regarded as a prized one — a representative from the spiritual and cultural capital. Like in most constituencies, politics is not above caste or religion in Benares. Despite the charged atmosphere and the cutthroat campaign, Benares retained its sanity and cohesiveness, allowing the city's free spirit to prevail and "a thousand flowers to bloom". Benares has had its political figures but none more towering than the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Benares also gave Madan Mohan Malaviya, an enlightened personality. Respectfully called Mahamana, he would frequently advice those aspiring to be in politics that "The path of politics is strewn with struggles. And remember, if you want to be in politics never let your self-interests get the better of you." His groundings in the tenets of Hindu Dharma led him to strong beliefs on 'right thinking and right actions'. And it was his vision and great determination that he eventually built the renowned Benaras Hindu University (BHU) in 1916. As the president of the India National Congress four times, he moderated successfully between the liberals and the nationalists and the moderates and the extremists. It is often recollected that when Malaviya was on his deathbed, he said, "Take me to the outskirts of Benares". Puzzled, the people by his side asked as to why and he replied, "My work on earth is not complete, I do not want to achieve moksha. I must come back and finish my work."

Dr. Uttam Kumar Sinha works at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and Prof. Manoj Kumar Mishra teaches at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research, BHU.

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director@iaie.org.au
+61 (7) 33913525